

SPECIAL MATRIC EDITION

JANUARY 2025

# CLASS OF 2024 SHATTERS ALL RECORDS



**INSIDE** EDUCATION  
*Inspiring Minds*

**Telkom**



basic education  
Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

# Celebrating excellence - meet the top achievers of SA's 2024 matric exams

Johnathan Paoli



2024 NSC National Top Learner Owethu Shangase  
- Photo:Eddie Mtsweni



2024 NSC National Top Learner Ryvan Ebrahim -  
Photo:Eddie Mtsweni

For 2024, two matriculants have been honoured with the National Top Learner Awards by the Basic Education Department. While it has not always been plain sailing for Owethu Shangase and Ryvan Ebrahim, the two attribute their success to the support systems around them and their ability to dream big.

Shangase, 17, is from the John Wesley Kosi Bay Private School in Umhlabuyalingana in northern KwaZulu-Natal, and Ebrahim, 19, is from Pinelands High School in Cape Town. Shangase achieved a total of eight distinctions in the 2024, while Ebrahim passed with nine distinctions.

Shangase is described by the department as a spectacularly driven young man who is the product of "when consistency meets inspiration".

His academic career boasts an impressive first place from Grade 3 to Grade 12, and comprises a full house of distinctions achieved for the entire FET phase (grades 10-12). He skipped two grades due to his aptitude for academics, especially Mathematics.

Speaking to Inside Education, Shangase expressed his immense gratitude and disbelief at his achievement.

"Being the top performer in the country has left me overwhelmed and humbled. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine this," he said.

Shangase revealed that procrastination and inconsistency were among his biggest challenges for Grade 12.

"I planned a lot, but struggled to follow through. This affected my confidence, making me doubt my ability to succeed," he admitted.

Despite these hurdles, his determination and support from his family, who ensured that he had the necessary resources, helped him persevere.

Among his proudest moments was becoming the valedictorian at his school, achieving first place in every subject with a remarkable 96% average.

And securing second place in a provincial Inter-District Olympiad reinforced his belief in the value of hard work.

Looking ahead, Shangase plans to study Actuarial Sciences at the University of Cape Town, aspiring to become a fellow



member of the Actuarial Society of South Africa and possibly a chief risk officer in the future.

He envisions a South Africa where funding and educational resources reach the most disadvantaged communities.

His advice to future matriculants is to set goals and persevere.

"Have clear goals, work diligently and help others along the way. Collaborating and supporting peers only brightens the path for everyone," Shangase said.

He also emphasises the importance of prayer and maintaining humility throughout the journey.

For Ebrahim, who was the head boy at Pinelands, the recognition is "unbelievable and overwhelming".

"I'm so grateful to have been honoured in this way, and it's all by the grace of God," he told Inside Education.

Described by the department as an exceptional, resilient young man, in his Grade 10 exams he faced significant challenges when his home underwent renovations. Undeterred, he devised a plan to wake up early and study in quieter places like the school library.

Ebrahim, who had an aggregate of 97.57%, acknowledges

that his matric year was not without its challenges, saying just like other students, there were moments when he was overwhelmed.

"I decided to step back, remind myself that my best was good enough, and leaned on the support of my family and friends," he shared.

His ability to manage stress and maintain focus helped him navigate the intense academic year.

Ebrahim plans to study Data Science, which he describes as a fusion of maths, computer science and business, also at UCT.

"It's an area I'm passionate about and one that aligns with South Africa's growing need for innovation," he explained.

The stories of Shangase and Ebrahim serve as a beacon of hope for future matriculants, demonstrating that with vision, effort and resilience, greatness is achievable.

The department celebrated the achievements of these exceptional matriculants and 37 others at a ceremony in Johannesburg, recognising the transformative impact of their hard work.

As they embark on their academic and professional journeys, Shangase and Ebrahim stand as shining examples of South Africa's potential and the power of education to shape the future.



DBE Minister Siviwe Gwarube, Ryyan Ebrahim, Owethu Shangase and Deputy Minister Mhaule - Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

# Education DG praises teachers, parents for supporting matriculants

Thebe Mabanga



DBE Director-general Mathanzima Mveli - Photo:Eddie Mtsweni

The performances of learners from poor backgrounds, as well as the sacrifices of teachers, learners and broader communities were the most commendable features of this year's matric results.

That is according to Basic Education director-general Mathanzima Mveli, who spoke shortly after giving the technical presentation of the matric results of the Class of 2024, who achieved a record pass rate of 87,3%.

Mveli spoke of teachers "who know of no weekends and no holidays" in order to offer extra lessons and camps, as well as parents who gave up their time and other resources to support learners in camps by offering services like security and catering.

"The broader support from civil society in order for learners to receive extra support is something I have never seen," he said.

This year's matric exam had a fulltime enrolment of 724,156 candidates and 155,948 part-time candidates. This group started school in 2013 as 1,2 million. A total of 740,876 matriculated, which is a retention rate of 61,6 %.

But Mveli noted that this was not due to the widely held belief that there was a high drop-out rate.

"The problem is not high drop-out, it is high failure rate and repeating grades," he said, suggesting that most learners were still in the system and would reach matric, just not in the envisaged record time.

A total of 572,338 learners, more than 75% of the candidates, were grant recipients.

Mveli attributed this statistic to the support offered by government.

"Government offers a safety net."

This group of learners started their high school careers in 2020, the year of the Covid-19 outbreak.

Mveli said they have benefited from "extraordinary support" since the pandemic in the form of extra classes, support for former model C schools, a wider range of subjects, more intense monitoring and the use of data to track progress.

The pass rate for no fee school was 85,8%, while fee paying school achieved 90,1 % and independent schools achieved 91,9%. The pass rate among males and females

was almost similar at 87,5% for females and 87,1 % for males,



while the bachelor pass rate stood at 47,8 %.

An impressive feature of these results was the record low enrolment and absentee rate.

In 2017, of the learners who were registered for Grade 12 by October, 15% did not write their final exam. This year the figure of absentees was only 2,63%.

Mweli attributed this improvement to the confidence that learners have developed in their chances of passing.

“You are unlikely to go write if you feel you are going to fail,” he explained.

Government says it had to contend with a number of challenges in the staging and marking of these exams. These range from inclement weather such as floods and heat waves, to water and electricity supply challenges. There was also the challenge of marker wellbeing as well as food handling and hygiene.

To deal with the weather, government provided daily forecasts and enlisted the support of the South African National Defence Force. It also allowed learners to use accessible exam centres in the event of floods, for instance.

Marking centres were supplied with backup power and water tanks, while markers were given access to psycho sociological support to aid their overall health and wellbeing. Stringent food preparation and handling measures were also put in place.

Mweli used the occasion to pay tribute to all education ministers who have served during the country’s democracy, starting with the recently deceased Prof. Sibusiso Bengu, the late Kader Asmal and Angie Motshekga as well as former directors-general Thami Mseleku and Duncan Hindle.

He also paid tribute to the four educators and markers who lost their lives during the marking period.



Ministerial Breakfast honours class of 2024 Top 39 Achievers - Photo: Andile Mbele

# Matric Done? What's Next? Explore your career options for 2025 with us!

Your future is full of possibilities! Whether you're heading to university or exploring other pathways, EWSETA is here to guide you.

Interested in tertiary education? Find career-aligned qualifications. Didn't get a university pass? Explore skills development and training opportunities.

Visit the EWSETA Career Portal and start building your tomorrow – today  
[www.ewsetacareers.org.za](http://www.ewsetacareers.org.za)



Creating a Sustainable Tomorrow – Today.



# Telkom Foundation head prioritises access to technology for learners living with disabilities

Dineo Bendile



Telkom Foundation Head Judy Vilakazi - Photo: Supplied

**T**he development of learners living with disabilities and special learning needs is set to become one of the priority areas for the Telkom Foundation, as its new head, Judy Vilakazi, endeavours to broaden the scope of the organisation's focus.

Speaking to Inside Education, Vilakazi expressed her passion for ensuring that learners living with disabilities were brought on par with their able-bodied peers through the use of technology.

While this was always an area of interest for Vilakazi, it was during a visit to the Ekurhuleni School For The Deaf last year that her mission to invest in the development of learners living with disabilities was solidified.

Vilakazi recognised how many learners were extremely bright, but lacked the necessary resources to support their natural gifts. This realisation led to the Telkom Foundation donating coding

and robotics kits to the school.

"Deaf learners primarily rely on visual and tactile methods for their education. Equipping them with this skill provides the learners with hands-on experience in manufacturing and engineering," Vilakazi said.

"What I am passionate about is to make sure that our reach also caters for those learners with special educational needs and those living with disabilities. That is very close to my heart".

"In as much as we are servicing quintile one to three schools and it's all learners who are coming from disadvantaged communities, but my big drive is to say let us also cater for learners living with disabilities who are always placed at a disadvantage simply because of how they are differently abled".



In addition to this, Vilakazi believes companies have a responsibility to ensure the creation of an inclusive workforce, by playing a more active role in the development of youth living with disabilities.

“It’s easy for organisations to say we are doing this or that, but most of the time they are catering for able-bodied [learners] and we are all fighting for the same group,” Vilakazi said.

Latest studies by the Commission on Employment Equity reveal that disability representation in the South African workforce stands at 1.1%, which falls short of the targeted two percent.

Vilakazi said a transformation of this outlook would only be possible if more companies developed learners living with disabilities to give them an equal chance at participating in the workforce.

