**BUDGET SPEECH DELIVERED BY KZN MEC FOR EDUCATION, MR SIPHOSIHLE HLOMUKA , MAIN CHAMBER LEGISLATURE – KWAZULU-NATAL. 29 JULY 2025**

**Honourable Speaker, Ms Nontembeko Boyce**

**Honourable Deputy Speaker, Ms Mmabatho Tembe**

**Members of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Executive Council**

**Honourable Members of the Provincial Legislature**

**Members of the diplomatic corps**

**Leaders and Representatives of Labour Unions**

**All traditional leaders**

**Head of Department, Mr Nkosinathi Ngcobo**

**All Heads of Departments and Senior Management present**

**People of KwaZulu-Natal**

**Members of the media**

**Business leaders**

**Distinguished guests**

**Education Portfolio Committee Chairperson , Hon Buthelezi**

**Members of the Education Portfolio Committee**

**DDGs and Senior Managers from the Department of Education**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am honoured to stand in front of this august house to present budget vote 5 on behalf of the Department of Education in KwaZulu Natal. This debate on the budget vote is taking place as the country continues celebrating the life and times of the struggle icon, internationalist, and constitutionalist, President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.

As we remember the multiple facets of our hero, we are grateful for his steadfast leadership towards adopting the country’s constitution which cemented the transition from apartheid to a democratic legitimate state.

It is that constitution from which the budget cycles, including these budget processes derive the mandate. We therebefore continue to champion and uphold the constitution for the role it plays in protecting the public by ensuring that the allocation of budget is aligned to the needs of the masses.

We all know that President Mandela emphasised the need to prioritise the improvement of the education system, he directed government to ensure that a quality public education is provided for all regardless of race.

I stand before you acutely aware of the magnitude of the work required to deliver quality education for the people of KwaZulu Natal. I am equally aware that the needs associated with this mandate far exceed available resources.

Therefore, in presenting this budget, we will borrow from **Amilcar Cabral** and we will ***“Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told. Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures. Claim no easy victories.”***

Honourable Speaker, I can reassure this house that the budget we are presenting today will reflect the successes we have managed to attain through the previous administrations.

I am pleased to say that in the 7th administration we inherited a fully effective and functional department even though it was struggling to adjust to the economic constraints as a result of repeated budget cuts. It is common cause that the department has responded by reprioritising its budget to adjust to the budget accumulated reductions of **R26.8 billion since 2021/22**, while also accommodating the cost of employment increases.

Over the years this has negatively affected our ability to transfer fund for norms and standards to school on time. We are therefore happy to report that through the **R900 Million advance** in the department’s equitable share allocation, we were able to transfer these funds to schools. This has released enormous pressure on schools, especially the principals and educators.

We have developed plans to respond to the aftershock of the budget cuts which have adversely impacted the operations of the department. We have had to reprioritise departmental needs in order to safeguard educator salaries and other areas of priority. One of the unintended consequences of the reprioritization is the increase in **unauthorised expenditure**.

**COST DRIVERS**

**Compensation of Employees**

Honourable Speaker, it will be shown in this budget speech that the **Cost of Compensation of Employees (COE**) remains the major cost driver for the Department, accounting for close to 90% of this budget. This is so solely because we are a department that is labour intensive and depends largely on having a teacher in front of learners in the delivery of our core mandate. The department has an approved staff establishment of 107 503 made up of 90 057 educators, 2239 professionals in the form of subject advisors, circuit managers and specialists, 190 therapists and 15 017 public service employees. However, in November 2024 we were only able to fill 98 987 posts due to budgetary constraints. ***A total of R 56 billion goes towards paying employee salaries.***

Over the years we have retained the educator pool of 90 057 of which more than 86 000 is distributed to schools through PPN certificates. Due to several cuts on our budget implemented by National Treasury and increased costs associated with employee salaries it has been difficult to sustain this pool of teachers as they were gradually becoming unaffordable. This situation has continued to worsen.

We have always been upfront during our engagements and consultations with our education stakeholders that maintaining the above pool was becoming unsustainable given the above painted scenario.

**Cost Reduction**

Despite all this as the department we did not collapse in the face of a crisis. We have assessed our own expenditure and we are implementing a robust cost reduction strategy to mitigate the impact of the budget cuts on the sector.

