



# DEPARTMENTAL **BUDGET VOTES**

**2025**

**VOTE 6**

**HON. M.J MABOYA**  
Education



**FRIDAY, 06 JUNE 2025**



**Fourth Raadsaal,  
Bloemfontein**



**10h00**



**education**

Department of  
Education  
FREE STATE PROVINCE



A **FREE STATE** THAT **WORKS FOR ALL**



Honourable Speaker  
Honourable Deputy Speaker  
Honourable Premier of the Free State Province  
Members of the Free State Provincial Legislature  
Members of the Executive Council  
Executive Mayors, Speakers and Councillors  
Ntlo ya Marena ya Foreisetata  
Marena a Rona a Hlomphehileng a Foreisetata ka Kakaretso  
Organised Labour (SADTU, CTU/ATU, NEHAWU, and PSA)  
School Governing Bodies  
Our Partners in Education and Civil Society Organisations  
Principals, Teachers, and Learners  
Distinguished Guests, The people of the Free State, Ladies and Gentlemen, greetings to you all.

It is with a deep sense of accountability that I stand before this esteemed house to present the **Budget Vote of the Free State Department of Education** for the **2025/26 Financial Year**. Today's presentation serves as both a progress report on the commitments outlined in my **Budget Vote Speech** presented to this house on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2024, and a roadmap for the commitments and priorities set for the new financial year.

**Honourable Speaker**, as we gather here in the month of June, we do so with solemn remembrance and deep reflection on the historic significance of June 16 - a day etched in the collective memory of our nation. This month is not just a commemoration of Youth Day, but a profound reminder of the sacrifices made by young people who stood fearlessly against an oppressive system, demanding their right to quality education and a dignified future. June reminds us that education has always been at the heart of the struggle for liberation - a contested space where the youth rose up to reject inferior systems designed to entrench inequalities. Their courage continues to inspire us to ensure that every child, regardless of background, has access to a transformative education that liberates minds and restores dignity.

We take this opportunity to extend our warmest wishes to the **South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU)** as it celebrates its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary, honouring its enduring role as a champion of workers' rights and quality public education.



**Honourable Speaker**, as we celebrate 31 years of democracy and 70 years since the adoption of the Freedom Charter, we reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that education becomes the ultimate tool for empowerment and economic liberation. Our commitment to delivering quality education has borne fruit in several impactful ways.

## **2024 OVERVIEW AND OUTLOOK FOR 2025**

### **The Basic Education Laws Amendment Act, Act 32 of 2024**

**Honourable Speaker**, we are proud to affirm that we are strategically leveraging the **Basic Education Laws Amendment Act (commonly known as BELA Act)** as a powerful catalyst to advance equity, inclusion, and excellence in our education system - starting where it matters most: at **Grade R**. The Act's introduction of **compulsory Grade R enrolment** marks a watershed moment, officially recognising early childhood education as a fundamental right and anchoring the foundation for lifelong learning, cognitive development, and school readiness. This transformative legislation further empowers the Department to standardise admissions, language, and school governance policies – ensuring that no learner is excluded based on language, geography, or administrative discretion.

### **Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education (MTbBE) and Language in Education Policy (LiEP)**

**Honourable Speaker**, we have advanced **Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education (MTbBE)** as a deliberate and strategic instrument to give full expression to the **Language in Education Policy (LiEP)**. This is not merely a pedagogical shift - it is a profound affirmation of **linguistic justice, cognitive development**, and the **cultural rootedness** of our children. Through MTbBE, we have set the stage for ensuring that learners begin their foundational years in the comfort and clarity of their **home language**, with a carefully phased transition to English or Afrikaans as the medium of instruction, **only after six to seven years of solid linguistic grounding**.

This approach enhances comprehension, deepens literacy, builds learner confidence and bridges the gap between home and school.



**Honourable Speaker**, a well-educated, skilled, and empowered youth is the foundation of economic growth, poverty eradication, and good governance. President Cyril Ramaphosa echoed these very sentiments in his Opening of Parliament Address in July 2024, when he said, and I quote: ***“A well-functioning and quality education system is the foundation upon which economic growth and social transformation must be built.”*** This was further reinforced by the outstanding achievement of the class of 2024 in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations, where the country recorded its highest pass rate at **87%**, with nearly half of the learners achieving bachelor passes.

In this context, the Free State continues to set the national benchmark for academic excellence. In a historic and unprecedented achievement, the Free State became the first province in South Africa to surpass the **90%** mark, achieving a remarkable **91%** pass rate in the 2024 NSC results with **four out of five of our districts performing above 90% pass rate**. We have also seen a significant rise in Bachelor passes from 44.7% in 2023 to 48.2% in 2024.

