

**ADDRESS BY THE KZN MEC FOR EDUCATION, MS MBALI FRAZER,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE PROVINCIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE
2023 NSC RESULTS HELD AT THE DURBAN ICC, ON 19 JANUARY
2024**

Sanibonani

Today is a day of jubilation, indeed, a day when the entire province of KwaZulu-Natal stands united in congratulating the Matric Class of 2023 for their remarkable achievements.

Their sterling results are not just a testament to the hard work and dedication of our education collective, but also to the resilience and maturity of the KwaZulu-Natal education system. Just as we stood shoulder-to-shoulder as a collective during challenging times, today, KwaZulu-Natal stands together to congratulate the Class of 2023 for proudly raising the province's flag with an 86.4% pass rate.

For more than a decade, these young people worked tirelessly, with the support of all stakeholders, to bring glory to the land of the founding President of the ANC, Dr Pixley ka Isaka Seme, Dr John Langalibalele Dube uMafukuzela onjengezulu, Inkosi Albert Luthuli, Anton Muziwakhe Lembede, uMam' Victoria Nonyamezelo Mxenge, uMam' Jabu Ndlovu, uMam' Dorothy Nyembe, uMam' Nokuhamba Nyawo, and many others brave men and women who laid their lives on the line so that every South African – irrespective of race, economic status, gender, or background – could have access to their basic human right to education.

Esteemed guests, as we reflect on the past year, we cannot help but characterize 2023 for KwaZulu-Natal as the **Year of the Underdog**.

The term ***underdog*** is not just a label; it embodies the spirit of triumph over adversity. It symbolises the ability to rise above challenges, to overcome obstacles that may seem insurmountable. And today, as we witness the success of the Class of 2023, we see the underdog emerging victorious.

This so-called disadvantaged cohort, as some have described the Class of 2023, has proven to the whole of South Africa and the world that nothing – not the coronavirus, not inclement weather, nor anything else, for that matter – can stand in the way of a determined and hardworking individual.

In the face of financial constraints and devastating storms that plagued the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education in 2023, the commitment and dedication of everyone—from the Head of Department, uMapholoba, and all the officials to the educators and learners in the classroom—never wavered for even a second.

As President Thabo Mbeki once observed, it is during times of adversity that a true character is revealed.

Ladies and gentlemen, today I want to reaffirm that as the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, we remain resilient, tenacious, and unwavering in our pursuit of excellence.

Minister Motshekga, the results that we are presenting today are the outcome of the hard work and commitment of both our educators, district teams, and office-based officials to the implementation of the 2023 Provincial Academic Improvement Plan.

One of the objectives of our plan was to increase the provincial pass percentage from 2022's 83% to a maximum of 100%. This goal was in line with the directive of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, which stated that no district should obtain anything less than 85%. This directive served as our compass, and we were determined not only to achieve this target but also to improve the quality of our results.

To ensure improvement in our education outcomes, the Head of Department implemented accountability sessions for all schools that obtained a 40% pass rate and below in the 2022 NSC examinations. The aim of this programme was to eliminate the category of performance below 40% in the 2023 National Senior Certificate exams.

As part of ensuring that our learners are well-equipped for all their assessments, the Department also rolled out a number of initiatives to support both learners and educators. All our districts also hosted winter and spring tuition classes across the province which sought to facilitate effective curriculum coverage and revision.

Ladies and gentlemen today is a day of celebration as the province of KwaZulu-Natal salutes the Class of 2023 for the historic 86.4% pass rate – with a 3.4% increase from 83% obtained in 2022.

Of the **167 247** (one hundred and sixty-seven thousand, two hundred and forty-seven) candidates who sat for the 2023 NSC examination; **136 366** (one hundred and thirty-six thousand, three hundred and sixty-six) passed.

Distinguished guests, we are pleased to report that KwaZulu-Natal province continues to contribute the highest number of candidates who sit for and pass the National Senior Certificate examinations in the country.

As aligned with the objectives of our Academic Improvement Plan, the number of schools achieving a 100% pass rate saw a notable increase, rising from **214** in 2022 to **246** in 2023.

Our efforts to eliminate the 40% and below category of performance are yielding positive results. Consequently, we successfully reduced the number of schools that performed below 40% from **29** in 2022 to **18** in 2023.