**Fleet Management:** To safeguard our fleet from theft and other forms of misuse the department installed tracking devices to all its vehicles in 2021. This has helped in dealing with the misuse of state vehicles and monitoring the behaviour of the users, while at the same time mitigating vehicle theft thereby reducing costs for replacement.

**Office accommodation, facilities, and provision of tools of trade:** The department is in the process of reducing costs related to office facilities in the form of buildings where it conducts its business operations.

There are 22 buildings that are leased by the Department through Public Works. The cost spent for the payment of rental towards leased buildings is projected at **R 120 million** per annum.

To counter this as an alternative the department has resolved to reduce these costs by either purchasing or constructing its own buildings and will use available land to achieve this. Here, the aim is to save on the payment of increasing rental costs and other challenges associated with office rentals.

We have also reduced costs related to printing, travel and accommodation, and conferencing. The phased approach we have adopted for the rollout of capital ICT projects and procurement includes the implementation of Smart Schools that use modern digital technology for the delivery of teaching and learning in all districts.. In this regard 92 Smart Schools **have been rolled out between to date.**

**Improving Efficiency**

Madam Speaker, I wish to declare here that as part of our endeavour to improve efficiency in the spending of the department’s budget, we undertake to embark on a new cycle of learner and staff verification which also seeks to deal with the issue of undocumented leaners. This verification exercise through Head Count which we will soon be commencing with will ensure that we have correct learner numbers, and it will protect the integrity of our payroll by eliminating any possibility of ghost employees.

Madam Speaker, we believe that this Head Count exercise will play a significant role in improving our efficiency as the Department in the way we do teacher provisioning, allocate norms and standard funds to schools, and provide learner transport as well as the National School Nutrition Programme as this will be based on up-to-date and accurate learner information and figures.

We are also leveraging technology to improve efficient management of the Department. For example the implementation of an electronic leave **management** (e-Leave) system and also optimising the use of an existing e-submission system will speed up the processing and management of these critical areas of Human Resource Management and administration.

**Continuous Improvement**

Honourable Speaker, as committed during the 2024/25 budget vote, KZN remains a top contributor in the National Senior Certificate pass rate. Over and above the 89.5% pass rate, the province continues to improve the quality of the Matric passes, hence its second position performer in the country.

The Department continues to strive for academic excellence in all schools and districts. We are forging ahead with implementing our **Provincial Academic Improvement Plan**, whose pillars seek to:

* improve bachelor passes;
* eliminate certificate passes;
* eliminate zero percent schools and schools achieving below 70%;
* increase number of learners passing with distinctions;
* achieve and maintain above 60% pass rate in gateway subjects like mathematics, physical sciences, technical subjects, and accounting;
* maintain the above 80 % performance of all our districts;
* increase the number of schools achieving 100 %.

For example, 84,470 candidates achieved Bachelor passes, the highest in the country and an increase from 72,099 in 2023. The number of schools achieving a 100% pass rate rose from 246 in 2023 to 321 in 2024.

In order to sustain these results, we have to ensure that there are enough teachers in the classrooms on time, limit any disruptions to teaching and learning (including the targeting of schools by communities during protests related to service delivery), implement matric intervention and support programmes such as boot camps, winter and spring classes and high flyer programmes.

In August 2024, we took a decision to advertise 737 posts in a deliberate effort to try and reduce the high numbers of unemployed qualified educators on our provincial database. This was also done with the aim of promoting transparency in our recruitment procedure.

Madam Speaker, this process was delayed for more than five months due to the failure of school governing bodies to submit recommendations for the department to fill those posts. This had a huge impact in that learners were left without enough teachers for the duration of 5 months and leaving available teachers with heavy workloads and impacting adversely on our core mandate of teaching and learning.

This compelled us to invoke the provisions of the law provided for in Section 6 of Employment of Educators which allows the Head of Department to take over and fill teacher posts without recommendations of School Governing Bodies. This we had to do to mitigate the risk of having learners without teachers as the new 2025 school year had already commenced.

I can report Madam Speaker that because of this intervention we have seen more recommendations coming from schools and almost all the posts have now been filled. However, this experience forced us to revert to the use of the database as another method of teacher placement although with a lot of modifications. Moving forward we will follow these dual methods to recruit and place teachers in schools.