**Honourable Speaker**, the 2024 NSC results have powerfully reaffirmed that the education performance gap between township and former model C schools is significantly closing, and that excellence knows no boundary of geography or privilege. Schools such as **Thuto ke Lesedi and Cedar Secondary, both in Zamdela Sasolburg, Dikwena Secondary in Qwaqwa, Oranjekraag Combined in Xhariep, and Breda Combined in Fouriesburg**, have all achieved a **100% pass rate**, with exceptional Bachelor passes ranging from **81% to 90.4%**, a clear evidence of the rising academic quality and improving standards in our township and rural schools.

Equally inspiring are top-10 learners hailing from quintile 1–3 schools, these are **Lehlohonolo Mokhothu (JC Motumi SS), Nthabeleng Malakoane (Rantsane SS), Puseletso Tsosang (Tsebo SS), Letlotlo Ntoahae (Ventersburg CS), and Lerato Khutlane (Ntemoseng SS)**, who have defied the odds to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the best in the province. Our collective commitment to transforming township education represents a beacon of hope and excellence for our people.



**Honourable Speaker**, I am thrilled to share yet another cause for celebration: Leifo Iziko Secondary School girls from Petsana, in Reitz were crowned **Provincial Champions** of the **Kay Motsepe School Netball Cup** in Bloemfontein in May 2024, under the auspices of the Motsepe Foundation. As champions, they qualified for the **13th International Youth Netball Challenge** in **Singapore** (23–29 November 2024), where they secured a **bronze medal**. This showcases talent, resilience, and global competitiveness of our young athletes in the Free State.

**Honourable Speaker**, for the past five consecutive years, the department has consistently qualified for the infrastructure incentive grant by meeting the planning requirements of the National Treasury and the Department of Basic Education, securing an additional **R474.4 million** for the provincial fiscus. In the 2024/25 financial year, the department's strong infrastructure performance earned it an additional **R50 million** from National Treasury, reallocated from underperforming provinces to further enhance educational infrastructure development.

**Honourable Speaker**, in our continued pursuit of service excellence and administrative alignment, we have formally reconfigured the erstwhile **Motheo Education District**, which is now officially recognised as the **Mangaung Metropolitan Education District**, in line with the latest municipal demarcation dispensation. This development ensures that our education planning and service delivery are better synchronised with the District Development Model.

Furthermore, **Honourable Speaker**, we are pleased to confirm that plans to relocate the Xhariep Education District Office to its own dedicated premises in Trompsburg are at an advanced stage, with the relocation expected to be finalised before the end of the academic year. In the spirit of the African proverb, which says ***“The sun does not forget a village just because it is small”***, the relocation will not only improve accessibility and administrative efficiency, but it also serves as a catalyst for local development and economic renewal in the heart of Xhariep, reminding us that every corner of our province deserves the light of progress.



**Honourable Speaker**, even as we celebrate our successes, we cannot turn a blind eye to the surmountable obstacles that stand in the way of delivering the high-quality education every child deserves. These are:

- recurrent budget cuts,
- conversion of eligible Grade R practitioners to permanent teaching posts,
- delayed completion of infrastructure projects and protracted procurement processes,
- aging school buildings and overcrowded classrooms,
- limited Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure and uneven connectivity to schools,
- shortage of qualified teachers, particularly in critical subjects and in rural areas, and
- safety of learners, teachers and schools.

**Honourable Speaker**, we take this opportunity to remember the passing of Mr Mosiwa Tshabagae, a devoted mathematics teacher at Kgololosego Secondary School, who was brutally murdered on 23 September 2024. We also pause to honour the memory of **13-year-old Mbali Mlaba** of Vulindlela Primary School, whose tragic passing on 8 April 2025 highlights the devastating impact of bullying in our schools. We extend our deepest condolences to their families. We are equally alarmed by the surge in gender-based violence in our schools. We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to eradicating bullying and Gender-Based Violence (GBV), strengthening psychosocial support, and building safe, nurturing school environments where every learner and educator is protected, respected, and empowered.

## **MEDIUM-TERM DEVELOPMENT PLAN (MTDP) AND EDUCATION SECTOR PRIORITIES**

**Honourable Speaker**, we recently finalized the Department's 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, rooted in the **Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP) 2024–2029**. Each of our programmes, emanating from the strategic plan, is purposefully aligned with the three Strategic Priorities of the MTDP and directly supports the priorities of the basic education sector for the 7th Administration. The provincial department has adopted the following **six sector priorities** for the current administration:

1. Improved access to Early Childhood Development (ECD).
2. Improved literacy and numeracy skills across all phases of schooling.
3. Improved access to inclusive education and strengthened social cohesion.
4. Improved access to training and professional development opportunities for Teachers and School Management Teams.



5. Improved safety and quality of schooling environments and infrastructure development.
6. Curriculum recovery and offering of skills and competencies for the changing world.

The above sector priorities will advance the governments' national strategic priorities in the following ways:-

### **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND JOB CREATION**

- Implementation of the Three-Stream Model and the rollout of Digital and Science Education in schools to build the skills sets needed in the economy.
- The roll-out of School Infrastructure projects aimed at stimulating local economy.
- Creation of job opportunities through initiatives such as internships, Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP), Basic Education Employment Initiative (BEEI), etc.