“Companies are pushing to make sure they meet the quota of two percent, but if we are not developing [learners living with disabilities] from an early age, where are we going to get those employees?” she asked.

Since taking the reins at the Telkom Foundation in February 2024, Vilakazi said her focus was on continuing the work of existing programmes that have helped the foundation make its mark as a leading investor in South Africa’s education sector.

One such programme is its flagship Connected Schools Programme, which was launched in 2009. The programme provides ICT support to schools and encourages the integration of technology in teaching and learning.

It comprises a number of components which include the provision of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) devices and equipment, interactive and gamified educational content, fibre connectivity to schools and teacher training.

The teacher training and support component has seen more than 6000 teachers upskilled in the past five years.

“The programme has been able to move the majority of the teachers from level one and two [ICT] skills, and some of them are now sitting at level three to five, which is quite a big achievement,” Vilakazi revealed.

“So now those same teachers are able to improve from just being aware of what ICT is and its basic use, to actually incorporating ICT into their teaching and learning environment”.

Since the introduction of the programme, more than 2000 South African schools have benefited from the ICT support provided by the foundation.

Learner development is also an area of great investment for the Telkom Foundation, particularly as it pertains to the providing support in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects.

South Africa has been flagged to expect an increasing critical skills shortage, due to do declining rates at which learners are pursuing STEM subjects. To combat this, the Telkom Foundation in partnership with Lightbulb Edtech, provides a zero-rated platform that supplements learning in maths, science, accounting and English among other subjects.

The aim of the programme is not only to improve STEM performance in South African high schools, but also to introduce learners to exciting career opportunities available to them in STEM fields.

While Vilakazi believed awareness levels about STEM-related careers were still low, she said the Telkom Found-

ation was doing all it could to introduce learners to the world of opportunities open to them in the sciences.

For those who have already exited the basic education system, Telkom has launched TelkomLearn, a platform that provides quality ICT-related courses through accredited partners. “Young people have the option of choosing courses they can enroll to and build their careers. Some of these courses are free and some of them need you to pay,” Vilakazi said.

“These courses are from credible institutions like IBM and Microsoft,” she added.

The courses can either be used as a means of upskilling existing ICT capabilities, or providing entry-level skills that students can use to get their foot into the world of tech.

Vilakazi has especially encouraged young women to take up opportunities in STEM streams and not limit themselves out of fear.

As a new digital era takes hold, bringing innumerable changes to the workings of the world, Vilakazi said her overarching goal was to ensure that as many people as possible would benefit from the digital economy.

“Making sure that everyone can profit from this digital transition and making sure that everyone is informed about the different opportunities that exist within this ICT space... that is my vision,” Vilakazi said.



# Thandeka Ntuli: A journey of perseverance and optimism

Johnathan Paoli



Telkom Foundation 2024 Beneficiary Thandeka Ntuli - Photo: Supplied

Thandeka Ntuli's story is one of hope, perseverance, and the unwavering belief in pushing towards one's goals. She recently celebrated a milestone in her academic journey, expressing her happiness and excitement over her achievements. However, her success was not without its struggles, especially in overcoming challenges with English during her time at St. Mary's, a Johannesburg school known for its rigorous academic demands.

Reflecting on her journey, Ntuli acknowledges the importance of effort and commitment. It wasn't until she found her strengths in Mathematics that her academic trajectory began to shift. Her aptitude for problem-solving and logical thinking sparked her confidence and became the foundation for her academic success.

In celebrating her achievements, Ntuli expresses gratitude at the role played by the Telkom Foundation in assisting her on her journey. "I would not have gotten where I am today, if not for the Foundation. Telkom has made my dream of studying Computer Science a reality," she says.

Ntuli shares that one of the keys to her progress has been learning to prioritise the important things and advises striking a balance between focusing on critical tasks and challenging oneself to aim higher. Her guiding principle, "always push to your goals," reflects her resilience, even when the path seems difficult.

Her commitment to trying, regardless of obstacles, has paved the way for her to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science at the University of Cape Town – an exciting opportunity to combine her analytical skills with innovation, and she looks forward to contributing to the fast-evolving tech industry.

Ntuli's story is a testament to the power of determination and optimism and demonstrates that while challenges are inevitable, perseverance and a positive outlook can transform obstacles into steppingstones for success. With her focus and drive, Ntuli is poised to make her mark in the world of technology and beyond.



# Kabelo Monageng: An Aspiring Attorney Overcoming Financial Barriers

Johnathan Paoli



Telkom Foundation 2024 Beneficiary Kabelo Monageng - Photo: Supplied

**K**abelo Monageng, an 18-year-old from Alexandra township in Johannesburg, is a shining example of perseverance and determination. He recently completed his National Senior Certificate exams with an impressive six distinctions and is now set to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Law at the University of Pretoria.

Throughout his academic journey, Monageng has faced numerous challenges, including financial barriers that could have hindered his aspirations. However, his dedication to excellence and support from the Telkom Foundation and the Alexandra Education Committee bursary programme helped him overcome these obstacles during high school.

"I am thankful that the Foundation not only financed my education, but also shaped me into the determined and passionate individual I am today," Monageng says.

He says diligence, determination and hard work are principles that have carried him, principles that not only enabled him to achieve academic success but have also become the foundation of his future ambitions.

His goal is to become an attorney, a dream he is determined to realise despite the significant financial hurdles that continue to challenge him. Monageng expressed his gratitude for the support he has received from the Telkom Foundation and his commitment to excelling in his studies.

"To be chosen as a worthy candidate is an honour and privilege," Monageng says, "I aim to show that it will not be in vain. With the aid of this programme, the sky will not only be the limit but a platform to reach beyond."

As Monageng embarks on this next chapter, his story underscores the transformative power of education and financial support in breaking barriers for talented young individuals. His journey is a testament to the potential that can be unlocked when determination meets opportunity, inspiring others to pursue their dreams against all odds..

## LEVEL UP NOW



Empower yourself with free courses from **TelkomLearn**

Course Examples

- ▶ Agile Explorer
- ▶ ACA Cloud Computing Fundamentals
- ▶ Applied Data Science with Python
- ▶ Fundamentals of digital marketing
- ▶ Artificial Intelligence Fundamentals

The digital age is here, and the demand for tech skills is growing rapidly. TelkomLearn is your gateway to staying ahead.

Visit [www.telkomlearn.co.za](http://www.telkomlearn.co.za) and start your journey today!

TelkomLEARN

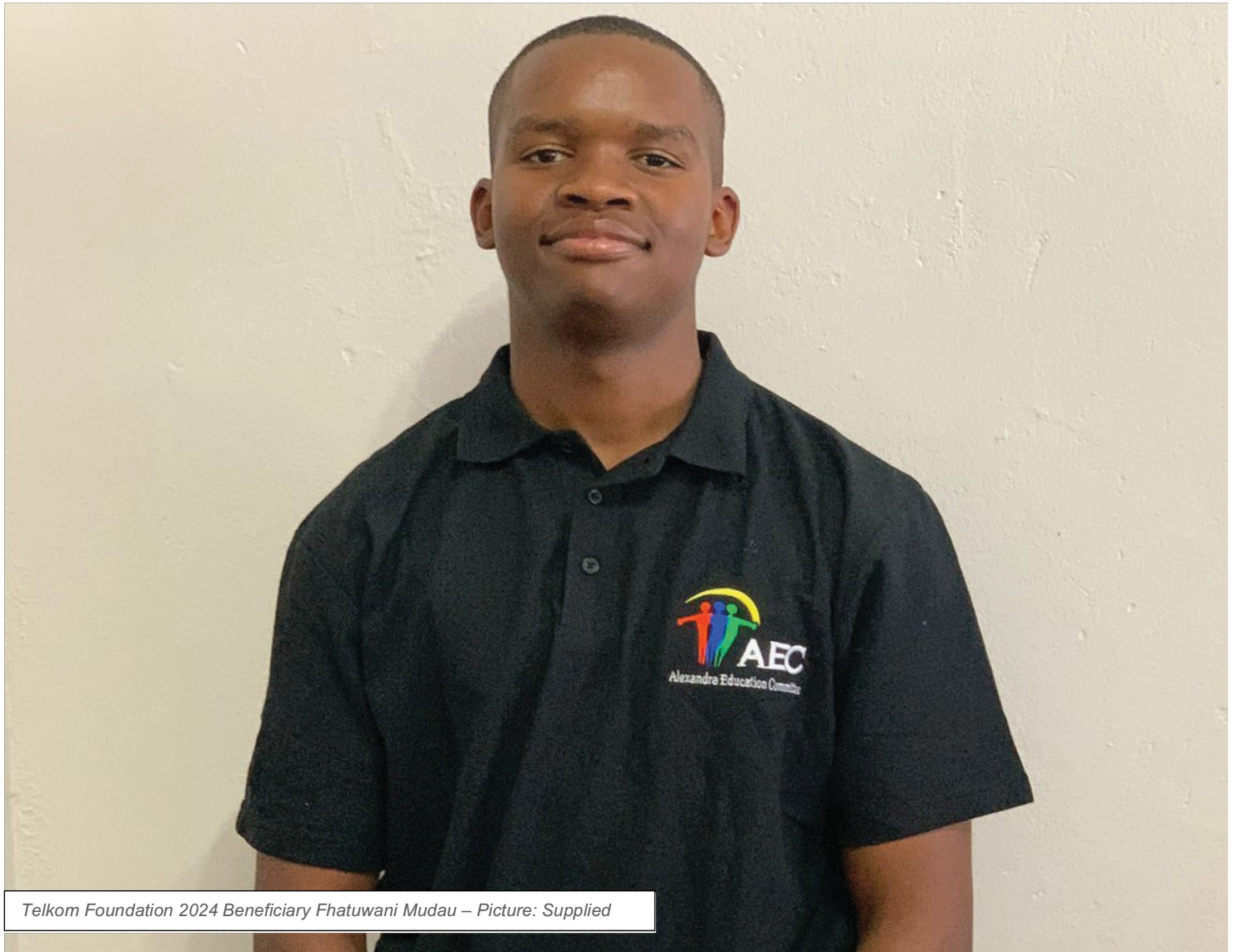


**Telkom**



# Fhatuwani Mudau – Achieves success despite numerous challenges

Johnathan Paoli



Telkom Foundation 2024 Beneficiary Fhatuwani Mudau – Picture: Supplied

**F**hatuwani Mudau, an extraordinary achiever, recently completed his academic journey with remarkable success, earning seven distinctions and an impressive overall average of 89%. His outstanding performance includes scoring 84% in English and Mathematics, 86% in Accounting, 89% in Life Orientation, 90% in Business Studies, 92% in History, and an incredible 98% in IsiZulu.