**Implementation of Phase 5 of the Basic Education Employment Initiative (BEEI)**

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform this house and the public at large that government implementation of phase 5 of the Basic Education Employment Initiative (BEEI) is well under way. Through the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative, the government seeks to stimulate employment by creating jobs for the unemployed youth. Through this programme, **45 658** our youth in the province are currently employed at schools across the province as teachers assistants, as well as general assistants since the 1st June 2025.

This programme is being implemented with 2 sources of funding and targets unemployed youth.

The first source being the Department of Employment and Labour which has set aside an amount of R 881 413 040 which is funding 35 336 teacher-assistants’ jobs in KZN schools. These funds are managed by the Independent Development Corporation (IDC).

The second source of funding is the allocation by National Treasury of R260 851 774 to this Department which is funding 10 322 job opportunities of teacher assistants and paying operational costs as well as stipends to appointed youth.

**Youth Empowerment through Internship and In-service Training Programme**

As the Department we continue to empower our youth through our graduate internship, as well as in-service training programmes. This we do by recruiting and placing 1000 graduate interns in our offices and schools who require exposure to practical work experience. The department also provides experiential learning opportunities to student interns from TVET colleges who require work-based experience as part of the work integrated learning (WIL) to complete their qualifications. So far, we have successfully placed 390 students.

**Enrolment and Curriculum**

Honourable Speaker, in this financial year we have over 2.8 million learners who are enrolled in 5 749 public ordinary schools, 22 077 learners are enrolled in 77 public special schools with, and 29 454 learners in 115 independent schools.

The department will be rolling out phase 2 of the Online Learner Admission System, thereby extending the system to all twelve districts. This approach will allow for registration and admission of learners in Grades R, 1, and 8.

As directed by the provisions of the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act (BELA), we are paying special focus on strengthening the foundations of learning through Pre-Grade R and Grade R education, and to make it available to most learners.

Focusing on these foundation stages will also contribute to our effort to improve educational outcomes and throughput across all levels, including matric. Our participation in International Standardised Benchmark Assessment Studies through the Department of Basic Education, particularly the **Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS**) has revealed that most Foundation Phase learners, particularly those in Grade 4, are not doing well in literacy and struggle to read texts for meaning in their home language.

Though interventions like the QALAKAHLE Strategy, which aims to enhance Curriculum Management by School Management teams (SMTs) and learner performance in Literacy and Mathematics, we are ready to improve. The Early Grade Reading Instruction (EGRI) targets training IsiZulu Home Language teachers in Grades R-3 to improve their content knowledge, teaching methodology and classroom practice using a combination of face-to-face training and online teaching with online group discussions to reinforce learning.

Provincial assessment results as well as the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), Early Learning National Assessment (ELNA) as well as the outcomes of international standardised benchmark assessment tests, such as the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SEACMEQ), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) will be used to address identified content gaps.

As a department, we are responding to these findings by developing reading programs and campaigns such as **Read-Aloud Days** in schools. We also encourage parents to read these stories with children at home. Other reading programmes include **Nali Bali**. During 2024/25 we trained School Management Teams (SMTs) in 326 schools, with storybooks delivered to 222 primary schools in line with the target. An additional 60 primary schools (five schools per district) were resourced with storybooks.

The department utilised the REALS-SA to procure additional reading resources for 282 primary schools, to improve learning outcomes. Also, 5 873 school governing bodies (SGBs) were mobilised to train parents in Leading for Reading support to learners.

We also trained 1 874 Grade R teachers and practitioners in pre-literacy content and methodology, and 2 588 Grade R teachers and practitioners in pre-numeracy. Furthermore, 2 494 ECD practitioners from ECD centres were trained on the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for birth to four-year-olds, and 1 380 monitoring and support visits were conducted. As part of our mass registration programme we will be mobilising ECD owners and communities to register all ECD centres.

**Leveraging ICT And Digital Integration**

The department has rolled out an on-line tool to assist Section 21(c) schools to procure LTSM efficiently. The department will continue to give support to Section 21(c) schools to manage their LTSM responsibilities and procurement mandate with transparency and value for money.

**As part of monitoring the implementation of the LTSM Retention Policy** in addition to topping up textbooks, the department is also focusing on managing existing textbooks at schools to encourage prudent expenditure. Efforts are underway to analyse existing textbook stocks at schools and annual loss levels.