### **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: REDUCING POVERTY AND TACKLING THE HIGH COST OF LIVING**

Through our pro-poor policies and programmes such as ECD, school nutrition, no-fee paying schools, hostel projects and learner transport, we ensure that no learner is left behind whilst cushioning our people from high costs of living.

### **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: BUILDING A CAPABLE, ETHICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL STATE**

- Professionalised education through Teacher and Leadership Development,
- Ethical governance and values in education,
- Modernised systems through digital transformation and data-informed planning.

These measures enhance institutional capability, accountability and delivery efficiency.

### **1. BUDGET ALLOCATION: PROGRESS ON 2024/ 2025 COMMITMENTS AND SECTOR PRIORITIES FOR 2025/2026:**

**Honourable Speaker**, for the 2025/2026 financial year, the Free State Department of Education has been allocated a budget of R18.889 billion, marking a 5.45% increase from the previous year's allocation of R17.895 billion (**Refer to the Annexure**). Looking ahead, the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) reflects a projected allocation of **R19.632 billion for 2026/2027**, and **R20.498 billion for 2027/2028**. While this upward adjustment is welcomed, it must be acknowledged that it occurs within the broader context of continued fiscal constraints, requiring us to exercise rigorous financial discipline, innovation in service delivery, and a sharper focus on impact-driven spending.



## 1.1 EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD)

### 1.1.1 Early Childhood Development Centres

**Honourable Speaker**, the President reaffirmed Early Childhood Development (ECD) as a national priority, underscoring its vital role in promoting equality and building a just, inclusive society. In 2024/2025, we recorded significant increase in enrolment from **72,742 to 90,873** children, growing the number of centres from **1,410 to 1,571**, and ensuring equitable support through subsidies and resources for previously unfunded centres. Infrastructure upgrades completed in **QwaQwa and Edenburg** reinforced safety and quality in compliance with the **Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005)**. In addition, in 2024, we have successfully trained a total of 1005 ECD practitioners on the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), upskilled 291 ECD practitioners towards NQF Level 4 - so that every classroom is led by professionals equipped with the latest early learning methodologies.

**Honourable Speaker**, in 2025/2026 financial year, we have allocated a budget of **R335.8 million to ECD**. Our **Bana Pele Mass Registration Drive** will ensure that **100** new ECD centres are formally registered and integrated into South African Schools Administration and Management System (SA-SAMS), ensuring no child is excluded from the education system.

This drive will ensure that **75,705** eligible children receive crucial early learning support. An estimated total of **6 993** children stand to benefit from the subsidy, compared to the 2024/25 Financial Year. Among others, the subsidy is meant to provide much-needed nutrition, preventing stunting and malnutrition, which disproportionately affect children from marginalized communities. As part of paying homage to Nelson Mandela's legacy and honouring the ANC's commitment to restoring dignity, we will upgrade the infrastructure of **15** ECD centres aimed at eliminating pit toilets in ECDs in **Thaba Nchu, Zastron, QwaQwa, and Virginia**.

### 1.1.2 GRADE R

**Honourable Speaker**, the enactment of the BELA Act has declared Grade R as a compulsory entry point into formal schooling. In 2024, we trained **640** Grade R teachers and assessed **565** learners across **103** schools and ECD sites for school readiness at both the start and end of the year.



We also conducted **three (3)** Grade R management and funding roadshows across all five districts, while ensuring the procurement of critical resources through Norms and Standards to strengthen Grade R delivery in both public schools and ECD sites.

**Honourable Speaker**, in 2025/2026, we will provide learning materials, classroom furniture and expand access to structured learning opportunities. We will also construct **51** new Grade R classrooms across **17** schools, a decisive step towards universal Grade R access. Recognizing that the quality of education is directly linked to teacher competence, we will train:

- 600 grade R practitioners on perceptual skills, equipping them with structured early learning manuals,
- 300 grade R teachers in ECD Centres,
- 650 grade R teachers on numeracy (content assessment and methodology), and
- induction of 20 newly appointed Grade R practitioners.

## 1.2 FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

**Honourable Speaker**, in response to the reading crisis and poor performance in mathematics highlighted in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) Report of 2021 and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) Report of 2023 respectively, the Department has:

- conducted baseline language and mathematics assessments in over 190 primary schools,
- we capacitated over **7,000 educators** through targeted training initiatives including the following:
  - Jolly Phonics training for 1,200 Grade 1 teachers
  - Reading methodology training for 500 Grade 2 teachers.
  - Primary Schools Reading Improvement Programme (PSRIP),
  - Mathematics content, methodology and assessment training for 1095 Grade 1 – 6 teachers,
  - Reading Enrichment Programme for 137,090 Grade 1 – 7 learners, and
  - Mental Mathematics competitions for 3,200 Grade 3 – 7 learners.

**Honourable Speaker**, an estimated amount of **R 6 million** has been set aside for the implementation of the Provincial Literacy and Numeracy Strategy in 2025/26.



