

ADVANCING YOUR RIGHT TO SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

MATRIC RESULTS 2019 – LEADERSHIP IN PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS AND DISTRICT OFFICES: FIXING THE GROSS AND UNACCAPTABLE DISPARITIES IN ACCESS AND PERFORMANCE

17 January 2020

The Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, announced the results of the Class of 2019 on Tuesday, 7 January 2020. The Minister noted that the matric class of 2019 achieved an overall pass rate of [81.3%](#); a 3.1% increase from 78.2% in 2018. We welcome the improvement in the results for the National Senior Certificate (NSC). The Department of Basic Education (DBE) also noted that “all the 75 districts are performing at 60% and above with 45 of the districts (compared to 34 in 2018) performing at 80% and above”.¹

Worth noting is that six (6) of the top ten (10) districts performed above 85% while four (4) had a pass rate above 90%. Six (6) are in Gauteng; two (2) in the Free State; one (1) in the North West; and one (1) in the Northern Cape. The Free State was the top achieving province with a pass rate of 88.4%. In 2018 – the province was also home to the top performing education district; Fezile Dabi. Amongst the reasons attributed by the District Director to this success was the provincial leadership’s concerted efforts on providing strategic support to districts and of district offices providing critical support to schools. In addition to this, professional development, instructional leadership and stakeholder collaboration are [emphasized](#).

Illustrated below are the ten (10) best performing districts:

Number	Province	District	Pass rate
1.	Gauteng	Tshwane South	93.3%

¹ BusinessTech. 2020. Here are South Africa’s matric results for 2019. Accessed from <https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/364724/here-are-south-africas-matric-results-for-2019/>

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2.	Gauteng	Gauteng North	90.7%
3.	Gauteng	Tshwane North	90.6%
4.	Free State	Fezile Dabi	90.3%
5.	Northern Cape	Namaqua	89.9%
6.	Gauteng	Sedibeng East Sedibeng East	89.6%
7.	North West	Bojanala Platinum in the North West	89.6%
8.	Free State	Xhariep	88.9%
9.	Gauteng	Ekurhuleni North	88.8%
10.	Gauteng	Johannesburg West	88.7%

In recent years – the Eastern Cape appears to be redeeming itself from the position of the worst-performing province. Similar trends are evident at the district level. Eleven (11) of the twelve (12)

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districts within the Eastern Cape obtained a pass rate of above 70% with the exception of Amathole West.² Illustrated below is the district pass rate between 2017 and 2019:

District	% Pass rate by year			Difference 2018-19
	2017	2018	2019	
Alfred Nzo East	62.4	71.9	77.6	5.7
Alfred Nzo West	67.3	72.8	76.9	4.1
Amathole East	56.7	68.7	77.2	8.5
Amathole West	54.1	55.6	64.7	9.1
Buffalo City	65.9	73.0	77.9	4.9
Chris Hani East	61.8	70.2	71.9	1.7
Chris Hani West	67.9	69.1	75.4	6.3

² 2019 National Senior Certificate Results Booklet.

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Joe Gqabi	67.0	67.4	76.4	9.0
Nelson Mandela	72.6	76.1	81.4	5.3
OR Tambo Coastal	61.7	69.6	77.6	8.1
OR Tambo Inland	69.3	71.2	75.6	4.5
Sarah Baartman	71.8	73.1	73.9	0.9

Nelson Mandela was the top performing district increasing from 72.6% in 2017 to 81.4% in 2019. While Amathole West was the worst performing district between 2017 and 2018, we welcome the highest improvement of 9.1% from 55.6% in 2018 to 64.7% in 2019. It is still of concern, however to note that the Eastern Cape does not feature in the top 10 districts. In fact, that the deep rural provinces and districts do not feature indicates that more focus should be dedicated to developing and improving the quality of basic education in the rural provinces. Furthermore, the overall pass rate obscures the realities of learners who drop out of school before they reach grade 12. The organisation Equal Education (EE) rightly points out that “while the release of the matric results remains a critical moment for hundreds of thousands of learners, these results do not provide a good indication of the health of the education system as a whole”.³

Gauteng was in the second place, having achieved 87.2% in the 2019 NSC results. The Eastern Cape achieved 76.5%, an improvement of 5.9% from 70.6% in 2018. We, particularly, congratulate the Eastern on having the highest improvement of 5.9%. This is encouraging and gives hope for the continued improvement of the results.