After the pronouncement and approval of the Coding and Robotics curriculum, we extended the pilot to all 12 districts in the province, and we have already oriented 3 915 Foundation Phase educators in preparation for the full implementation in 2026. This brings the total number of teachers who have been oriented on Coding and Robotics to 7 890.

To help us meet our reading proficiency targets, we are accelerating the rollout and accessibility of the KZN Education Digital School Library. The library now carries a collection of 630 000 fiction and non-fiction e-books.

We have distributed 1 360 laptops and tablets to schools, in the past four (4) years, to promote the use of the KZN Education e-library platform. We will continue to seek opportunities to partner with individuals, NGOs, and businesses so that we can give more learners access to the platform.

We are also using technology to simulate laboratory environments by deploying **Virtual science labs in schools**. This technology helps us reduce costs for consumables, equipment maintenance, and space. These labs have proved to be effective due to their accessibility, safety, and much more cost-effectiveness compared to traditional laboratories. We intend to roll out more of these to more schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal, especially schools in rural areas.

The department will also be supporting learners through a comprehensive digital mental health support system as part of psyco-social support to address social challenges affecting learners including gender-based violence, substance abuse, cyberbullying, depression, anxiety and other psychosocial ills. This platform will be available digitally 24/7 to support learners holistically.

**ACCELERATION OF SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS**

It is our view, Honourable Members, that in order for any school to perform at an expected level, infrastructure must be conducive for teaching and learning. It is for this reason that we have been quite relentless in our efforts to provide our schools with state-of-the-art infrastructure.

Honourable Members, it would also be remembered that in our previous Budget Vote we made a commitment to commence with the building of the five Technical High Schools in the **2024/25** financial year. These schools were Sihayo Technical High School in Umzinyathi District, Mpumelelo Technical High School in uThukela District, Dingeka Technical High School in Harry Gwala District, Mvaba Technical High School in Pinetown District and Nombika Technical High School in Ilembe District.

Of the above-mentioned schools, we have contractors on site at Mpumelelo which is now at **25%,** Mvaba at **20%** and Nombika at **50%.** With regard to Sihayo and Dingeka, the design processes are at an advanced stage. We are therefore happy to report today that a lot of ground has been covered since we were here last year when we made this commitment. We have been on the ground to ensure that we deal with all the infrastructural projects that need to be dealt with. To this end, we are recommitting ourselves again to always go beyond the call of duty to change the face of our schools in terms of infrastructure provision.

Despite the devastating effects of natural disasters that continue to delay the rate of delivery of these programmes and projects, the Department continues with the development of education infrastructure programmes and projects.

We made several strides when it comes to enriching curriculum and the implementation of the Three-Stream Curriculum Model, and that is evidenced by the work we have done in the construction of the state-of-the-art **Maritime School of Excellence in Umlazi district,** and the acquisition of property for use in establishing ***Mbuso Kubheka ICT, Engineering and Technology School of Excellence,*** *in Amajuba district.*

*These are* ***two Focus Schools*** *that are targeted for opening in 2026****.*** As we speak, we are delighted to share with you, ladies and gentlemen, that **these two focus schools will soon commence with admitting learners for the very first time in preparation for opening in 2026.**

These schools are in addition to the other two Focus Schools that already exist in the province namely **Mandla Mthethwa School of Excellence** in Mkhanyakude district and **Anton Lembede Maths, Science and Technology Academy** under Pinetown district. Our aim is to have at least one focus school per district.

We are aware that there is still a long way from wall to wall coverage of all the schools that need different types of infrastructural interventions. It is this knowledge that strengthens our resolve to provide our schools with infrastructure and to also build new ones amongst which we have some that are closer to completion.

It is also important that I share with you, Honourable Members, that in the 2024**/25** financial year, a lot of progress was made towards completion of schools that were under construction. To this end, we want to report to the people of KwaZulu-Natal that we have a total of **24** schools that are earmarked for completion in the **2025/6** financial year. Among those schools that are:

**Amajuba District:** It is my pleasure to announce that this **Friday 1 August**, we will officially open **Isikhalisezwe Primary School** which has now been completed.

Thembinkosi Primary at **68%** to completion**.**

**uThukela District:** Meadowsweet Combined School which is **88%** complete, Phuthini Secondary School at **89%,**

**uMkhanyakude District:** Dlilanga Secondary at **60%.**

It is also worth noting that one of the best performing schools in uMgungundlovu District, Mconjwana Secondary School, is also earmarked for completion in the **2025/6** financial year and is now at **56%** complete.