To ensure effective implementation, we have actively rallied parents, SGBs and primary schools across the province, securing their buy-in around centering primary education as a programme and the bedrock of future academic success. Addressing the reading crisis remains a **top priority** as we strive to strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, to boost curriculum delivery and subject leadership across key learning areas, we will:

- **Provide Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM):** Schools will receive a broad range of culturally relevant, age-appropriate reading materials to enhance instruction and meet diverse learner needs.
- **Strengthen Partnerships:** Collaborations with local libraries, publishers, and community organisations will expand access to reading resources and support sustainable literacy programmes including reading clubs.
- **Conduct Teacher Development Programmes:** These will include the training of over **4500** teachers and subject heads, training of **1000** teachers on language content and methodology, and encourage participation in annual reading conference.
- **Conduct Learner Enrichment Programmes:** 300 Schools will participate in Language Enrichment activities in the new financial year. Literacy and numeracy competitions will be enhanced to foster a love for learning and showcase learner talents.
- **Monitor and Track Reading Progress of all Grade 1-7 learners:** Schools will be required to record and report reading proficiency levels of learners to enable targeted support.

### 1.3 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

**Honourable Speaker,** inclusive education lies at the heart of our constitutional commitment to equity, dignity, and access for all. In the 2024/2025 financial year, the Department made substantial strides towards this vision:

- Of the three hostels that we are currently building, one of them, namely Oranjekrag, has been completed while construction is underway at Boitumelong in Thaba Nchu and Trompsburg in the Xhariep District,
- We repurposed un-utilized components of schools' infrastructure in each district to support learners with moderate intellectual disabilities, embedding practical, life-enhancing skills for sustainable independence.



**We also provided specialised training and support programmes in the following areas:**

- Psychosocial support benefiting **893** learners,
- A total of **908** teachers and **70** officials were trained on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy, psychosocial support, and concessions processes, and
- Provision of assistive devices, specialised LTSM and professional support for Children with profound intellectual disabilities across 47 Special Care Centres.

**Honourable Speaker**, in the 2025/2026 financial year, we are scaling up our commitment to inclusive education with renewed energy and resources. An amount of **R1.7 million** has been set aside to continue the rollout of specialised SIAS training for teachers and officials. We are allocating **R33 million** through the Learners with Severe to Profound Intellectual Disabilities (LSPID) Grant to enhance support for these children, including the provision of assistive devices, specialised learning and teaching support materials (LTSM), and the employment of therapists and caregivers. Scholar transport for special schools' learners is also receiving a boost, to ensure reliable, accessible mobility.

To build resilience among our learners against social ills, we will intensify our **Life Skills** programmes. We are advancing the re-purposing of schools like Monyatsi Primary School in Bloemfontein, Refihlile Primary School in Botshabelo, Dirisanang Primary School in Thabong, Welkom, Villiers Combined School in Villiers, Boitumelong Special School in Thaba Nchu, and Ikanyegeng Combined School in Jacobsdal into Schools of Skills, offering Technical Occupational Curricula that equip learners with practical skills in fields such as Agricultural Studies, Consumer Studies, Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Technology, Hairdressing, Personal Care, and Ancillary Health Care.

#### **1.4 TEACHER DEVELOPMENT, CAPACITATION & RECOGNITION**

**Honourable Speaker**, in the 2024/25 financial year, we provided teacher development and capacity building through:

- Training of **1030** Foundation Phase teachers on reading methodology,
- Induction of newly appointed School Management Teams (SMTs) and teachers,
- Enrolment of 93 SMT Members in the Advanced Diploma in Education: School Leadership and Management programme,



- Training of Grade 1-8 teachers in partnership with Teachers Across Borders: Southern Africa (**TABSA**), in Life Skills, Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Technology, as well as in Coding and Robotics,
- Training of **1537** teachers on inclusion, and **1138** teachers on ICT integration and Basic ICT skills, and
- Training of **1186** teachers on Psychosocial Support Policy.

**Honourable Speaker**, annually, we proudly recognise and celebrate our Free State educators who have shown excellence in teaching through the **National Teaching Awards**:

- **Tiisetso Daniel Chaka** of **Thiboloha Special School** took **1st place in Special Needs Teaching** and drove away with a car,
- **Alinah Majobo Dikgang** of **Phomolong Public School** earned **2nd place in Grade R Teaching**, and
- **Lucia Bongiwe Cele** of **Tiisetsang Secondary School** secured **3rd place in Secondary School Leadership**.

These champions of education have brought immense pride to our province, as they are now mentoring peers - showcasing our commitment to continuous professional growth and excellence.

**Honourable Speaker**, for the 2025/26 financial year, we have allocated a budget of **R 44 451 million** for professional development and psychosocial support in underperforming schools. This includes resources for teacher wellness, resilience-building initiatives, and continued participation in the **National Teaching Awards**.