However, Mudau's journey to success was not without its challenges. He faced significant mental health struggles, primarily stemming from academic and familial pressures, as well as his own relentless pursuit of perfection. But he demonstrated resilience and a commitment to improving his physical and mental well-being. With substantial assistance from the Telkom Foundation, his efforts to maintain a balance between academic excellence and personal health have paid off.

Now pursuing a Chartered Accounting degree at the University of Cape Town, Mudau envisions a future in the corporate world, where his determination and strong work ethic will undoubtedly shine.

He emphasises the importance of a conducive working environment, particularly one that fosters meaningful interactions between teachers and learners, as well as the support he received from the Foundation, which he credits as a vital factor in his success.

"Just keep believing in yourself; that has been a guiding principle throughout my journey. I got here through believing in myself as well as support from Telkom to trust in my capabilities, even during the most challenging times," he says.

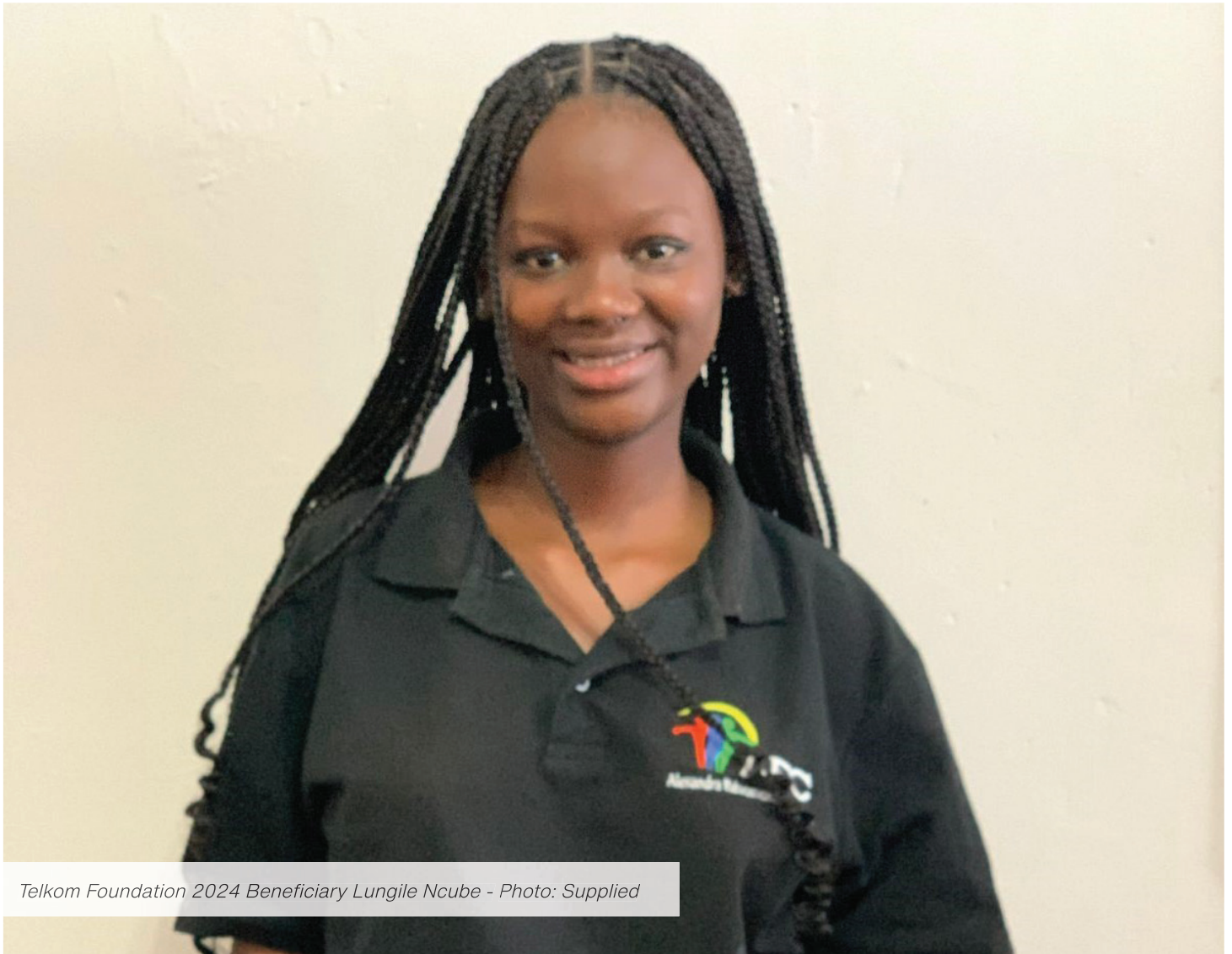
Mudau's aspirations don't end with accounting. He is also passionate about pursuing an LLB degree, with a focus on criminal law and dreams of becoming a defender of justice, using his knowledge and skills to advocate for those in need.

His story is one of perseverance, self-belief, and resilience. Mudau's achievements inspire many, proving that with determination and the right mindset, it's possible to overcome obstacles and achieve greatness.



# Lungile Ncube: Time management important for achieving results

Johnathan Paoli



Telkom Foundation 2024 Beneficiary Lungile Ncube - Photo: Supplied

Lungile Ncube, a recent matriculant, shared insights into her journey through a demanding final school year, highlighting the challenges of balancing academic responsibilities and the importance of support from programmes offered by the Telkom Foundation.

Her story sheds light on the broader pressures faced by high school learners and the need for institutional support.

One of Ncube's proudest achievements was earning second place in her matric class, a testament to her dedication and hard work. However, she admits that the journey was far from easy.

"Matric was not like the other grades," she explains.

"No matter how hard I tried, it required an immense amount of work in terms of time management and preparing for exams and portfolios. The pressure would have been worse, without the help of the Foundation."

She emphasises the importance of setting realistic goals and warns against putting excessive pressure on oneself. "If you put too much pressure, you don't get the best results," Ncu-

be advises, reflecting her belief in the value of balance and self-compassion.

Driven by a passion for helping people, she is now pursuing a nursing degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her career choice aligns with her empathetic nature and desire to make a positive impact on others' lives.

Ncube says that schools need to address the heavy workload placed on students and consider strategies that allow learners to focus on quality over quantity. She advocates for better systems and additional support from organisations such as the Telkom Foundation to help students manage their academic responsibilities effectively.

Her message to fellow students is one of encouragement and balance: "Don't be too hard on yourself."

Always set goals that are achievable and give yourself the space to grow." Ncube's story highlights the importance of self-awareness and institutional reform in fostering student success. Her journey serves as an inspiration to others navigating the demands of high school and beyond.

# Free State snatches SA's top pass rate for a 6th consecutive year

Johnathan Paoli



Freestate MEC Julia Maboya - Photo - Eddie Mtsweni

The Free State once again emerged as South Africa's top-performing province in the 2024 National Senior Certificate (NSC) results, marking the sixth consecutive year it has claimed the top spot.

The province attributes its success to relentless hard work, strategic planning and community involvement.

"We have always surpassed our targets. As a province we are really proud of learners, teachers, parents, SGBs and teacher unions. I think it is in this province that we have demonstrated that education is a societal matter," said education MEC Julia Maboya.

She has praised the feat as remarkable given the province's socio-economic challenges, but proudly stressed the Free State's determination.

"We are investing in our people through education. That is the best thing we can do for our people because we happen to be one of those poor provinces," she said.

The Free State achieved an impressive 91% pass rate, a marked improvement from the 89.1% recorded in 2023, with key achievements including a notable increase in quality passes.

In addition, 48.2% of learners earned bachelor passes and

30% achieved diploma passes, reflecting consistent improvement in high-grade results since 2020.

A total of 17,486 learners qualified for university studies, 10,889 for diploma programmes, and 4,621 for higher certificates, underscoring the depth and diversity of academic success across the province.

Four of the Free State's districts ranked among the top 10 nationally out of 77 districts, with Fezile Dabi District achieving a remarkable 93.5% pass rate, the second highest in the country.

Other high-performing districts include Motheo, Xhariep and Thabo Mofutsanyana, demonstrating the province's regional strength in education.

