

Media statement by the Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal, on the state of readiness for the 2022 academic year, Sunday 16 January 2022.

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal is ready to welcome learners and educators for the 2022 academic year. 2022 is the third year since the Covid 19 Pandemic became the defining feature of the department's academic activities. Over the past two years, the department has learnt valuable lessons on how to ensure curriculum delivery amidst the Covid 19 Pandemic, hence our state of readiness for the 2022 academic year.

LEARNER ADMISSION

The number of learners placed in 2022 has increased by 676 from 2 569 695 to 2 570 371. To date, the number of unplaced learners is 1673. The reasons for unplaced learners vary from late registrations, death of parents/ guardians and movement of parents/guardians from one place to the other.

The work of learner placement is continuing and the department is dealing with learner placement issues as they arise (walk ins). King Cetshwayo and Umkhanyakude Districts accounts for a large number of unplaced learners in the province. Districts indicated that Monday the 17th and Tuesday the 18th of January 2022 will be dedicated to schools admissions.

INFRASTRUCUTRE

The Province of KwaZulu-Natal has been affected by inclement weather since the beginning of December 2021. Since then, districts have been sending reports on the affected schools, indicating the extent to which school infrastructure has been damaged.

The first report that the department got was that there were 106 schools that were affected, and later got the report that from December and January, there are 186 schools that have been affected throughout the Province.

From the 186 affected schools, 90 schools will need a total of 288 mobile classrooms for teaching and learning to commence. In order to ensure that

schools are functional on the 17th of January, mobiles have been supplied to all affected schools where required.

“Despite the destruction caused by inclement weather, as a Department of Education in KZN, we have worked hard to ensure that our school infrastructure is ready for learner intake and for teaching and learning to commence on the first day of the 2022 academic year,” said MEC Kwazi Mshengu.

The estimated costs to supply mobile classrooms is R72 million and the overall estimated costs to repair 186 affected schools, including provision of mobile classrooms is R238 million.

SANITATION

There are 3901 schools that are on the water supply programme in the department. By the end of December 2021, all these schools in the programme were receiving water and municipalities have committed to further supply water to schools. Working with municipalities that department is not expecting any challenges regarding water supply to schools.

LEARNER TRANSPORT

The dedicated learner transport in the province has 85 contracts comprising of 595 buses and 220 taxis. The total number of learners benefiting from learner transport is currently 67 163. There are also six emergency learner transport contracts which are managed directly by the department, comprising of 09 buses and 14 mini bus taxis, transporting just over 900 learners. The figure of benefiting learners this year is likely to increase by an average of 3 500, which will take the number of benefiting learners to over 70 000.

The confirmation of learner transport’s readiness starts in the preceding year during meeting that the department holds with various stakeholders and role players in the learner transport. The results of these meeting gave a clear indication that learners transport is ready to ferry learners for the 2022 academic year.

SCHOOL STAFING

HRM Circular 50 of 2021 was issued at the end of September 2021 guiding the implementation of 2022 staffing establishment. There were 245 surpluses outstanding from 2021 Post Provisioning Norm (PPN) and were placed by districts before schools closure in December 2021. The Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal currently don't have any surplus educators.

2616 school promotional posts were advertised in September 2021 and 2247 posts are already filled and incumbents will assume duty on 17 January 2022. 355 posts remain unfilled and are expected to be filled by 31 January 2022. In the 355 posts that have been unfilled, there are people acting as well as substitute educators.

643 educators have been approved for conversion to permanent into critical posts. Districts were informed to implement such conversions early in December 2021. A progress report on implementation has been received confirming the processing of conversions.

When schools open on 19 January 2022, no classroom will be without an educator and no school will be without a functional school management team.

LTSM DELIVERY

Delivery of Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM) has been running smooth since the department started towards the end of 2021 to deliver LTSM for the 2022 academic year. As a department we can say without any fear of contradiction that 100% stationary has been delivered to schools. 99% of textbooks were delivered before schools were closed in 2021.

The reasons for 99% and not 100% of delivery of textbook vary from text books that are out of print, meaning textbooks that are no longer available (these will be removed from national catalogue for future purchases), textbooks that are not available from publishers and supplementary material which is made up of readers which were erroneously included into the State Owned Catalogue.

To ensure that there is 100% LTSM delivery despite the few challenges regarding textbooks as a result of reasons stated above, schools have been given an opportunity to select alternative titles for delivery to ensure that teaching and learning is not compromised.

NATIONAL SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMME

The department has prepared an internal memo to be sent to all districts for circulation to schools and to all service providers directing that food items be delivered on Monday, 17 January and Tuesday 18 January 2022.

A circular has also been sent directing principals and other officials on the receiving of food items provided to schools as the department strengthen compliance with NSNP Quality Plan.

There are plans to provide food for learners attending and not yet attending schools in 2022. This includes learners eating meals at school, learners collecting cooked meal at school, learners collecting food parcel elsewhere to take home and a combination of cooked food and food parcels.

There are adequate cooking utensils and cooking equipment and where schools are in need, schools have been advised to collect equipment from the head Office.

The department is ready to provide daily nutritious meal to the learners of KwaZulu-Natal.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENTS (PPE's)

Delivery of PPE's commenced on 11 of January and will end on 18 January 2022. Schools will have a buffer on each and every item to ensure that there is no shortage of PPE's in schools. Given the experienced obtained in the last 2 years of Covid 19, the department is ready with the provision of PPE's for the 2022 academic year.

CONCLUSION

“As a Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal we are eager and ready to start with teaching and learning for the 2022 academic year. We once again ask for communities to play an active role in the educations of our children. We are forever grateful for the participation and cooperation of all our stakeholders and we are confident that even in this academic year, our relationship with our stakeholders will bear good results,” said MEC Kwazi Mshengu.

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ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN KWAZULU-NATAL