

Speech by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo at the EDUCATION AWARDS at Amajuba District

19 January 2017

Amajuba District Municipality Mayor – Dr Musa Ngubane

Newcastle Local Municipality Mayor – Cllr Makhosini Nkosi

Senior Managers in the Department of Education

Teachers and learners across the length and breadth of Amajuba District

Parents and guardians

Distinguished guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Before we get immersed in the activities of this evening; I request that we all rise observe a moment of silence for all the educators and learners who passed on last year.

May their souls rest in eternal peace

It is a glorious moment indeed that we meet to applaud; appreciate and recognise the excellent outcomes achieved by this District in educating its children.

Here I single out all the hard working and progressive teachers who committed their time to achieve such excellent results that saw this District becoming number 1 in the whole Province.

Through your hard work and commitment we are proud to declare that you have made President Jacob Zuma's pronouncements come true when he said:

'Our schools must become centres of excellence which promote hard work and performance amongst teachers and learners....

Teachers and learners should be in school, in class, on time - learning and teaching for at least seven hours a day.'

The President further reminded us of the significance of the role of educators in our situation, saying:

'As teachers, the future of the country is thus in your hands. It is up to educators to produce these new South Africans and a new South Africa, from the ashes of our tragic past.

We should always remember that education is a site of struggle, the struggle against poverty, unemployment and inequality. Through education, we should unlock the potential of the youth to participate effectively in the economic activity of our country.'

Thank you again to all the Senior Education Specialists here for ensuring that the above becomes a norm in this District.

Yesterday we had our 1st KwaZulu Natal Cabinet meeting for this year and the first item that was tabled was by the Department of Education – this was on the 2016 National Senior Certificate results.

The Cabinet was excited to learn that as a Province we have improved but the following were specifically noted:

- All Districts improved but the highest improvement was at Amajuba District with 18%
- The overall performance of Amajuba District was recorded at 77,4%

The District was congratulated and Members of the Cabinet got interested on why Amajuba was doing so well. To this the Department said though it has not looked into possible variables but it is sure of 2 aspects:

- Good Leadership at Amajuba District, as well as,
- Following and adhering to processes and protocols

Personally I added that the Operation Sukuma Sakhe that saw Amajuba being visited by the Cabinet last year August assisted to elevate the issue of Education to where the ruling Party had put it in its 2007 Polokwane Conference.

It was also worth noting that those tasked with Education were motivated by having Members of the Cabinet visiting them. We believe that this assisted.

Last week when we were here for the School Opening Programme I also noted that what also contribute to the good performance of this District was the structured visits to other Provinces like Gauteng to learn and share good practices.

Now allow me to give a word of advice – a caution to be precise – being Number 1 is a very difficult position as you have to fight – to retain and improve on the position.

As earlier indicated, this District improved by 18% on its previous marks to attain the 77, 4 percentage which put it to number 1 in the Province.

The big question is:

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

If we go by the confidence given and displayed by the Principal of St Lewis High School – this District is destined to reach the pinnacle of its desires.

For both learners and educators, please regard this evening as recognition for all your efforts of correctly putting your best foot forward and performing accordingly.

This evening also reminds us that despite the mammoth challenges each of one of us faces and the limited resources which are our reality; we have hard-working heroes and heroines in this District.

In the spirit of our national icon, President Oliver Reginald Tambo, that this year is dedicated to – I would like to express my full appreciation to what appears before me – children of all races coming together to celebrate their remarkable achievement as one. President Oliver Tambo had prayed for this moment when he said:

‘One of the ideas that has inspired many of us in my generation of black South Africans is that race should cease to be a category that governs relations between and among peoples.

Scientific enquiry and social experience have combined to bury the primitive notions that skin pigmentation was a factor which affects the intellectual capacity of individuals and an element that determines people`s natural place in society.’

In a nutshell, dear colleagues, I am saying **we are on track.**

Working together we will take quality education to greater heights in this District

Thank you for all the good work; let us all continue being inspired, this is our country.

Good evening