Among the 355 schools in the province, 67 achieved a 100% pass rate, and 232 exceeded a 90% pass rate.

The province's focus on Mathematics and science education also yielded exceptional results, with Mookodi Secondary School in Thabo Mofutsanyana District being named the best school in these subjects, achieving a 97% pass rate in both.

Maboya said the Free State's consistent advancements in quality outcomes and district level achievements highlighted its leading role in South Africa's education landscape.

Fezile Dabi District Director Vusi Chuta said the accomplishment reflected the district's dedication to quality education and its transformative impact.

He stressed the drivers of success in the district including initiatives like Saturday classes, after-school programmes, and holiday revision sessions focusing on critical subjects such as Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Accounting, supporting high-risk learners.

The district also focused on fostering teamwork among educators, principals and school governing bodies, enhancing teaching quality through regular workshops and training, with the district officials actively involving parents and community stakeholders to ensure holistic learner support.

Additionally, Chuta said the district prioritised foundational literacy and numeracy, preparing learners to excel in senior grades and celebrating achievements of learners and schools by cultivating motivation and healthy competition.

Approximately 67% of Bachelor passes came from Quintile 1 to 3 schools, showcasing the district's commitment to equity and inclusivity, with many regarding Fezile Dabi's success as integral to the Free State's overall 91.0% pass rate.

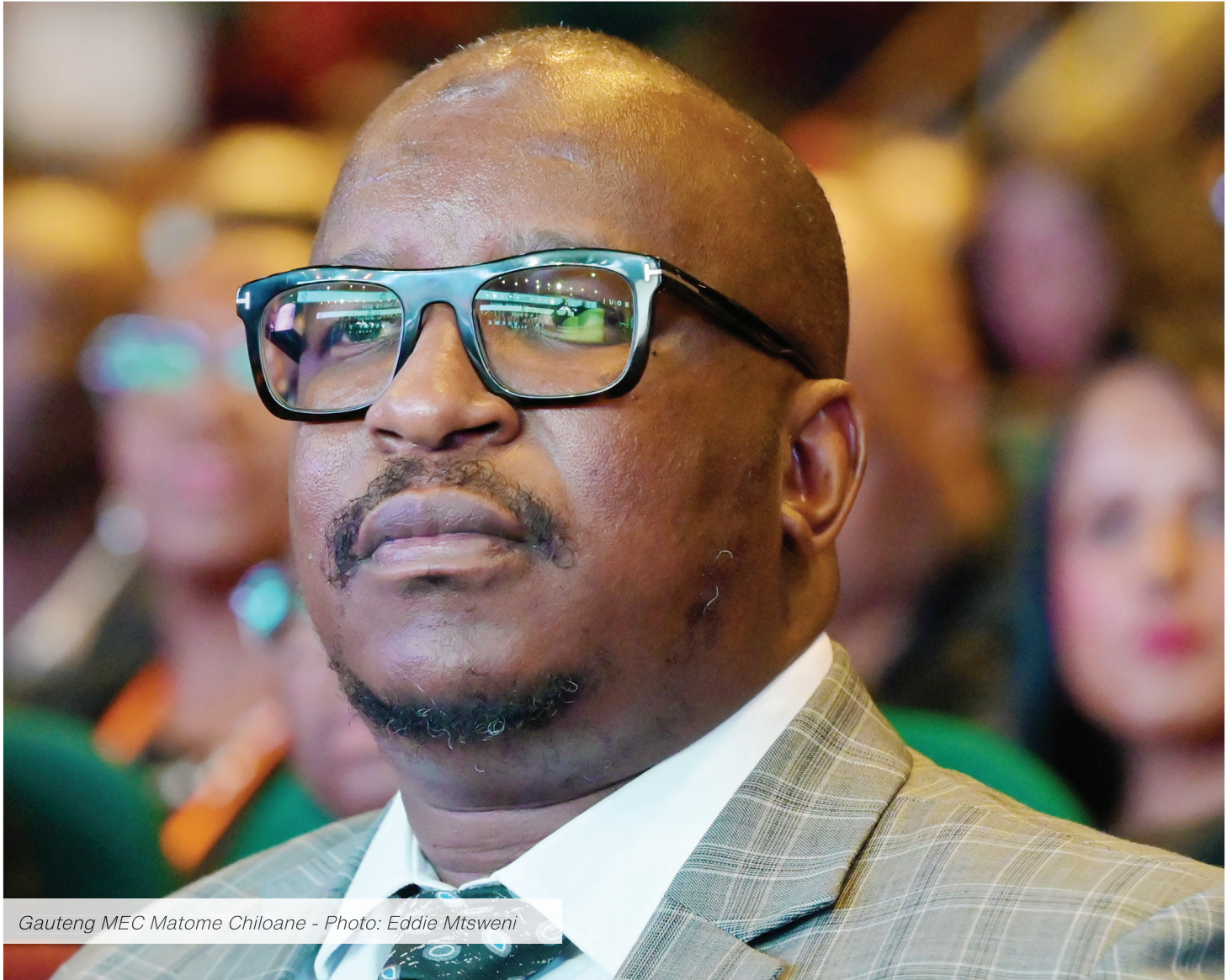
Despite its success, Chuta said the district aimed to address challenges like declining participation in gateway subjects.

He said the district's commitment to sustained excellence would ensure it remained a model of educational achievement in South Africa.



# Despite Gauteng achieving 3rd place, it outlines plans to boost results

Thapelo Molefe



Gauteng MEC Matome Chiloane - Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

**G**auteng's education system continues to shine, securing its place as the third-best performing province in the matric exams. With an impressive 88.41% pass rate, the province has celebrated its best performance since 1995.

Gauteng education MEC Matome Chiloane lauded the Class of 2024, describing their achievement as a testament to their resilience and dedication despite challenges stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Through sheer determination and tireless commitment, you have transformed your dreams into reality, demonstrating that excellence is born where dedication meets perseverance," Chiloane said.

Gauteng achieved several key milestones in the 2024 National Senior Certificate results. The number of learners qualifying for Bachelor studies reached a record-breaking 66,979, representing 52.3% of matriculants and marking an increase of over 10,000 Bachelor passes compared to 2023.

No-fee township schools continued to close the performance gap with fee-paying schools, achieving an impressive average pass rate of 85.3%, just 7.7% percentage points behind their fee-paying counterparts.

Among the top-performing schools, Lufhereng Secondary School stood out with a 100% pass rate and an exceptional 97% Bachelor pass rate, earning special recognition for its outstanding achievement.

As the province celebrates this milestone, the focus now shifts to understanding the factors behind this performance and the strategies in place to ensure continued improvement in 2025.

The Secondary School Improvement Programme (SSIP) has proven to be a cornerstone of Gauteng's educational success. This initiative, aimed at supporting learners in underperforming schools, has shown its value by delivering consistent improvements in results over the past four years.

More township children than ever are benefitting from this pro-



gramme, which has not only boosted pass rates, but also improved the overall quality of teaching and learning in priority schools.

“The SSIP’s sustained success proves its role in transforming teaching and learning in prioritised schools,” Chiloane emphasised.

In Gauteng, all 15 districts achieved pass rates above 84.5%. Notably, three districts including Tshwane West, Tshwane North and Tshwane South, secured spots in the national Top 10.

Johannesburg West emerged as the top-performing district in the country, with a remarkable 97% pass rate, an improvement from the previous year. Johannesburg East also recorded the highest improvement in 2024, with a 6.7% percentage-increase in its pass rate.

The province’s performance by region highlights the success of its strategies.

Tshwane achieved a 90.3% pass rate, up from 87.5% in 2023. Johannesburg followed with 89.6%, an impressive leap from 85.4% the previous year.

Sedibeng, West Rand, and Ekurhuleni also posted improved results, demonstrating the effectiveness of interventions across Gauteng’s five regions.

Academic performance in 2024 showed improvements across various subjects, particularly in gateway subjects like Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Accounting. Sixty-seven out of 80 subjects had a pass rate above 90%, with 26 subjects achieving a 100% pass rate.

Mathematics saw a commendable pass rate of 72.7%, exceeding the national target of 60%. Physical Sciences recorded a

4.7% percentage increase, reaching 79%, while Life Sciences achieved an 83.5% pass rate.

The performance in indigenous languages was equally encouraging, with 100% pass rates in isiNdebele and South African Sign Language. The province also recorded significant growth in English as a First Additional Language, maintaining a 99.9% pass rate.

Chiloane has outlined a comprehensive plan to address key trends and ensure further improvements in the coming year.

One of the primary focus areas is strengthening foundational education across all grades.

Emphasis will be placed on improving literacy and numeracy, particularly in the General Education and Training phase. To support this, the SSIP programme will be reviewed and expanded to include Mathematics at grades 9-10.

Underperforming schools will face stricter accountability measures. Schools with pass rates below 70% or with low Bachelor pass rates will undergo management reviews and receive targeted academic improvement plans.

Teachers struggling with specific curriculum areas will be provided with tailored support, while those unable to meet performance expectations may be reassigned.

The province also plans to enhance technical education by expanding specialist schools and introducing new technology-focused subjects. Gauteng aims to increase access to e-learning and multimedia content to enrich classroom experiences.

The MEC also announced plans to support matriculants who failed through the Second Chance Programme, which offers supplementary exams, modularised learning and tutoring support.