Thus, we will implement a robust programme of professional development, governance strengthening, and psychosocial support to improve the quality of education delivery across the province in the new financial year. Teachers across all grades and subjects will benefit from ongoing training on content, methodology, and assessment in critical subjects, including specialised sessions delivered in partnership with TABSA. In addition, we will train:

- 1,000 ECD practitioners on the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) and related matters. This will be complemented by the training of matrons, social workers, and departmental officials who support ECD centres,



- Foundation Phase educators on effective subject content and methodology, as well as on the teaching of reading,
- 1,000 teachers will be trained on inclusive education, ensuring all learners, including those with barriers to learning, receive quality support,
- Grade 10–12 technical school teachers, supported by quarterly workshops across all technical specialisations,
- 1,200 teachers on digital literacy and ICT integration,
- newly appointed SMT members and teachers, and
- School Governing Bodies (SGBs) on financial management to ensure improved governance and accountability,
- 200 teachers from underperforming schools will attend psychosocial support sessions.

## 1.5 SCHOOL SAFETY AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

**Honourable Speaker**, ensuring safe, dignified, and future-ready learning environments is not only a policy imperative - it is a moral obligation. In the 2024/25 financial year, we installed security fencing in 47 schools, safeguarding schools, learners and educators. We trained 1,000 School Safety Committee members, including SGB representatives, Safety Officers, and Probation Practitioners, to implement school-specific safety plans. Our strategy includes values-driven education and positive behavioural change through community dialogues, learner ambassador programmes, and a transformative partnership with NICRO to cultivate safety champions in schools.

We have formally linked all schools and registered ECD centres to their local SAPS stations to ensure coordinated response to any safety threats. In 2025/26, a budget of **R5 million has been set aside for school safety**, and our interventions will focus on the following: -

- broadening of search-and-seizure operations in collaboration with law enforcement agencies,
- community engagements through school safety campaigns led by our QLTC structures,
- broadening of our anti-crime campaigns to reach 10,000 learners across various districts,



- facilitation dialogues for 1,000 Grade 8 and 9 learners on violence prevention, substance abuse, bullying and gangsterism,
- training of 100 School Safety Ambassadors in partnership with National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders (NICRO).

**Honourable Speaker**, in **2024/25**, we completed three (3) new schools – DR Sello Primary School in Rammulutsi, Viljoenskroon, Malebogo Primary School in Hertzogville, and Arbeitsgenot Primary School in Mangaung, which we are in the process of renaming after the late Free State MEC for Education, **Dr PHI Makgoe**. Currently, six new schools and three replacement schools are under construction, each at varying stages of completion.

School Name	Type of School	District	Town	Progress
Malebogo	P/S	Lejweleputswa	Hertzogville	100%
DR Sello	P/S	Fezile Dabi	Viljoenskroon	100%
Arbeitsgenot: Replacement	P/S	Mangaung	Bloemfontein	100%
Trompsburg	Spec/S	Xhariep	Trompsburg	31%
Matlafalang	P/S	Mangaung	Bloemfontein	70%
Morena Tshohisi	P/S	Thabo Mofutsanyana	Harrismith	47%
Father Balink	P/S	Fezile Dabi	Parys	89%
Tsebo Ulwazi	S/S	Fezile Dabi	Frankfort	39%
Bergman	S/S	Mangaung	Bloemfontein	37%
Dr. Blok: Replacement	S/S	Mangaung	Bloemfontein	80%
Olympia: Replacement	P/S	Mangaung	Bloemfontein	43%
Western Holdings: Replacement	P/S	Lejweleputswa	Welkom	19%

**Honourable Speaker**, an amount of **R1.085 billion** has been allocated for the 2025/26 financial year for infrastructure development. As part of our continued commitment to expanding access and addressing overcrowding, procurement processes will commence in the new financial year for the construction of **three new schools**: *Kgotso Taole Technical Secondary School* in *Botshabelo*, *Thuto Ke Lesedi Secondary School* in *Sasolburg*, and *Langenhoven Park Comprehensive School* in *Bloemfontein*.



**In addition, this investment will enable us to facilitate:**

- construction of 51 new Grade R classrooms,
- renovation of 15 ECD centres,
- development of two state-of-the-art science laboratories, and
- critical maintenance and upgrades of 43 schools.

Furthermore, through these upgrades, we will be re-purposing some of the academic schools into technical, agricultural and arts schools amongst others. For **technical education**, schools including *Kgabareng, Concordia, JC Motumi, Kutlwanong, Navalsig, Moroka, and Kwetlison* will be enhanced for industry-aligned skills. To support **agricultural education**, we are transforming *Boiphihlelo Secondary School in Mokwallo, Vredefort, Goudveld Secondary School in Welkom, Vierhoek Intermediate School in Welkom, Bainsvlei Combined in Bloemfontein, and Vrede Primary School in Vrede* into modern agricultural training hubs. In the **creative arts sector**, *Makwane Secondary* will be repurposed into a dedicated **Articon School**, cultivating talent and careers in the growing creative economy. Furthermore, recognising our constitutional obligation to inclusive education, we are repurposing schools with underutilised classrooms in each district to support learners with **Moderate Intellectual Disabilities (MID)**. These schools will offer specialised programmes that equip learners with practical life and vocational skills - empowering them **for lifelong independence and meaningful economic participation**. This is infrastructure investment with purpose: to transform education, uplift communities, and prepare all learners for the world ahead.