Honourable Members, some of the contractors for the projects being implemented by the Department were terminated during the financial year. The terminations were because of a number of issues including poor workmanship or underperformance of contractors and delayed payments. Delayed payments to service providers emanate from the Departmental financial challenges and regular occurrence of natural disasters, forcing the Department to reprioritise the implementation of interim measures aimed at ensuring that teaching and learning is not affected.

**Focus on the Schools Affected by Natural Disasters**

Honourable Speaker, it is quite unfortunate that in the past few years, our beautiful Province of KwaZulu-Natal has been prone to some devastating disasters. A lot of these disasters such as storms, floods and even tornadoes have left untold destruction to infrastructure that includes roads, bridges and schools.

We have found ourselves having to work very hard trying to repair some of the schools that have been damaged by these natural disasters. And we are pleased, ladies and gentlemen, to report to the people of KwaZulu-Natal that we have successfully repaired a number of schools among which are Nqobile Primary School in uThukela District which is now **100%** completed, Gloeckner Combined School, and Qhozo High School also in uThukela District and 100% complete. In Zululand District, we have successfully completed the Zombode Primary School, Ngoza Primary School and Philibana Primary School whilst Mhlabanisa Secondary School is at **80%** construction.

In uMzinyathi District we are at **76%** construction at the Mkhonjane Primary School whilst at Echwebeni Primary School in uMkhanyakude the construction is currently at **95%.**

**Construction of New Schools**

Owing to the movement of the people in search of better opportunities, KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education has had to undergo the construction of **21** new schools. In some instances, we have had to replace makeshift schools that were not conducive for teaching and learning. Some of the new schools that we are building are Vimbukhalo Primary School in uThukela District which is now **96%** complete, Cliffdale Secondary School in Pinetown District at **65%,** Umzokhanyayo Secondary School in Harry Gwala at **45%,** Sidingulwazi Primary in uThukela District at **56%** and Zizamele Primary School in Harry Gwala District which is at **60%.**

Additionally, there are **133** schools undergoing major refurbishment and rehabilitation across the province.

**Strengthening The Foundation Of Education Through Maintenance of ECD Centres and Construction of Grade R Classrooms**

The Department is continuing with the construction of **59** new **Grade R** classrooms and the maintenance of existing Early Childhood Development Centres (ECD) across the province, that is why we are embarking on a Mass Registration of the ECD programmes/centre in the 2025 academic year.

The construction of the **Grade R** classrooms at the following schools were completed during the **2024/25** financial year; Straalhoek Primary School and Savela Primary School in Harry Gwala District, Phumela Primary School in uMzinyathi District, Siyaphambili Primary School in uThukela District and Imfihlo Primary School in King Cetswayo District.

Amongst the **Grade R** classrooms earmarked for completion in the **2025/6** financial year are at Gabangemfundo Primary School in uThukela District, Landulwazi Primary School, Fisokuhle Primary School and Mhlungwane Primary School in uMzinyathi District as well as Ntuthunga Primary School in King Cetswayo District.

It is worth noting that the construction of the ECD Centre at Luncedo Primary School in Harry Gwala District and Lethabo ECD Centre in uThukela District were successfully completed in the **2024/25** financial year. With the construction of the **Luncedo ECD**, u-Mrs Mhlongo has been able to double the enrolment and she is opening opportunities for more children to access foundation education.

The Department anticipates to complete the construction of the ECD Centres in the **2025/26** financial year in schools such as the following, to name a few; Siyakhula Primary School of which the progress currently is at **98%** in iLembe District, uMgodi ECD Centre currently at **97%** and Greater Kokstad ECD Centre currently at **25%** in Harry Gwala District. The Department will also commence construction on the ECD centres amongst which is Thokozane ECD Centre in iLembe.

**Support for Learners with Special Education Needs**

In our quest to maximise the expansion of inclusive education, we have taken a progressive stance to ensure that we build as many state of the art special schools as possible. We have some special schools that are currently being built, and those are **Open Gate Special School** in uMgungundlovu and **Musa Special School** in Zululand District.

Having made an assessment of the conditions at the Inkosi **Thathezakhe Special School in uMzinyathi District**, we have taken a decision to provide this school with proper infrastructure that is in line with what is required in any school accommodating learners with special needs.