Gauteng Education MEC Matome Chiloane and Premier Panyaza Lesufi with Musawenkosi Buthelezi- the 2024 Matric Top Achiever in Gauteng



# Resilience and commitment highlighted for North West results

Johnathan Paoli

**N**orth West education MEC Viola Motsumi has welcomed her province's performance in the NSC exams as a celebration of resilience, hard work and a commitment to quality education despite the challenges faced over the past year.

Motsumi praised learners, teachers and the department for its 87.52% pass rate.

"Against all odds, driven by our unshaken beliefs in serving the best interest of the child and in advancing the boundless potential of our learners, we weathered every storm and soldiered on," Motsumi said.

The MEC described the results as particularly significant, due to this cohort representing the first to graduate under the leadership of the seventh administration, which took office in June last year.

She said the candidates sat for their exams after facing a unique set of challenges, both internal and external, that could have derailed progress.

The North West's pass rate increased by 5.89% from the previous year's 81.63%, which helped maintain its position as the fourth-best performing province nationally.

The MEC said that despite fierce competition from other provinces, the North West's performance underscored the collective effort and strategic interventions over the past years.

Motsumi attributed the improvement to the unwavering commitment of educators, learners and stakeholders.

She also expressed her determination to continue pushing for even better results in the coming years, with the goal of securing a top-three position in the future.

"The game is never over until we win. We are determined to do everything in our power to reach the top three," she said.

The quality of the results also saw notable improvements, with the province recording 7,901 distinctions across various subjects, up from 7,067 in 2023.

Notably, 18,279 learners (45.05%) obtained passes that qualify them for admission to bachelor's degree studies, a significant increase from 2023's 15,059 (36.36%).

The number of learners qualifying for diploma studies remained steady, while those qualifying for higher certificates saw a decrease, reflecting the focus on academic excellence over mere pass rates.

Another achievement was the reduction in the number of underperforming schools.

Those with pass rates below 70% dropped from 106 to just 28, a clear indication that the province's educational interventions are paying off.

In terms of district performance, every district in the province achieved a pass rate of over 84%. Bojanala, the largest district in the province, led with a pass rate of 89.4%.



North West MEC Viola Motsumi - Photo : Eddie Mtsweni

Other districts like Ngaka Modiri Molema and Dr Kenneth Kaunda followed closely, with the MEC hailing it as demonstrating the effectiveness of district-level interventions in improving educational outcomes.

Motsumi also lauded the performance of special schools, with two schools, Christiana School for the Blind and Meerhof Special School, achieving a 100% pass rate.

She said the province continued making strides in ensuring that learners with disabilities were provided with equal opportunities for success.

Top-performing schools included Rustenburg High School, which secured the highest number of subject distinctions, and Potchefstroom Girls High, which achieved the highest percentage of distinctions relative to the number of subjects offered.

The top-performing candidate, Johannes Jurie Blygnaut from Rustenburg High, achieved six distinctions and scored a total of 1,735 marks.

As part of the government's pro-poor policies, such as the National School Nutrition Programme and the Presidential Youth Unemployment Initiative, the province has seen increasing educational equity.

These programmes, along with other support mechanisms, have significantly contributed to improving school attendance and academic performance, particularly in quintile 1 to 3 schools.

The MEC acknowledged the communities, particularly those in Jouberton and Kanana, for their collaboration in ensuring that schools were protected from disruptions by criminal elements.

While the province celebrates this impressive performance, Motsumi emphasised that the work was far from over.

She urged everyone to continue striving for excellence and ensure that the North West was firmly positioned among the top three performing provinces, reflecting on the collective efforts needed to build on this success and shape the future of education in the province.

# Eastern Cape improves matric results despite many challenges

Johnathan Paoli



Eastern Cape MEC Fundile David Gade - Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

The Eastern Cape had set itself a pass rate target of 85% for the NSC exams for the Class of 2024. It increased its target by 3.56 percentage points to 84.98%, just missing its goal.

Basic Education Minister Siviwe Gwarube, who hails from the Eastern Cape, was present at the announcement of the province's results and expressed her pride in what it had achieved.

"This province has come a very long way over the years to get to the point of where it is. When I first met the (education) MEC sometime after my appointment... I met a very bold man who had a very bold vision, and he said, 'I am telling you minister 85% is possible'. When I was getting a briefing from the department, my heart swelled with so much pride because you believed in it and you guys did it," the minister said.

"I am... incredibly proud of that fact that some of the most rural districts in this province are outperforming our metros and that says to me that in fact it is those educators in those areas that are absolutely dedicated to making sure... that you can have an opportunity for you to change your life through education.

"And that is the power colleagues of the transformative power of education... and a province like ours that is incredibly rural can produce the top three of Bachelor passes (in the country) shows that there is something right happening in the province."

Education MEC Fundile Gade has attributed the success to com-

prehensive interventions and improved quality in school-based assessments, which received commendation from Umalusi.

Despite logistical complexities such as flooding and some tragic incidents, including the gang rape of five learners in OR Tambo, the MEC said the process was executed with credibility and integrity.

Encouragingly, the affected learners persevered and achieved Bachelor passes, exemplifying extraordinary resilience.

The Eastern Cape posted significant gains in various performance metrics.

The province's 84.9% pass rate reflects consistent improvement, rising from 76.5% in 2019, while Bachelor passes rose to 45.7%, up from 39.6% in 2023.

The number of distinctions increased from 29,064 in 2020 to 35,640 in 2024, with a year-on-year improvement of five percentage points.

Of the 56 subjects examined, 30 saw upward performance trends.

High-enrolment subjects like Mathematics and Physical Science recorded commendable improvements, with Mathematics achieving a 62.2% pass rate, up from 57.4%.

Among home languages, IsiXhosa and SeSotho maintained near-perfect results, while Sign Language saw a substantial rise from 75% to 85%.

In gateway subjects, which are important for future academic and career opportunities, progress was noted with accounting improving from 76.7% to 81%.

Life Sciences rose from 76.6% to 83%, while Agricultural Sciences achieved 89%, up from 83.9%.

The Eastern Cape's districts showed progress, with 11 out of 12 districts achieving over 80% pass rates.

Chris Hani East emerged as the top-performing district at 88.5%, a 4.5 percentage point improvement. Amathole East followed closely with 87.8%.

Additionally, 857 schools achieved pass rates of 80% or above, with schools in Quintiles 1-3 showing significant gains, underscoring efforts to uplift historically under-resourced schools.

Gade said his department implemented extensive interventions to support learners, including morning, afternoon and vacation classes, and additional support in key subjects such as Mathematics and Science.

The department also offered online resources as well as collaborations with organisations like Eskom, Trac-SA and the National Education Collaboration Trust to provide valuable resources and motivation.

While celebrating the achievements, the MEC extended a message to learners who did not succeed, encouraging them to regroup and continue pursuing their dreams.



# Northern Cape results indicate long-term growth and commitment

Johnathan Paoli



Northern Cape MEC Abhraham Vosloo - Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

The Northern Cape, which showed the most improvement in the matric results, attributes the success to years of strategic investment in education and collaboration with stakeholders.

The province surged by 8.4% from 2023 to 84.2%.

"This achievement is a testament to our commitment to modernising and growing the Northern Cape through education. The steady improvement in matric results over the past five years demonstrates the stability and progress in our education system," said Northern Cape premier Zamani Saul.

A total of 12,937 candidates sat for the 2024 NSC examination, with 10,892 students successfully passing.

Notably, 4,951 candidates achieved a Bachelor pass, representing an 8.3% increase from the previous year. The province also recorded 2,034 subject distinctions, an encouraging 4% rise.

This year, for the first time, all five districts in the province achieved pass rates above 80%.

ZF Mgcawu District led with an 86.3% pass rate, followed by Namakwa (85.9%), Pixley Ka Seme (85.4%), Frances Baard (84.6%) and John Taolo Gaetsewe (81.4%).

Pixley Ka Seme registered the most significant improvement, with an 11.2% rise, while ZF Mgcawu claimed the title of the

best-performing district.

The province celebrated outstanding individual achievements, with Kutlo Motlhoia from Kimberley Technical High School, Petrus Nel from Duineveld High School, and Kutlo Motshwana from Galaletsang High School emerging as the top three learners.

Veritas High School in Pixley Ka Seme District stood out as the top-performing public school, while Diamantveld High School excelled in Mathematics and Physical Science, achieving pass rates of 98.3% and 95.3%, respectively.

Dikgatlong High School in the Frances Baard District was recognised for its remarkable improvement, achieving a 100% pass rate, a 46.3% increase from 2023.

The premier highlighted the province's strategic focus on health and education since 2019, emphasising the importance of equipping young people with the skills and knowledge needed to build a prosperous future.

Despite the progress, challenges remain.

A total of 102 candidates were unable to complete the NSC examination due to valid reasons such as ill health or family bereavement.

Saul said these students would be supported to complete their exams during the May/June supplementary session.

Additionally, 20 schools in the province were identified as underperforming, with pass rates below 70%.

The provincial government plans to address these gaps through targeted interventions outlined in the provincial improvement plan.

While the pass rate for Mathematics improved by 5.8% to 62.8%, Physical Science saw a slight decline of 0.6%, settling at 66.6%.

The province has pledged to prioritise these subjects in 2025 to enhance participation and performance, broadening career opportunities for learners.

Saul praised the collaborative efforts of teachers, unions and administrative staff, highlighting the integrity and efficiency of the examination process as certified by Umalusi.

A total of 179,978 answer scripts were marked by a dedicated team of 839 markers, 45 chief markers and 45 internal moderators.