**Honourable Speaker**, in addition to the above infrastructure improvements, the department will provide existing schools with Ablution blocks **(11 schools)**, additional Classrooms **(5 schools)**, Security Fences **(61 schools)**, Laboratories **(4 schools)**, Nutrition centres **(3 schools)** and admin blocks **(10 schools)**:

Planned Projects for 2025/2026	Number of Schools	Number of Facilities
Ablution Facilities	11 schools	16 blocks
Additional Classrooms	5 schools	20 classrooms
Fences	61 schools	61 fencings
Laboratories	4 schools	8 laboratories
Nutrition Centres	3 schools	3 nutrition blocks
Admin Blocks	10 schools	10 admin blocks



**Honourable Speaker**, we are taking bold and unapologetic steps to safeguard schools from persistent water and electricity disruptions. In 2025/2026, we will implement targeted alternative water provisioning in **10 of our schools**, including water sourcing, purification, and ensuring a **minimum of 48 hours onsite storage**. In parallel, **13 schools** will receive **standby power solutions** to mitigate the impact of load shedding.

## 1.6 SKILLS FOR THE CHANGING WORLD

### 1.6.1 Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics - STEM Education

**Honourable Speaker**, in 2024/2025, we continued to equip our learners with practical, job-ready skills - particularly in globally competitive **STEM fields** essential for their future employability and meaningful economic participation. We invested in digital and technical education infrastructure to ensure learners are prepared for the demands of the modern world. In 2024/ 2025, we have made the following strides:

- We procured Coding and Robotics Kits for 60 primary schools for grades 4-7
- We expanded full-service Coding & Robotics solutions to 7 secondary schools for grades 8 and 9.
- We upgraded Computer Applications Technology & Information Technology laboratories in 10 secondary schools for grades 10-12.
- We procured Practical Assessment Tasks materials for 31 technical schools targeting grades 10-12.

Our Technical schools increased from 29 in 2024 to 31 in 2025. Additional 15 more schools have introduced Digital Technology in Grades 8 and 9, embedding vital skills in coding, automation, and Artificial Intelligence (AI). In addition, through the co-funded PROMATHS Project with Investec and Harmony Gold Mining Limited respectively, we provided targeted Mathematics and Science support to 2 000 grade 10-12 learners across three districts, ensuring expert guidance in these critical subjects. The PROMATHS Project remains a key priority as we continue to expand Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics programmes, strengthen learner support, and build the skills that will shape our nation's future. In August 2024, we successfully hosted the 5th Provincial Technical Schools Skills Competition, where 117 learners and 56 teachers demonstrated their technical mastery.



This skills competition has become a launchpad for talent, with five learners earning national recognition, including one securing a prestigious R300,000 bursary - a clear proof of the untapped potential that exists in our province.

**Honourable Speaker**, in the current financial year, through the Maths, Science and Technology (MST) grant, we have allocated **R51.1 million** to enhance and expand existing interventions in STEM subjects, which will allow us to:

- equip 23 technical schools offering Electrical Technology in grade 8 and 9,
- support 31 schools offering Civil Technology in grade 8 and 9,
- support 29 schools offering Mechanical Technology in grade 8 and 9,
- procure natural science and technology kits, and
- procure Practical Assessment Tasks materials for 33 technical schools.

Through our partnership with MTN, the Department has launched a tailored Learner Management System (LMS) and will equip Quintile 1–3 schools with **20,000** tablets focused on key subjects like Maths, Science, and Technology.

**Honourable Speaker**, in view of our strategic partnership with the Chemical Industries Education and Training Authority (CHIETA), we are proud to highlight the transformation of the former Tshiya College of Education in QwaQwa into a Centre of Excellence in Skills Development. As a key outcome of this partnership, a state-of-the-art Smart Skills Centre will be officially handed over to the Free State Department of Basic Education by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Honourable Nobuhle Nkabane in July this year.

This innovative facility will provide access to virtual reality platforms for engineering-related programmes, 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution occupational qualifications, and essential digital skills training - empowering our rural communities and bridging the digital divide. We extend our sincere appreciation to the Minister for her visionary leadership and steadfast commitment to making this transformative initiative a reality.