Once again, I want to call on all members of society and communities to protect our public and school infrastructure from vandalism and theft. We thank all the stakeholders and social partners who joined us at the School Safety Conference, held August 2024. We appreciate the commitment of labour, traditional and religious leadership, School Governing Bodies and SAPS made valuable contributions and commitments on how schools should be protected.

**Dedicated Learner Transport As A Bridge Through Which Learners Are Able To Get To School On Time**

Despite continued budgetary constraints which have persisted to affect the provision of dedicated learner transport in KZN, we have continued providing learner transport to thousands of qualifying learners who would otherwise travel long and often dangerous terrains on foot to school.

Since its inception more than a decade ago, more than half a million learners in this situation have benefited from dedicated learner transport.

What has dented the dedicated learner transport programme in recent years and pushed it to the verge of collapse was the reduction of the budget in the middle of the current five-year contract that began in July 2020 and is coming to an end in July 2025.

Having started at an allocation of R457 million in 2020-2021, the budget was suddenly reduced to R266 million in the 2022/2023 financial year, sending the programme on a tailspin that it has not recovered from to date. Although an additional R130 million was received to ease the pressure, it was not enough to return the program to its optimum performance.

The continued budget cuts since then has meant that the programme needed continuous bailouts from the Department of Transport, leading to a debt of over half a million by the end of the current financial year. That debt itself has no prospects of being repaid, due to the overall budgetary constraints emanating from the budget cuts running into billions of rands.

This has meant that when the current contracts come to an end, the new contracts must fit within the budget of R343 million allocated for the current financial year, which will have reduced to R94 due to accruals from the last financial year as well as payments for the first three months of the current financial year.

This situation means that the current 76 000 learner transport beneficiaries must be reduced to 9000 to fit within the remaining budget of R94 million for the programme to continue through the remaining months up to March 2026.

Having said that, we are working together as a government to ensure that learners continue to enjoy the benefits of the service and will allow us to introduce more beneficiaries from a new baseline budget.

**Provision of Free Nutritious Meals to Learners Through the** **National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP)**

It is my pleasure, Honourable Members, to report to you and the people of KwaZulu-Natal, that we are continuing with the proper implementation of the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) where we are ensuring that throngs of learners from qualifying schools are receiving nutritious meals daily.

This programme, for the longest time, has seen multitudes of learners from the poorest communities benefit from getting nutritious food daily, thereby improving learner attendance and participation in class, reducing learner absenteeism rate, and providing support to learners from child-headed households and contributing to the overall improvement of learner attainment. The progress made in the improvement of the lives of learners and increasing the participation continued at a steady rate of around **1%** over the strategic cycle.

To ensure that we increase the contribution we are making in taking care of our learners, we have gone one step further and introduced provision of breakfast to **3 877** primary schools accounting for **72%** of participating schools and **1 407 634** learners accounting for **60%** of participating learners.

In 2025/26 financial year, the NSNP shall have an operating budget of **R2 335 101 000** to provide nutritious meals to learners for **200** days at a rate of **R4,02c** per learner per day for secondary school learners and **R3,80c** per learner per day for primary / special and combined school learners.

The department has reached this budget after numerous engagements with the Department of Basic Education to assist with more funding. The department appreciates the additional **R33,3million** top-up from the Department of Basic Education and a further **R3,4million** from Provincial Treasury which has seen the allocation increase from the initial preliminary allocation of **R2 298 299 000** to **R2 335 101 000**. This budget shall also cater for the payment of **R1,900** stipends for Volunteer Food Handlers, conducting nutrition education activities which include advocating healthy living through obesity day, commemoration of Nelson Mandela Day, advocating World School Milk Day and many other advocacy programmes. The funds shall also be utilised for the payment of salaries for officials who manage and monitor the implementation of the programme.

Whilst this allocation is still not sufficient for the implementation of the programme, since the kitchen equipment and utensils cannot be catered for, the Department will strive to ensure that all learners are provided with nutritious meals throughout all school days.

Despite these challenges we are continuing to improve the program which honors the legacy of our first democratic president, Nelson Mandela who emphasized the importance of addressing fundamental human needs, including food and education, for a better society. His vision included ensuring that all children, including those in need, have access to proper nutrition and education. He recognized that a healthy, well-nourished child is better equipped to learn, grow, and contribute to society.