Ladies and gentlemen, the results have shown a significant improvement across our 12 districts, with all of them performing at 80% and above.

Could all our district directors please stand and wave as I call out your district.

The overall pass percentage per district is as follows:

- In the first position, we have the uMkhanyakude District, led by Mr Motha, which proved the naysayers wrong and demonstrated its true potential by achieving a 90% pass rate.
- Hot on its heels is the Ugu District, led by Mr Sibiya, with an 89.5% pass rate.
- They are followed by the iLembe District, led by Dr Madondo, with 88.58%, marking an impressive 5.49% increase from 2022.
- In the fourth position, we have Zululand, led by Mr Ndlovu, with an 87.16% pass rate.
- In addition to maintaining its record of not having a single school achieving less than 40%, the Harry Gwala District, which led by Ms Ntombela, closed the Top 5 with an 87.05% pass rate.
- In the sixth place, we have the Amajuba District, led by Mr Nzama, with an 87% pass rate.
- Recording the highest increase of 7.51% from 2022's 79.08%, uMzinyathi, led by Mr Kheswa, is our most improved district with an 86.59% pass rate.
- Our sister districts from eThekweni sit side by side and refuse to be separated. Umlazi, led by Mrs Mahlambi, takes position eight (8) with 86.01%, while Pinetown, led by another Mr Kheswa, follows with 85.6%.
- We then have uMgungundlovu District, led by Mr Mabinza, which obtained 85.06%
- At number eleven (11) is the King Cetshwayo District, led by Ms Nzama, with 83.4%

- And lastly, with an 82.93% pass rate is the uThukela District which is led by Mrs Mokoena.

Congratulations to all of them!

Ladies and gentlemen, our bachelor passes have increased from **61 856** (sixty-one thousand, eight hundred and fifty-six) in 2021 to **69 849** (sixty-nine thousand, eight hundred and forty-nine) in 2022 and further to **72 099** (seventy-two thousand and ninety-nine) in 2023.

The Class of 2023 also recorded **43 769** (forty-three thousand, seven hundred and sixty-nine) diploma passes while the number of higher certificates decreased from **22 560** (twenty-two thousand, five hundred and sixty) in 2022 to **20 435** (twenty thousand, four hundred and thirty-five) in 2023.

Programme Director, allow me to emphasise that our aim as the Department is to see fewer and fewer of our candidates exit the system with higher certificates because we know that bachelor passes place them in a better position to pursue their studies and other opportunities post-matric level.

As stated in the 2007 ANC Economic Transformation Policy Discussion Document, the most effective weapon our developing nation has against inequality, poverty, and unemployment is education.

Ladies and gentlemen, all 10 of our special schools performed at 80% and above, with five of them obtaining a 100% pass rate.

The 100% achievers are:

- Vuleka School for the Deaf in the King Cetshwayo District
- Mason Lincoln in Umlazi District
- AM Moolla Spes Nova in the Pinetown District
- As well as KwaThintwa School for the Deaf and VA Naik School for the Deaf, also in the Pinetown District

Our schools in correctional services centers - Qalakabusha Secondary, Usethubeni Youth, and Sicebengolwazi Secondary - all achieved a 100% pass rate.

To the Class of 2023, as we collectively applaud you on this memorable Friday morning, I want to take this moment to remind you that your success today is not just about the marks on a piece of paper. It is about the journey you travelled, the challenges you faced, and the determination to overcome them. You have not just passed a test, but you have conquered a trial, and this triumph will stay with you throughout your lives.

I also want you to know that your success is not yours alone; it is a triumph for your families, your educators, your communities, and for the legacy of those who fought for education as a fundamental right. As you step into

the next chapter of your lives, remember the lessons learned during this journey – the power of resilience, the strength in unity, and the courageous spirit of the underdog.

When you've made a success of your own lives, please go back to your communities and schools to help in lifting others.

Remember the words of the 'Mother of Black Freedom,' uMam' Charlotte Maxeke, who once said:

“Kill that spirit of self and do not live above your people. If you can rise, bring some with you...Do away with fearful jealousy, kill that spirit and love one another as brothers and sisters.”

To those who did not get the results that they had hoped for, please do not despair - your success might be slightly delayed, but it's definitely not denied. The Department has a Second Chance Programme that provides support to candidates who want to rewrite subjects.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we celebrate the success of the Class of 2023, it is also fitting that today we honour some of our dedicated, creative, and outstanding educators. These educators are our provincial winners in the 2022 National Teaching Awards.