### 1.6.2 Multi-Certification – A Pilot Project

**Honourable Speaker**, in our pursuit of a future-ready education system, we are proud to launch the multi-certification pilot project, empowering learners to graduate with the National Senior Certificate (NSC) and multiple, industry-relevant qualifications. This year, we will see some of our learners enrolling and graduating with additional certificates, boosting their employability and access to further opportunities in the following short courses:

- **Agricultural sector** - 300 Grade 10 and 12 learners - gaining vital skills in sheep handling, animal health, and lamb rearing. We have established Hendrik Potgieter Agricultural School as a dedicated Training Hub, with Seotlong, Trio, and Unicom schools joining as additional centres to ensure sustainability.
- **Engineering sector**, 45 Grade 12 learners will receive Arch Welding Certificates through **SA Truck Bodies**.
- **Tourism sector** - 60 Grade 10 learners will receive FET Certificates in Tourist Guiding through our partnership with the **Sector Education and Training Authority for Tourism**.
- **Telecommunications and ICT Sector** – we will facilitate provision of short course certificates in Cybersecurity, Digital Marketing and Data Analytics in partnership with **MTN**.
- **Telecommunications and ICT Sector** – we will provide accredited short courses on ICT infrastructure, Basic Software and Hardware Domain and Cloud Computing in partnership with **HUAWEI**.

**Honourable Speaker**, these interventions not only create opportunities for learners to thrive but also lay the foundation for a **self-reliant, skilled workforce** that contributes meaningfully to inclusive economic growth and job creation across the Free State.

## 1.7 OUR DIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MTDP STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

### 1.7.1 INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND JOB CREATION:

#### BASIC EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE (BEEI) PHASE V

**Honourable Speaker**, a total of **15 249** young people were employed across the Free State through the Basic Education Employment Initiative Phase 4 (previously known as the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative – PYEI), and were placed in **all** schools throughout the province.



This initiative also ensured that more learners received additional classroom support, more schools benefitted from essential administrative and infrastructure assistance, and more unemployed youth gained work experience. In the new financial year, **a total of 11 408** employment opportunities will be created. This is expected to ensure placement of **9 570** Education Assistants (EAs) and **1 838** General School Assistants (GSAs) in **784** schools across all districts.

## INTERNSHIP PROGRAMMES

**Honourable Speaker**, in 2024, we made tangible progress through the Internship and Work-Integrated Learning Programmes, ensuring that young graduates gained invaluable skills and experience to access sustainable employment. **Twenty-five (25)** Social Work Interns appointed in 2023 were converted into permanent employment with effect from September 2024. We appointed **114** interns in administration and **48** young people across five districts as Change Agents for Teaching and Learning on a three-year contract basis. The number of Change Agents for Teaching and Learning has been increased to **70** for the new financial year. We have also appointed **116** young people as interns, **83** of whom have just commenced their internship on 01 April 2025 whilst **Twenty-five (25)** have already commenced in October 2024. This is more than an investment in young people; it is an investment in the future of our nation!

## EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME (EPWP)

**Honourable Speaker**, in the 2024/25 financial year, the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) created **215** work opportunities in the Free State Department of Education, directly offering much needed employment opportunities mainly in Xhariep communities while improving learning conditions in our schools. In the 2025/2026 financial year, the Department will create **173** EPWP employment opportunities, with a deliberate focus on capacity building the Xhariep Education District.

### 1.7.2 REDUCING POVERTY & TACKLING THE HIGH COST OF LIVING

#### LEARNER SUPPORT

**Honourable Speaker**, we have intensified efforts to eliminate socio-economic barriers that hinder learner success.



In the **2024/2025** financial year, we strengthened the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP), where we saw **595,339** learners in **775** schools receiving nutritious daily meals. Looking ahead to **2025/2026**, a budget of **R 592 500 million** has been set aside to increase the number of learners benefiting from the NSNP to **600 000**, this will be complemented by placement of **3 338** Voluntary Food Handlers.

**Honourable Speaker**, in ensuring equitable access to education - particularly for rural and special needs learners, we have provided safe, daily transport to over **9,500 learners from 147 farm schools** and **1,200 learners from seven special schools**, reaffirming that geography must never be a barrier to learning. In 2025/2026, we have set aside a budget of **R 112 404 million** to increase the number of learners benefiting from the learner transport programme. Strengthening our commitment to safety, we have signed a new Protocol Agreement with the Department of Roads and Transport to enforce rigorous vehicle inspections and compliance standards.

We will further expand our commitment to learner support services through the opening of new hostels at **Leboneng Special School** and **Oranjekrag school**. These targeted investments will provide secure, dignified, and supportive accommodation for some of our most vulnerable learners, ensuring that no child is left behind in their pursuit of education and personal growth.

### **1.7.3 BUILDING A CAPABLE, ETHICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL STATE**

**Honourable Speaker**, over the past five financial years, the Department achieved unqualified audit outcomes, reflecting accurate and complete financial reporting. We are intensifying efforts to strengthen our financial management and operational efficiency in **2025/2026**. As part of this, we will be undertaking a comprehensive skills audit in collaboration with the Provincial Treasury, in order to ensure that our human resource capacity is strategically aligned to drive excellence, efficiency, and accountability across the education system.