**Providing support to Districts to Propel KZN to the Top**

Honourable Members, one of the reasons behind the performance of the Department is the proper functioning of our Districts and their ability to provide, manage and monitor teaching and learning activities. It is for this reason that the Department is providing support to all Districts with the view of providing effective teaching and learning and improving the **National Senior Certificate (NSC)** results.

To this end, the Department has adopted an approach that supports the learners that are at risk through the supplementary tuition programmes. It is worth mentioning that the supplementary tuition programmes also target high flyers to maintain our position of producing the highest number of distinctions in the country.

After the NSC results for the 2024 academic year, we did not sit on our laurels or bask in the shade of our glory that came with the good performance in the 2024 academic year, we conducted an analysis which showed that in fact we could have done better than what we did. Our analysis showed that we still have a number of schools that need our urgent support in order to improve their academic performance.

The districts are being given support based on their performance in the 2024 academic year. We have already met some Districts and we are continuing to visit the ones we have not met to provide them with the support that will take this Province to the top. We also visited 14 schools that achieved 40% and below and assisted them with curriculum delivery and curriculum management workshops. As a result, during the 2024 NSC results,12 of these schools improved significantly, many obtained 80% and above, while only 2 schools remained below 50%.

We have proven that these interventions are effective, therefore following the 2024 NSC results, we have already visited schools who performed below 50% and we intend to support at least one school per week, focusing on comprehensive management, governance and curriculum enhancement and management, this includes the accountability session of eleven (11) [King Cetshwayo and Zululand] schools in this category on 10 March 2025.

To ensure common understanding and proper implementation of the BELA Act, we planned and conducted workshops for all districts. A train the trainer model where officials from Governance and Management, Teacher Development, Circuit Management and Employee Relations were trained to further cascade to all SGBs in the districts.

**Addressing the issue of undocumented leaners in the Province**

Honourable Speaker, esteemed colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, one of the most challenging problems that affect the efficiency of our educational system is the prevalence of undocumented learners in our schools.

The latest **2025 Snap Survey** indicates that approximately **149,000 undocumented learners** are attending our schools. This surge underscores the urgent need for action.

Assisting undocumented learners aligns with our primary objective to uphold the strength and fairness of our educational system. Accurate and reliable data are crucial for strategic planning, the fair distribution of resources, and efficient school management.

In collaboration with the Department of Home Affairs, our department is taking the necessary steps to eliminate uncertainties about their presence while streamlining the documentation process, ensuring data accuracy and potentially saving costs by preventing inflated learner numbers.

Our comprehensive plan involves a detailed verification process of undocumented learners across KwaZulu-Natal, starting with a pre-verification phase led by us as the Department of Education, followed by post-verification efforts with the Department of Home Affairs.

One commitment I want to make as far as this matter is concerned, ladies and gentlemen, we will be very relentless in tackling this issue head-on, together, for the sake of our learners and the integrity of our data system. With collaborative efforts, we can create an inclusive environment that offers all learners the opportunity to succeed.

**IMPACT OF HIV/AIDS, LEARNER PREGNANCY AND SCHOOL DROPOUT**

Ladies and gentlemen, and esteemed Members, we stand here today with a full recognition of the massive problem of HIV/AIDS, learner pregnancy and school dropout in the province that are affecting the lives of the school going youth, often limiting their personal growth, their pursuit of rewarding careers and their ambitions, with incalculable impact on South Africa’s socio-economic landscape.

To mitigate the impact of these social ills, the Department has put in place My Life **My Future Campaign** aimed at curbing these social ills through prevention as well as care and support interventions for learners in schools. The interventions have a huge potential to reduce social ills since they are tailored to address their key drivers in the province and have a sharp focus on vulnerable learners. To this end, ladies and gentlemen, **750** out of school youth were recruited as **Learner Support Agents (LSAs)** and empowered with requisite skills and expertise to implement school-based prevention, care and support interventions intended to reduce HIV infections, learner pregnancy and drop out. More than **100 000** vulnerable learners were reached through these interventions by LSAs in hotspot schools across the province with the highest rate of social ills.

As we continue to work towards improving physical and mental health as well as wellbeing of our learners, we recognize the importance of training of **Life Orientation educators** in Comprehensive Sexuality Education to enable them to empower learners with knowledge and skills to protect themselves. We have already empowered more than **4000** of these educators. Further training of these educators is an integral part of our plans.

