

02 FEBRUARY 2026

MINISTERS GWARUBE AND MALATSI PARTNER WITH MICROSOFT SOUTH AFRICA TO JOINTLY HANDOVER DIGITAL LAB AT SECONDARY SCHOOL

The Minister of Basic Education, Ms Siviwe Gwarube and the Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, Mr Solly Malatsi jointly handed over a newly refurbished Digital Lab at **Phefeni Secondary School** in Soweto, marking an important milestone in government's efforts to expand digital access, strengthen teaching and learning, and prepare young South Africans for a rapidly changing, technology-driven world.

The Digital Lab, made possible through a partnership with Microsoft South Africa and supporting partners including Jozi My Jozi, represents a tangible investment in the future of learners and educators at Phefeni Secondary School and the broader Soweto community. This handover reflects a shared commitment by both the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies to ensure that schools are not only safe and dignified spaces of learning but are also equipped to participate meaningfully in the digital economy.

Both Ministers noted that access to reliable digital infrastructure is no longer a luxury, but a necessity. Digital labs such as this one open new pathway for learners to develop critical digital skills, enhance literacy and numeracy through technology-enabled learning, and gain exposure to tools that are increasingly essential in higher education and the world of work.

Acting Director – Communication and Research: Terence Khala – 081 758 1546

Media Liaison Officer: Lukhanyo Vangqa 066 302 1533

DCDT Media Liaison Officer: Kwena Moloto – 060 902 7077

While acknowledging the progress represented by today's handover, the Ministers reiterated that many schools across the country still face serious infrastructure challenges, including unsafe buildings, overcrowding, and limited access to learning resources. Partnerships with the private sector are therefore critical in accelerating the pace of change and addressing historical backlogs.

The Ministers emphasised that this initiative is not a handover to government alone, but to the learners, educators and the community of Phefeni Secondary School. The success of this Digital Lab will depend on collective ownership, responsible use, and a shared commitment to protecting and maintaining the facility so that it continues to benefit future generations. Infrastructure, the Ministers stressed, must be matched by quality teaching, strong school leadership, active community involvement, and disciplined, motivated learners. Technology is a powerful enabler, but its impact depends on how effectively it is integrated into teaching and learning.

Speaking at the handover, Mr Asif Vallley, Microsoft's National Technology Officer reflected to say "Phefeni Secondary School has always been a symbol of courage and possibility for Soweto. By modernising this computer lab and creating brighter, more engaging classrooms, we're not just upgrading facilities – we're opening doors. This lab will help prepare learners with the digital skills they need for the jobs of the future. Together with our partners, we want every learner who walks into this space to feel that their future in the digital economy is real, and that they have the skills and support to step into it."

Acting Director – Communication and Research: Terence Khala – 081 758 1546

Media Liaison Officer: Lukhanyo Vangqa 066 302 1533

DCCDT Media Liaison Officer: Kwena Moloto – 060 902 7077



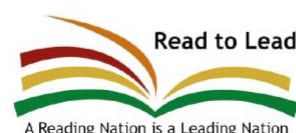
basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**communications
& digital technologies**

Department:
Communications & Digital Technologies
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



The handover also speaks to South Africa's broader development trajectory. With Africa projected to have the largest working-age population in the world by 2050, investment in digital skills at school level is essential to unlocking future productivity, innovation and inclusive economic growth. The Ministers called on learners to use the Digital Lab responsibly, to be curious, ambitious and committed to their studies. Educators were encouraged to leverage the new tools to innovate in the classroom, support every learner, and nurture critical thinking and confidence.

ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION AND DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Acting Director – Communication and Research: Terence Khala – 081 758 1546

Media Liaison Officer: Lukhanyo Vangqa 066 302 1533

DCDT Media Liaison Officer: Kwena Moloto – 060 902 7077



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**communications
& digital technologies**

Department:
Communications & Digital Technologies
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

