Minister Angie Motshekga briefs Parliament portfolio committee on basic education sector

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Basic Education Department outlines sector priorities at Portfolio Committee in Parliament

Reading comprehension in the first years of school will be uppermost in the list of priorities for the basic education sector in the short to medium term. That’s according to the Minister of Basic Education Mrs Angie Motshekga in her remarks at the meeting of the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education held today in Parliament.

It was the Department of Basic Education’s (DBE) first appearance before the Portfolio Committee in the 6th administration. The DBE delegation was led by Minister Angie Motshekga and Deputy Minister Dr Reginah Mhaule. The Department’s annual performance plan (APP) for 2019/2020 was presented and discussed with Members of Parliament from various political parties. The APP is a detailed outline of the sector priorities as undertaken by DBE together with Provincial Education Departments.

The Chief Director for Strategic Planning and Research Ms Carol Nuga-Deliwe delivered the presentation to the committee.  She said the President announced the seven (7) bold priorities of Government and basic education is critical in priority on that list.

The President announced the ECD migration early in 2019 in his SONA, to this effect, the DBE has started to develop work plans in the first 3 months of the Sixth Administration to drive the work streams in ECD migration.

In support of the Presidential SONA 2019, in June 2019 the DBE has developed plans to ensure that pro-poor programmes, such as the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) in schools, are strengthened, so that we address hunger that affects millions of children in our country.

Ms Nuga-Deliwe said the key achievements were in response to SONA and work is being done to mobilise and reprioritise resources. There are clear links between SONA and sector priorities.

The SONA 2019 injunctions in February 2019 also indicated the following priorities in education and skills development through the sector under the leadership of the DBE. The migration of the responsibility for ECD centers from Social Development to Basic Education, and proceed with the process towards two years of compulsory ECD for all children before they enter Grade 1.

Minister Motshekga said it was important to be clear in terms of the concurrent functions because the bulk of the budget and the responsibilities were in the provinces. The Minister said that the DBE would work hard to ensure that the sector substantially improved reading comprehension in the first years of school, building on the department’s early grade reading studies, which have demonstrated the impact that a dedicated package of reading resources such as expert reading coaches and lesson plans can have on reading outcomes.

The Department would also focus on the provision of digitised material for learning on a tablet device, prioritising the most disadvantaged schools which are in the poorest communities, including multi-grade, multiphase, farm and rural schools.

Over the next 5 years the DBE will work on implementing the following priorities, which are linked to the NDP, the 2019 SONA and other Sector Planning priorities in support of improved reading and learning outcomes:

* ECD Function Shift,
* Early Grade Reading,
* ICTs in Education,
* Assessments,
* Violence and Social Cohesion in schools and SAFE Initiative.

By the end of 2019, the following will be achieved:

* School Nutrition: The DBE will expand protein alternatives in the NSNP;
* Support the pilot in the Northern Cape province to improve the quality of school meals,
* Better education and health outcomes in schools.
* A breakfast guideline, including the mapping of partner breakfast programmes, will be finalised and distributed to PEDs for implementation.
* Strengthening of International and National Partnerships: All DBE International and National partnerships will be guided by our focus on improving learning outcomes, especially in the Foundation Phase - For example, there is a Ministerial Meeting of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) in July 2019, and healthy interest from donors interested in evidence-based policy implementation support.

Infrastructure

The DBE will ensure the practical completion of 15 Inappropriate Schools and 41 sanitation projects by September 2019, in support of enhancing learner access to safe infrastructure in schools. In improving the education sector, the Department has taken the following steps:

* Engagements through HEDCOM Sub-committees relating to collaborating and improving the sector’s performance;
* Conducted Gap analysis of the sector alignment and working on mitigating the gaps identified in medium and long- term plans; as well as continued analysis of plans and reports to strengthen the management of Performance Information in the sector.

The DBE will double its efforts to achieve both short and long term goals of the education sector in collaboration with PEDs and partners.