He said the provincial government has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting all learners, particularly those who need additional assistance.

Parents were urged to engage actively with schools to ensure learners received the necessary support.

Saul expressed optimism for the future, saying he looked forward to this year with renewed determination to build on this momentum and create a Northern Cape its residents could be proud of.

# KZN achieves historic milestone with most Bachelor passes

Thapelo Molefe

**K**waZulu-Natal made headlines in last year's NSC exams, achieving the highest number of Bachelor passes and coming in second with an 89.5% pass rate.

The province continues to have the highest number of learners who sit for the matric exams.

Education MEC Siphosihle Hlomuka said 144,990 matriculants out of 161,962 candidates passed. In 2023 the province an 86.4% pass rate.

"The matric Class of 2024 has navigated a path that was unlike any other in recent history. This remarkable group of young individuals we are honouring today traversed this path, facing unprecedented obstacles that tested their mettle. Despite the adversities, they stood tall," Hlomuka said.

These included weather disasters, load-shedding and Covid-16.

"We applaud their perseverance despite facing an unprecedented journey filled with challenges, victories, and transformative moments over the last decade."

Hlomuka praised the resilience of learners and educators, saying their achievements were not just academic milestones; they were stories of courage and perseverance in the face of adversity.

Hlomuka extended gratitude to educators, parents school governing bodies, and other stakeholders, emphasising that "education is a societal matter."

He highlighted the critical role of after-school and holiday classes, and thanked teachers for their dedication.

He also acknowledged the province's strides in inclusivity, noting: "Our interventions have eradicated the 0% pass rate among schools, and the number of underperforming schools has drastically reduced from 288 in 2023 to 182 in 2024."

The number of schools that obtained a 100% pass rate increased from 246 in 2023 to 321 in 2024.

"We are proud to report that no school in this province obtained a 0% pass rate. Our interventions to eradicate the 40% and below category of performance in the 2024 National Senior Certificate exams are yielding results and we will continue to put more efforts towards addressing this bracket," said Hlomuka.

All 12 districts in KZN surpassed the 80% pass rate threshold, with uMkhanyakude District leading for the second consecutive year at 92.8%.

Other top-performing districts included Ugu (91.7%), Amajuba and Umlazi (89.8%), and King Cetshwayo, which was the most improved, rising from 83.4% in 2023 to 88.6% this year.

Hlomuka lauded the province's progress in gateway subjects like Mathematics and Science, while also calling for continued efforts to improve English First Additional Language performance.

Special schools also shone, with six out of 11 achieving a 100% pass rate, further underscoring KZN's commitment to inclusive



KwaZulu-Natal MEC Siphosihle Hlomuka-Photo : Eddie Mtsweni:

education.

Hlomuka expressed confidence that the strong academic foundation laid by the Class of 2024 would empower learners to thrive in higher education and beyond.

Looking ahead, the MEC pledged to implement the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act, which makes Grade R compulsory and expands access to quality education.

He called for continued societal collaboration to sustain the province's educational momentum.

"As the greatest province of KwaZulu-Natal, we are proud of the Class of 2024. Their success is a testament to perseverance and the transformative power of education," Hlomuka said.



# Limpopo reaches critical milestone in NSC exams

Johnathan Paoli

For the first time since the dawn of democracy, Limpopo has surpassed the 80% threshold for the matric pass rate.

“Today’s gathering is an indication of the hard work that has been put in over the past 30 years. We have steadily improved our results from some 38% in the 90s, and while there have been some challenges, we have made significant strides,” said Premier Phophi Ramathuba at an event to celebrate the results.

The province’s matric pass rate of 85.5% jumped from 79.5% achieved in 2023.

More than 90,000 learners sat for their exams, reflecting the resilience and determination that have become hallmarks of the province’s educational journey.

Education MEC Lerule-Ramakhanya echoed these sentiments, noting the province’s rise from a long-standing position at the bottom of national rankings to securing sixth place in 2024.

She emphasised the strategic efforts that led to this improvement, attributing the success to collaboration among educators, parents and community leaders.

Limpopo’s districts and schools demonstrated remarkable performances, with Mogalakwena District emerging as the top district with an 87.8% pass rate, followed closely by Mopani West at 87.2%.

Sekhukhune East was celebrated as the most improved district, leaping from 64.5% in 2022 to 84% in 2024.

Ngwaabe Circuit, within Sekhukhune East, achieved an extraordinary 92.2%, marking a 35.3% improvement since 2022.

Outstanding schools were also recognised, with Setotolwane Secondary in Capricorn South District standing out as the best performing public special school, achieving a 100% pass rate with 12 Bachelor passes.

New Era College in Vhembe East District led as the best-performing independent school, with 230 Bachelor passes out of 436 candidates.

A special honour was bestowed on Mabena Johanna Hlalan-gaye of Kgothala Secondary School. Under her leadership, the school transformed from a struggling institution with a 20% pass rate to consistently achieving over 90%, culminating in a 99% bachelor pass rate in 2024.

Despite these achievements, Ramathuba and Lerule-Ramakhanya acknowledged persistent challenges.

Sekhukhune District, while improving, requires additional support to close gaps in performance. The premier has called for collaboration with traditional leaders to foster a culture of education in the region.

Teenage pregnancies and mental health have also been highlighted as barriers to success.



Photo By Eddie Mtsweni: Limpopo MEC Mavhungu Lerule-Ramakhanya

Both leaders emphasised the need for community involvement and the establishment of supportive environments to address these issues effectively.

As Limpopo embarks on a new academic year, the province has set an ambitious target to be among the top five performing provinces in 2025.

This vision includes a focus on improving Bachelor pass rates and prioritising Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects to equip learners with skills for the future.

Infrastructure development remains a key priority, with plans to build and enhance facilities across the province.

The premier has underscored the importance of early engagement, urging learners to seize opportunities and parents to support their children’s education.

For learners who did not succeed, the MEC outlined multiple pathways for improvement, including returning to school as full-time candidates, registering as part-time learners or participating in the Second Chance Matric Programme, which provides face-to-face support across 10 education districts.

Both leaders expressed gratitude to educators, parents, traditional leaders and stakeholders for their contributions, with Lerule-Ramakhanya describing education as a “societal matter”, and recognising the critical role of collaboration in achieving excellence.

The MEC said the 2024 matric results symbolised Limpopo’s transformation into a “province on the rise”, and with renewed determination and a shared commitment to progress, it was poised to build on its achievements and continue its journey toward educational excellence.

# Western Cape continues to shine, with the highest retention rate

Thebe Mabanga



Western Cape education MEC David Maynier - Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

The Western Cape's contribution to South Africa's national pass rate is its own record pass rate of 86,6 %, which is 5,1 percentage points higher and 3800 candidates more than last year.

The Bachelor pass rate, which is considered a crucial indicator of the quality of a matric pass, is also up 5,6 percentage points to 47,8%. A total of 11,699 candidates achieved a record 27,948 distinctions, which is second highest in the country.

Beaming with pride at the national results event, Western Cape education MEC David Maynier attributed the success to this matric generation overcoming the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic, which wreaked havoc with the start of their high school careers at Grade 8 in 2020.

"This matric class has had three full years of uninterrupted schooling following Covid," said Maynier.

He also noted that this generation has had two full June and November exam cycles since the national assessment standard was amended. This gave them practice and allowed them to build "exam muscle" in preparation for the NSC exams.

The Western Cape once again achieved the top Mathematics (78%) and top Physical Science (79.4%) pass rates.

Maynier attributed this success to the hard work and quality of educators of these subjects and learners' dedication

A distinguishing feature of the Western Cape is that it has the highest retention rate from grade 10-12 in the country at 68.3%.

Maynier said their target was a retention rate of 70%. The province achieved this result by not holding students back needlessly as well as hard work from learners.

The province continued to shine on the national stage, with four of its candidates receiving national awards. The candidates included Rayyan Ebrahim and Matthew Christopher Wise of Pinelands High School, Nicholas David Schreiber of Rondebosch Boys' High School, and Jordan Raubenheimer of De La Bat School, who was the top candidate for South African Sign Language.

The province's district and individual schools also produced remarkable performances.





NSC Top Learner Ryyan Ebrahim & Western Cape education MEC David Maynier -  
Photo: Supplied

Joe Slovo, a school in Khayelitsha raised its matric pass rate from 87.2% in 2023 to 99.3% , the highest rate since the National Senior Certificate was introduced in 2008.

Its Bachelor pass rate more than doubled, from 25.1% in 2023 to 56.2% last year.

“Our school was one of the schools in Khayelitsha that have been battling to produce good results. Through the dedication and resilience of our educators we have managed to take the school from the rock bottom of the table to a better position,” said Joe Slovo Secondary School principal Sithyilelo Ntamo.

He noted that “we have done everything we were supposed to do in making sure that our learners are getting good quality results”.

“The 2024 learners have proved to us throughout the year that

they will give us good results and they did not disappoint us.” In 2009, only half of Khayelitsha candidates (50.5%) passed matric, with 9.3% achieving a Bachelor pass. This year, 87.6% of the candidates passed their matric, with a Bachelor pass rate of 47.8%.

Maynier attributed this improvement to the efforts of staff and learners as well as support from the Metro East Education District. The district is also one of the most improved with a pass rate of 88,5%, also a record

The Eden and Central Karoo Education District is the top performing district, with a record pass rate of 89.28% - an increase of 4.69 percentage points from 2023

All six districts improved their pass rate and every district now has a pass rate above 80% for the first time since 2016.