Through the **Life My Future Peer Education Camps** for boys and girls, we are focusing on instilling positive behaviour change, decision-making and healthy relationships. We will continue with the camps throughout the province but with a strong focus on districts with the highest rate of learner pregnancy, HIV infections and learner drop out. This will include training of school management teams, School Governing Bodies and educators on implementation interventions on care and support for orphans and other vulnerable learners.

To ensure the success of these interventions, we have allocated **a budget of R69 280 000 for their implementation in the 2025/6 financial year**. We believe that every learner deserves access to quality education, and we are committed to making this a reality.

**A Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body**

It is proven that **sports play a vital role in education**, contributing to the overall development of students beyond academics. They help build physical fitness, discipline, teamwork, and character—key traits that support lifelong success.

It is for this reason that as we are continuing to give support to the programme called **Dlala Thursday** where in every school, every Thursday, there must be time dedicated to engaging in sports. We are also delighted to report that this programme will soon be officially launched provincially and that will signal the official start of the programme in all the schools across the province.

We are delighted to share with you, Madam Speaker, that as the sector we are continuing to do very well when it comes to sports. Our teams have represented us in various sporting codes across provinces and made us all proud. We want to build on that momentum and make KwaZulu-Natal a powerhouse not only in terms of education but in sports as well.

We recently celebrated outstanding performances by KwaZulu-Natal schools at the 2025 ABC Motsepe National Schools Choral music Championship (SASCE). Several schools from KZN secured top positions in various categories, including Empangeni High School, Zama High School, and Aquadene Secondary School.

**Budget Allocation**

**The 2025/26 total budget allocation** for department to perform its functions is Sixty-six billion six hundred and ninety million two hundred and six thousand rands **(R66 690 206) as follows:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Budget Allocation Per Program** | | |
| **Program 1:**  **Administration** | R2 707 722 000 | Two Billion Seven Hundred And Seven Million Seven Hundred And Twenty-Two Thousand Rands |
| **Program 2: Public Ordinary School Education** | R 54 786 072 000 | Fifty-Four Billion Seven Hundred And Eighty Six Million And Seventy Two Thousand Rands |
| **Program 3: Independent School Subsidies** | R 75 500 000 | Seventy Five Million Five Hundred Thousand Rands |
| **Program 4:**  **Public Special School Education** | R 1 853 531 000 | One Billion Eight Hundred And Fifty-Three Million Five Hundred And Thirty-One Thousand Rands |
| **Program 5:**  **Early Childhood Development** | R2 266 872 000 | Two Billion Two Hundred And Sixty-Six Million Eight Hundred And Seventy-Two Thousand Rands |
| **Program 6: Infrastructure Development** | R2 822 844 000 | Two Billion Eight Hundred And Twenty-Two Million Eight Hundred And Forty-Four Thousand Rands |
| **Program 7: Examination And education Related Services** | R2 177 665 000 | Two Billion One Hundred And Seventy-Seven Million Six Hundred And Sixty-Five Thousand Rands |
| **TOTAL** | **R66 690 206 000** | Sixty-Six Billion Six Hundred And Ninety Million Two Hundred And Six Thousand Rands |

In Conclusion Honourable Speaker, I would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all members of the School Governing Bodies for their unwavering commitment, dedication, and leadership in supporting our schools.

Let me also thank the management team under the leadership of HOD Ngcobo, and all members of staff in the department for their hard work in supporting teaching and learning in our schools. I am confident that the work we are doing will lead to continued improvements in the learning outcomes of our beloved province.

Last and definitely not least, I thank the Education Portfolio and its members, chaired by Honourable Buthelezi for their support and constructive oversight of the education sector. I thank the support of the Premier and the Provincial Executive for the support.

I want to thank my organisation, the **African National Congress** for entrusting us with the responsibility to champion the implementation of progressive pro-poor policies in government.

Let me also take the opportunity to encourage all South Africans to take full advantage of our hosting of the G20 under the theme **“Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability'**.

The province will also host a number of **G20 meetings**, including the Working Group Meeting on Education. By bringing G20 discussions to the provincial education departments in South Africa, we can leverage international insights and best practices to enhance our education system.

We hereby request the house to support this budget.

I thank you

Ngiyabonga