

MEC Dhlomo gets a standing ovation for his contribution to Amajuba District as he wraps up term of office; sings the praises of education officials, educators and learners for coming out tops in the province

Matric classes that run from 6am – 5pm from Monday to Saturday; schooling that involves parents in their children’s education; and a school that is run strictly and works closely with the SAPS to clamp down on ill-discipline. This is just part of the recipe that has helped a Newcastle township school to produce 136 university-ready bachelor passes out of 202 learners who wrote and passed their exams. Despite being situated in a crime-ridden part of the town, Zama High School, in Dannhauser, has emerged as one of the top 20 schools that achieved a 80% - 99% pass rate at Amajuba, which was itself recently singled out as the overall best-performing district in KwaZulu-Natal.

Yesterday, KZN Health MEC Dhlomo - who is the political champion of Amajuba - hosted a dinner to congratulate all education stakeholders in the district for a job well done. Among the guests was the director-general of Basic Education, Mr Hubert Mathanzima Mveli, and KZN Speaker Hon. MPL Ms Lydia Johnson, both of whom sang the praises of Amajuba district.

Reflecting on their impressive achievement, acting principal of Zama High School Mr Selby Nyembe said, *“We always try to finish the syllabus as early as the 31st of July. Then on 01 August, we start with intensive revision, where school starts at 6am until 5pm. We also rely a lot on past papers as part of our preparation. We don’t have holidays. We work on Saturdays and on some Sundays.”*

Asked how the school is able to maintain discipline and achieve their 95% pass rate, Nyembe said: *“We ensure that, in the main, we admit children from grade eight. If you’ve taken a child from grade 8 and they are with you for five years, they end up knowing the culture of the school, and what is expected of them. We instil a culture of hard work, and time efficiency. We live in an area that is plagued by crime, but we enjoy huge support and co-operation from the SAPS.”*

He said the school compiles monthly reports for matric learners, so that parents can track their children’s progress.

“You have to involve other stakeholders, such as parents, because they play a huge role by supporting the children, bringing them to school in pool cars where possible. Parents should get involved all the way in their children’s education, and should not be surprised by their children’s results come November. By the time the year ends, the parent will have seen at least eight reports.”

A visibly excited MEC Dhlomo said that that there are strong links between health and education, because a populace that is educated becomes empowered to make better choices concerning their health and well-being.

MEC Dhlomo, who is a former mayor of Amajuba, said his association with education in the district was an example of the success of Operation Sukuma Sakhe, whereby MECs get involved in various sectors of governance, engaging closely with the people, and acting as a link between government and the public at all levels. It was therefore important for him to host the dinner to congratulate the officials at Amajuba for their hard work.



MEC Dhlomo with Mr Selby Nyembe, and the certificates that he accepted on behalf of Zama High School



Zibambeleni High School principal Sibusiso Nyandeni accepts an award for his school, which achieved 87%. Looking on are Mr Mr Hubert Mathanzima Mwel; MS Lydia Johnson, MEC Dhlomo and Amajuba District Speaker Cllr Jabu Khumalo

“This is the end of my term as Health MEC. I couldn’t have left without recognising the leadership of education in this district. Becoming the best-performing district in KZN is a major achievement. You don’t have to wait for people to die, and then go and speak to their funeral about how well they’ve performed. Create a platform speak to people while they’re alive. Motivate them, affirm what they’ve done. That, on its own, is motivation.

“For one high school to produce over 130 bachelors, from about 200 matriculants , is truly remarkable. They’ve excelled beyond measure... More so because they don’t have the best in terms of infrastructure. I felt it was important to wish this district well and thank them.” He said he was humbled during the dinner when Mr Mwela called for a standing ovation from the audience, in recognition of his contribution

“I take that as a sign of encouraging me to continue to work hard and give support.”

The MEC said the success of Amajuba in education could be attributed to the focus, dedication and hard of all involved.

“They’ve been doing this over many years. They’ve been sitting in position two for a couple of years. It’s the first time they got slot number one. If you look at the results of this district, they didn’t have too many schools who achieved 100%. But they have over 20 schools that achieved between 99 and 80%. They are actually pushing a cohort of very good performing schools. Those schools are going to remain in that category for a very long time. In fact, we’re going to add more. It’s about the quality of education in most schools, which is what this district is doing.”