# Mpumalanga aims to remain SA's technical hub

Thebe Mabanga



*Mpumalanga MEC Landulile Dlamini - Photo Supplied*

**M**pumalanga wants to retain its status as one of SA's technical and vocational skills hub with the opening of a technical school in each of its 71 districts in the year ahead.

This was announced by the education MEC Cathy Dlamini at the province's unveiling of its matric results Mpumalanga achieved, in line with the national average, a record pass of 84,9%. A total of 64,201 candidates wrote the exams and 54,567 passed. A total of 43,4% obtained a Bachelor pass, while 27,7% obtained a diploma pass and 14% a higher certificate pass.

Although a rural province, Mpumalanga has a large agricultural sector, as well as coal mining, energy and tourism. It has a high demand for technical skills from employers such as Eskom, Sasol Exarro and many others.

In 2012, the province achieved a pass rate of 70%. The only time it had breached 80% was in 2019. Since the introduction of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) in 2008, Mpumalanga has tended to lag the national average pass rates, with the exception being between 2014 and 2016.

A total of 58 schools obtained a 100% pass rate. Of these, 31 were no-fee schools, while 27 were fee pay-

ing. A total of 201 schools, which represented about 35% of the total, obtained a pass rate between 90% and 99%. A total of 157 of these were no-fee schools.

Overall, there are 575 schools in Mpumalanga that offer matric. Of these, 83% are no-fee schools Dlamini said that the no-fee schools, most notably those in quintile 1 to 3, would be offered continuous support through the school nutrition programme, scholar transport, teacher development and provision of learning material.

The province has six dedicated no-fee boarding schools, one of which, Izimbali a dedicated Maths and Science school, obtained a 100% pass rate.

Independent schools, which sustain themselves mostly through school fees, but some receive subsidies, obtained a 92,4% pass rate.

Mpumalanga has a dedicated category of schools that specialise in Maths, Science, Technology and Accounting and receive specialised support. These schools obtained 82,4% pass rate.

The MEC announced that the department would strengthen the OR Tambo Mathematics, Science and Technology Academy Programmes by providing capacity-building programmes for teachers and support to the designated 101 secondary schools offering Mathematics and Physical Science as a compulsory subject.

"Through partnerships with non-governmental organisations, we will work to make the teaching of Mathematics and science more attractive, ultimately increasing the intake and pass rates in these subjects."

Besides the technical high schools, the government would also provide support to Agricultural High Schools and support to schools offering coding and robotics, as well as those piloting the full-scale implementation of Ubuhlebusile e-learning programme.

Success in maths and Science was mixed, with learners obtaining 85,6% in Agricultural Sciences, 78,2% in Life Sciences and 66,37% in Mathematics, while obtaining 97,72% in Technical Sciences.

The Ehlanzeni District led the way with an 88,4% pass rate followed by the Gert Sibande District with 87,7% and the Nkangala District with 85,2%. The Bohlabela District was the only one that got below 80%, with a pass rate of 78,6%.

The province obtained a 100% pass rate for IsiNdebele Home Language, Sesotho and Setswana, and 99,3% for English First Additional Language, 99,7% for Zulu Home Language, 99,8% for Sepedi, and above 95% for all other languages including Afrikaans, Xitsonga and isiSwati.

The candidates obtained a 78% pass in Accounting and 80,4% for Business Studies and 95,8% for Tourism.

Dlamini also announced that the province would open the Lucky Dube Secondary School for Performing Arts in Ermelo at the Msukaligwa Local Municipality, which is named after the late iconic singer.



# No-fee schools inspire the country with 2024 NSC results

Johnathan Paoli

The success of the 2024 NSC results is particularly significant for quintile 1, 2, and 3 schools, commonly referred to as no-fee schools, which serve the nation's most underprivileged communities.

The results across the country show notable improvements across no-fee schools, with a significant shift observed in the proportion of schools achieving an 80-100% pass rate, reflecting strides toward equitable education.

Quintile 1 schools increased from 1343 to 1383 schools, achieving 80-100%, with the number achieving a perfect 100% rising sharply from 138 to 205.

Quintile 2 schools also showed growth, moving from 1045 to 1280 schools in the 80-100% range and seeing 194 schools achieve a 100% pass rate, compared to 111 in 2023.

Similarly, quintile 3 schools improved from 865 to 1056 in the top category, with 91 schools now at 100%, up from 67 the previous year.

These results highlight the continued efforts to uplift education quality in underprivileged areas, signalling optimism for equitable progress in future NSC outcomes, with approximately 67% of Bachelor passes originating from quintile 1 to 3 schools.

This indicates that learners from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are increasingly qualifying for higher education, paving the way for careers in fields such as medicine, engineering and science.

In the Free State, which got the highest pass rate in the country, Quintile 1 achieved a 90% pass (45.9% Bachelors), Quintile 2 scored 88.5% (42.9% Bachelors), and quintile 3 led with 91% pass (45.9% Bachelors), showcasing consistent performance across no-fee schools.

KwaZulu-Natal's no-fee schools also 2024 exams. Quintile 1 had 250 of 475 schools scoring 91-100%, quintile 2 had 295 of 499 schools, and quintile 3 saw 204 of 410 schools reach the same range, highlighting significant progress in historically disadvantaged communities.

Gauteng's quintile 1 schools achieved 90% pass (45.9% Bachelors), quintile 2 posted 88.5% (42.9% Bachelors) and quintile 3 excelled with 91% pass (45.9% Bachelors), highlighting strong performances across the province's no-fee schools.

Western Cape's no-fee schools saw significant improvements in the 2024 NSC results. Quintile 1 achieved 81.2% pass (+9.2 points) and 39.9% Bachelors (+12.2 points). Quintile 2 reached 82.9% pass (+5.4) and 37.8% Bachelors (+7.3), while quintile 3 achieved 83.0% pass (+5.0) and 36.8% Bachelors (+4.6).

The Eastern Cape's quintile 1-3 schools, comprising 76% of all schools, achieved an average pass rate of 80% and above. Quintile 1 improved to 85.5% (+4.2 points), quintile 2 to 84.8% (+2.8), and quintile 3 to 82.9% (+3.6), showcasing significant progress.

Limpopo demonstrated resilience in the 2024 NSC exams, with quintile 1 schools achieving pass rates exceeding 90% at institutions like Makuane Secondary. Quintile 2 schools saw



variability, with Ramagabudi Secondary at 95.2%, while quintile 3 schools excelled, led by Dzata Secondary who achieved an over 90% pass rate.

Northern Cape schools celebrated notable progress in the exams. Quintile 1 schools saw an 11.62% rise to 84.3%, while quintiles 2 and 3 achieved increases of 7.36% and 7.86%, reaching 67.3% and 67.94%, respectively.

North West's quintile 1-3 schools displayed mixed but encouraging performances with Johane Mokolobetsi Secondary excelling with over 90% in quintile 1, while Iketletso and Kgalatlowe schools achieved 94.8% and 94.4%, respectively. Quintile 3 schools generally led, reflecting stronger resources and targeted interventions.

The Basic Education Department's comprehensive support package, including grants, a nutrition scheme, scholar transport and learning and teaching materials, has been instrumental in improving educational outcomes for underprivileged schools.

Targeted interventions addressed challenges such as progressed learners and resource disparities, resulting in improved pass rates and an increased number of Bachelor passes, especially in underprivileged communities.

Key strategies involved partnerships with district offices to monitor underperforming schools and implement subject-specific interventions, transforming outcomes, with notable achievements in mathematics and science, despite persisting geographic and socio-economic challenges.

The roll-out of psycho-social support services addressed challenges such as stress and socio-economic pressures, while nutritional programs ensured that students were well-fed and focused during lessons.

While the achievements are commendable, the performance gap between different quintiles remains a concern.

The department has acknowledged the need for continued efforts to bridge this gap, ensuring that all learners, regardless of their socio-economic status, have access to quality education.

The success of the learners serves as an inspiration and a testament to the potential within South Africa's underprivileged communities.

With sustained support and targeted interventions, the nation can continue to build on this progress, fostering an inclusive and equitable educational landscape for all.

# The matric certificate is a passport to a better life

Thebe Mabanga



NSC Certificate - Photo Supplied

The South African matric certificate, obtained with good marks, remains highly valuable and still opens more doors than many holders realise. This is in spite of the country's high unemployment rate and other development challenges.

The first and most important consideration is what government aims to do with matric.

The National Development Plan states that: "By 2030, South Africans should have access to education and training of the highest quality, leading to significantly improved learning outcomes. The performance of South African learners in international standardised tests should be comparable to the performance of learners from countries at a similar level of development and with similar levels of access."

From evidence of the 16 years since the introduction of the National Senior Certificate suggests that a lot has been achieved even though some work needs to be done.

A matric certificate with suitable technical stream for the Further Education and Training (FET) Phase, or Grade 10, equips a learner with technical or artisanal skills that can be monetised immediately. If the South African economy produced millions of artisan posts, as it did in the late 80s and early 90s, the young people who obtain it would do well.

A matric certificate with a Bachelor pass opens door to university or University of Technology study in a range of internationally recognised field. This leads to formal employment in a range or areas from accounting and finance, law and engineering.