## Promoting Social Cohesion and Values in Education

**Honourable Speaker**, the 2024/25 financial year was marked by major milestones in curriculum enrichment, sports development, early childhood education, and nation-building. Highlights include:

- **6,800 learners** across all districts actively were engaged through **Mass Participation Programmes** focusing on sports and cultural activities.
- **Successful co-hosting of the National School Sport Championships (Autumn Champs)** in Bloemfontein from **2–8 April 2025** with the **Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation**, featuring athletics and swimming, showcasing provincial excellence.
- **Commemoration of national days** such as **Human Rights Day, Youth Day, and Women's Day**, instilling constitutional values among learners.
- Through the **SYRAC** programme, **2,000 young leaders** were empowered with leadership skills.
- **10,000 learners** were engaged through the **Values in Education** initiative, fostering ethical leadership and citizenship.

**Scaling up in the 2025/26 Financial Year**, the Department is determined to enhance these successes through:

- An allocated budget of **R8.5 million** to expand **Mass Participation and Nation Building Programmes** in the form of sports and recreational activities, targeting **8,500 learners** across districts.
- Strengthening the **Sports Youth Recreation Arts & Culture (SYRAC) leadership programme** by training **2,500 learner leaders**.
- Expanding the **Values in Education programme** to reach **12,000 learners**.

**Honourable Speaker**, these interventions are designed not only to promote active citizenship and leadership among learners, but also to instil positive values, discipline, and a sense of belonging - critical tools in the fight against social ills such as bullying, substance abuse, and other forms of anti-social behaviour within our schools and communities.



Through empowerment, engagement, and values-driven education, we are building a generation that chooses resilience, respect, and responsibility.

#### 1.7.4 CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) INITIATIVES

**Honourable Speaker**, we remain steadfast in our commitment to forging dynamic and strategic partnerships with the private sector and key stakeholders through targeted Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. These partnerships are not merely transactional - they are transformative vehicles for socio-economic empowerment, particularly for women and youth in our province. We are prioritising high-impact sectors such as textiles - with a focus on localised production of school uniforms - and agriculture, through the establishment and expansion of sustainable food gardens. These initiatives are designed to create jobs, stimulate local economies, and build long-term capacity within our communities. To give full expression to this vision, the Department will convene a Partnerships Summit in 2025, which will serve as a catalytic platform to mobilise support, align efforts, and foster purposeful collaboration between government, business, and civil society. Together, we seek to co-create pathways to inclusive development and economic resilience.

#### CONCLUSION

**Honourable Speaker**, we call on educators, parents, community leaders, and corporate partners to collaborate with us in building **a stronger and brighter future for every child in the Free State**. Let this budget be more than just numbers – let it be a collective commitment to making education a fundamental right, not a privilege. As **Mama Charlotte Maxeke** once profoundly said, "*If you can rise, bring someone with you.*" It is in this very spirit that we, as a department, deeply believe that Education is the most powerful tool for transformation, and that together, we will ensure that every child in the Free State reaches their full potential for a prosperous future.

**Honourable Speaker**, before I leave the podium, allow me to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to the Head of Department, Advocate Malakoane and his team for their invaluable contribution towards this budget vote.



Let me also extend my appreciation to my organisation, the African National Congress, the Premier of the Free State – Mme MaQueen Letsoha-Mathae, Members of the Executive Council and Members of the Portfolio Committee, for the unwavering support and guidance they always provide. We are indebted to the people of the Free State, School Governing Bodies, organised labour, QLTC structures, school leadership teams, teachers, corporate partners, NGOs, CBOs, municipalities, provincial departments, universities, churches for their contribution and tireless support. To my family and friends, thank you for being my rock. **Honourable Speaker**, I hereby table the **Department of Education's Budget Vote for 2025/2026. I thank you!**

**ANNEXURE A: BUDGET ALLOCATION 2025/26: EDUCATION BUDGET VOTE - 2025/26**

ALLOCATION PER PROGRAMME	AMOUNT R'000
Administration	1 440 575
Public Ordinary School Education	13 785 972
Independent Schools Subsidies	126 752
Public Special School Education	767 094
Early Childhood Development	711 282
Infrastructure Development	1 109 585
Examination & Education Related Services	948 131
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 889 391</b>

ALLOCATION PER ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION	AMOUNT R'000
Compensation of Employees	14 282 707
Goods and Services	1 328 899
Interest and Rent on Land	84
Transfers and Subsidies	2 525 580
Capital	752 121
Financial Assets	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 889 391</b>

CONDITIONAL GRANTS	AMOUNT R'000
HIV/AIDS (Life Skills Edu) Grant	11 640
Learners with Profound Intellectual Disabilities Grant	33 993
National School Nutrition Programme	592 500
Maths, Science & Technology Grant	51 189
Education Infrastructure Grant	1 050 500
EPWP Integrated Grant to Provinces	6 721
<b>Early Childhood Development Grant</b>	<b>96 038</b>
ECD Maintenance	11 148
ECD Subsidy Expansion	84 890
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1 842 581</b>