As the people of KwaZulu-Natal, we owe them and thousands of our educators across the province a great debt of gratitude for their courage, determination, and unwavering commitment to the delivery of quality

education in all our schools. Siyabonga kakhulu bothisha bethu ngokuzinikela kwenu kulomkhakha wokuthuthukisa intsha yethu ngokubahlomisa ngemfundo eseqophelweni eliphezulu.

The critical role of educators as the backbone of any successful education system can never be overstated. As educators, your responsibilities go beyond just educating our learners. You selflessly take on roles as nurses, trauma counsellors, and social workers when our learners need help. You are also tasked with moulding young men and women who will one day lead nations and world organizations. This means our future as mankind is in the hands of educators.

Congratulations to all the finalists and winners of the 2023 National Teaching Awards!

Mphathi wohlelo, ngithanda ukuthatha lelithuba ngidlulise ukubonga kakhulu kuwo wonke umuntu obebambisene nathi ukuvikela izimpilo zabafundi nothisha bethu kanye nesithunzi sezivivinyo zika 2023.

I want to thank His Majesty, The King, who has been a steadfast advocate for education in all His initiatives and for continuously encouraging our youth to strive for academic and lifelong success.

A heartfelt gratitude to our Minister of Basic Education, Honourable Motshekga, and Deputy Minister, Dr Mhaule, as well as the Honourable Premier, Mrs. Dube-Ncube, and her entire Executive for their unwavering support and invaluable guidance.

My appreciation also goes to the Speaker of the Legislature, Honourable Boyce, and all Members of the Legislature for the critical oversight role they play through initiatives such as the school functionality program.

Special thanks go to Honourable Sonjica and the entire Portfolio Committee on Education for their invaluable guidance and contributions to strengthening our education system.

A special acknowledgment goes to KZN Director-General, Dr Mkhize, for your unwavering support.

To the Head of the Department of Education, Mapholoba, the top management, and all officials in the Department, thank you for your tireless efforts.

The success of the 2023 NSC Examination and the overall improvement in our education system would not have been possible without the diligence of district administration, the examination and assessment team, as well as our dedicated school managers.

Thank you to all our circuit managers, district directors, and subject advisors - your efforts have truly made 2023 a year of hope and success.

Ladies and gentlemen, no matter how good the Department's plans and strategies were for the Class of 2023, none of them would have been successfully implemented without the educators.

Our educators are the true champions of our education system who do their best each and every day to ensure that every learner has a fighting chance.

A sincere thank you to organized labour and school governing body formations for their consistent and meaningful contributions to our mission of providing quality education.

To the ruling party, the African National Congress, thank you for the trust placed in us and the opportunity to serve in the Department of Education.

To our social partners - the business community, generous sponsors, the non-profit organisations and media houses - your support has been invaluable, and I hope we can continue this collaboration in 2024.

I extend our appreciation to izinduna and amakhosi for working alongside us and our educators to ensure that our learners are not deprived of their constitutional right to education.

Sibonga kakhulu nakumabandla ezenkolo alokhu eqhubeke njalo ngokusilekelela ngomkhuleko kuzo zonke izinselelo esibhekana nazo ezikoleni zethu.

To the parents and guardians who entrusted us with the vital responsibility of educating their children, your support has been crucial, and we recognize the sacrifices many of you made for the future of these young minds.

Sinxusa nabazali babafundi abangatholanga imiphumela abebeyifisa ukuba bangadikibali ngoba lisekhona elinye ithuba lokuthi baphinde babhale izifundo zabo.

Finally, to my family, thank you for your unwavering support and unconditional understanding. Your encouragement has been my pillar of strength.

Before I conclude, I want to leave you with the words of the great Olympic swimmer, Michael Phelps, who once said:

"There will be obstacles. There will be doubters. There will be mistakes. But with hard work, there are no limits."

Let us look to the future with optimism and determination.

The Class of 2023 has shown us that even in the face of adversity, success is possible.

Together, let us continue to strive for excellence and empower the next generation to overcome challenges and reach new heights.

Congratulations once again to the remarkable Class of 2023!

Ngiyabonga!!