In June 2022, quality assurance body Umalusi undertook an international comparison of the NSC with equivalent qualifications in Kenya, Zimbabwe and New South Wales (NSW), and found that the South African certificate carried weight and value. South Africa's matric was found to be in similar in entry requirements as well as leaning outcomes and content and even comparable in qualification structure.

The assessment found the South African matric is comparable in areas such as learner independence, numeracy and literacy outcomes, creativity and innovation as well as higher order critical thinking skills. The areas where the NSC was found to fall short, or to not state explicitly as an outcome, include ICT skills, research and problem solving as well as an affinity for lifelong meaning.

Elijah Mhlanga, spokesperson for the Department of Basic Education, confirms that the NSC is valuable for entry into foreign universities, with students from other African countries, including the Ivory Coast, targeting entry into South Africa to pass matric with English and gain entry into the United States and the United Kingdom.



Enrolment into technical subjects remains chronically low. This could be partly because some are new and not widely available due to shortage of teachers and suitably equipped centres. But it is also because the value of Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) Colleges is not fully understood.

For instance, a total of 237,748 candidates enrolled for business studies while 123,968 took economics. The picture for technical subjects is markedly different. Engineering, graphic and design attracted 38,941 candidates, the highest among technical subjects.

Technical Maths was taken up by 16,844 candidates while Technical Science was taken by 17,494 learners. Electrical technology (power systems) was taken by less than 6000 candidates while other disciplines drew in less than 1000.

Mpumalanga education MEC Cathy Dlamini, whose province has high demand for technical skills due to the presence of mines, power stations and Sasol, said her department was on a drive to increase enrolment.

The MEC announced that the department will strengthen the OR Tambo Mathematics, Science, and Technology Academy Programmes by providing capacity-building programmes for teachers and support to the designated 101 secondary schools offering Mathematics and Physical Science as a compulsory subject.

“Through partnerships with non-governmental organisations, we will work to make the teaching of Mathematics and Science more attractive, ultimately increasing the intake and pass rates in these subjects.”

In Gauteng, the government is trying to remedy this by opening more schools of specialisation such as one located in Rhodesfield accessible to learners from Thembisa.

It gives them technical education with qualified staff, suitable equipment and proximity to industry. South Africa needs more of these.

Another area that an NSC prepares learners for is entrepreneurship through business studies, accounting and economics. But being in business needs broader support from an ecosystem, thus a matric certificate is not sufficient.

A matter that is raised frequently when discussing matric results or any other development indicator is the advancement of women. Over the past few years, girls have tended to do better than boys. Last year, the national pass rate was similar for boys and girls at 87,1 % for boys and 87,5% for girls. But at a province like Mpumalanga, 56% of those who passed were females for example.

A question was raised whether female empowerment was now at the expense of the boy learner. This assertion was disputed by Basic Education director-general

Mathanzima Mweli, who noted that there was an equal focus on empowering each gender.

The reality is girls do better than boys simply because more girls enroll for matric, both full and part time candidates. More than half, at 405 330 or 55,7%, of candidates were females compared to 318,826 or 44,3% for males.

Western Cape education MEC David Maynier speaks of the latest generation of matriculants having built “exam muscle” after having written two full cycles of the June and November exams over the previous two years after national assessment standards were amended. He believes this practice run pre-



DBE Director-general Mathanzima Mweli - Photo: Eddie Mtsweni:

pared the matriculants for last year’s finals.

Looking at the overall standardisation statistics, it seems schools and their matriculants are getting a hang of the NSC exams. In 2008, when the NSC was introduced, there were 55 subjects on offer. Thirty of these, or 55%, were accepted with their raw marks.

Of the remaining 25, four were adjusted downwards and 21 were adjusted upwards.

Upward adjustment suggests that overall compared to the preceding three years, the exam may have been relatively difficult for learners to handle, while downward adjustment suggest that, overall, again compared to the preceding three years, learners may have handled a paper with relative ease.

In 2010, there were 58 subjects on offer and 39 of these, or 67%, were accepted with raw marks. Of the remaining ones, 10 were adjusted downwards while nine were adjusted upwards. Five years later, there were 59 subjects on offer, with 29 (49%) accepted with raw marks. All remaining 30 subjects were adjusted upwards.

Last year, a total of 68 subjects were offered and 53 (78%) were accepted with raw marks. Of the remaining ones, 13 were adjusted downwards and only two were adjusted upwards. This means that if more subjects were adjusted upwards, the record pass rate could have been even higher.

# INSETA targets rural learners for bursary opportunities

Dineo Bendile



One of the INSETA ISSF Rural Drive beneficiaries, Tshimbiluni Brian Mutavhatsindi from Mundinane Secondary School passed the 2024 matric exams with 7 distinctions - Photo Supplied

The Insurance Sector Student Fund (ISSF) wants to reach more learners in rural areas to make funding opportunities for higher education more accessible to those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The ISSF has launched its Rural and Township Outreach programme, through which it will hold information sessions with Grade 11 and Grade 12 learners to enlighten them on the bursary fund and its application process.

The ISSF is a co-funded bursary model implemented by the Insurance Sector Education and Training Authority (INSETA). Funding is received from partners in the public and private sector who are committed to the development of skills in the insurance sector.

The fund was established in 2021 with the intention of providing access to higher education for academically excellent learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The fund focuses its efforts on skilling, upskilling, re-skilling and multi-skilling students, graduates and workers in the insurance sector.

More than R45 million has been spent since the implementation of the ISSF, benefiting more than 400 beneficiaries. For the 2024/25 financial year, the fund has allocated R30 million, which will allow access to funding for more than 417 beneficiaries.

The pilot of the Rural and Township Outreach programme was im-

plemented during the matric class of 2023, resulting in the funding of six above-average learners from various schools in Limpopo.

In addition to plans to expand the reach of this programme, INSETA is aiming to become a flagship sponsor of the Department of Basic Education's Matric Top Achievers through the ISSF.

While the ISSF caters specifically for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, INSETA remains conscious of the challenges faced by students in the missing middle. These missing middle students are those whose families earn too much to qualify for financial aid, but too little to afford to pay for higher education.

To address the plight of this group of students, the ISSF has partnered with strategic implementation partners such as the Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme (ISFAP).

The ISFAP assists students from poor to middle-income families to pay their higher education fees through the provision of financial aid.

The partnership between the ISSF and the ISFAP plays a vital part in extending opportunities to students within the insurance sector.

INSETA, through the ISSF, has committed itself to maintaining fruitful partnerships with its bursary co-funders, strategic implementation partners, higher education institutions and other entities to empower and upskill young people in South Africa.



All students & scholars!

Get up to  
**R2500 back**  
on selected products.



Shop our exclusive

**+STUDENT  
REWARDS**

in store or online now!

# With new law in place, education dept turns focus to foundational learning

Amy Musgrave



Minister of Basic Education Siviwe Gwarube - Photo By Eddie Mtsweni

Following record matric results for 2024, the Basic Education Department will turn its focus to early childhood development (ECD) and the foundation phase at school. Now that the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act is in place, school attendance is compulsory from Grade R at six-years-old, and no longer from Grade 1.

Basic Education Minister Siviwe Gwarube announced five key commitments following her telling the country that every province had increased their pass rate.

She said the first focus would be expanding access to quality Early Childhood Development, with universal access to quality ECD programmes by 2030 remaining a central goal.

The government would continue its mass registration drive to formalise ECD programmes, aligned with the National Curriculum Framework for ECD and supported by newly developed learning and teaching support materials.

It would also prioritise the professional development of ECD practitioners and their integration into the basic education system, as well as prioritise the resourcing of ECD centres, especially those in rural and underserved communities.

Improving teacher support and development in the foundation phase was another commitment. It is the first phase of formal schooling in South Africa, covering grades R-3. It is a critical time for establishing the basis for a child's future education.

"Teachers are the backbone of our education system. We will intensify support for teacher training with a strategic focus on improving literacy and numeracy in the Foundation Phase," said Gwarube.

"We will also ensure that the Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme prioritises students who want to pursue a teaching career in

the Foundation Phase."

During the year, the department will also urgently be reviewing the Post Provisioning Norms, which allocates educator resources to schools. This is to ensure that they enable the department's drive to achieve universal access to quality Grade R and improve reading and calculating in the foundation phase.

The norms have not been updated in over 20 years and determine how teacher posts are distributed to public schools.

Another priority is strengthening curriculum delivery in the foundation phase.

By prioritising updates to the National Catalogue of Learning and Teaching Support Materials for the foundation phase in 2025, provincial education departments and public schools will be able to purchase textbooks, learning materials and equipment from a comprehensive, educationally sound and linguistically inclusive list that has been specifically approved by experts to achieve national curriculum standards in the phase.

Gwarube said that if the department was to improve the quality of education outcomes, it would need to protect teaching and learning time, and that teachers were at school and teaching for the entire day, for 230 days per year, to ensure adequate coverage of the curriculum.

"I would like to reiterate my call to all provincial education departments, all MECs, all education districts, all circuit teams, all school principals, all school management teams, all school governing bodies, all educators and all parents and learners to ensure that they urgently work together to ensure this," she said.

All provinces recorded pass rates above 84% last year, with the Free State leading at 91%, while the Northern Cape showed the most improvement, surging by 8.3 percentage points.



**Proudly brought to you by**

**INSIDE** EDUCATION  
*Inspiring Minds*

*in partnership with*



**basic education**  
Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Tell<sub><</sub>om**



**\*incredible**



**inseta**  
INSURANCE SECTOR EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING AUTHORITY



**KANDK**  
**MED IA**