³ Equal Education pre-matric results statement: Potentially drastic education reforms will not curb high dropout rates reflected in matric results. 7 January 2019. Accessed from <https://equaleducation.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Equal-Education-pre-matric-results-2019-statement.pdf>

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Minister Motshekga, noted that [6 districts \(1 in the Eastern Cape, and 5 in Limpopo\) performed at 64.7% and 69,9% respectively. Ten districts in the Eastern Cape, 5 in KwaZulu-Natal, 2 in Limpopo, 2 in Mpumalanga, 4 in the Northern Cape, and 1 in the Western Cape performed between 70% and 79%.](#)

The DBE policy on the organization, roles and responsibilities of education districts recognizes districts as the hubs of provincial education departments and central to improving access to education and supporting schools to excel in teaching and learning. The policy also underscores the country's unequal distribution of education opportunities as well as the "gross and unacceptable" disparities between high and low-performing districts. A question therefore, is what is needed to address such disparities?

The ECDOE has seen a myriad of noteworthy changes. Within the past decade it was famously labeled by the erstwhile Minister of Education as a department beset with the 'revolving door syndrome' owing to its leadership instability. For several years - key senior posts have seen a degree of continuity.

The ECDOE has also been the subject of multiple versions of Section 100 interventions as Cabinet recognized the department's sheer inability to undertake its mandate. These too are things of the past with ongoing support from the provincial executive.

The ECDOE has also seen a restructuring of its 23 districts to a mere 12 after several years of deliberation. The impact of this on educational performance requires robust interrogation. What impact has this had on the leadership, oversight and functioning of the ECDoE?

There remains a clear need to improve the quality of basic education from the foundation phase onwards and, not only in Grade 12. The DBE and provincial education departments should ensure that learners have access to quality early childhood development (ECD). Learners equipped with quality ECD are better prepared for the transition to primary school. The United Nation Children's Fund (Unicef), in its [first report on pre-primary education](#), explains that learners with quality ECD "reach higher levels of education and are more likely to develop the skills that the modern job market demands, including critical thinking, collaboration, resilience and creativity". The access to quality of education remains very poor mostly in the historically deprived areas of the Eastern Cape; some of the schools do not even meet the basic learning infrastructure requirements such as access to toilets, laboratories, libraries and Internet connections. For example, [the latest National Education Infrastructure Management System \(NEIMS\) report paints a very bleak picture with Eastern Cape still having 1 587 schools with pit latrines](#) only. Also, of the [5290 schools, only](#)

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[570 had internet connectivity for teaching and learning](#). One of the schools that continues to have infrastructure challenges is [Mcheni Primary School](#) outside Tsolo in the Eastern Cape. According to the National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030, “poor-quality education limits social mobility, further straining social relations”.⁴

We recommend that the DBE dedicates effort to ensuring that the infrastructure challenges in schools are eradicated. Improving the quality of basic education should be a critical priority for the 6th administration. More efforts should be dedicated towards ensuring that learners have access to quality education at the foundation phase. The NDP Vision 2030 emphasises that [children must be guaranteed access to high quality education and professional training throughout their education and working life](#). Therefore, the 6th administration should not only be obsessed with the pass rates in grade 12 but also access of children to quality basic education.

Finally - we are encouraged by the recent – albeit belated - publication of the revised organogram of the Eastern Cape Department of Education. The clear delineation of authority and responsibility constitutes a fundamental step towards strengthening leadership and accountability. What is now needed is a clear articulation of how the department intends to ensure the many changes result in eradicating the many gross and unacceptable disparities inherent in the education system.

For further information on this, please contact:

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⁴ National Development Plan Vision 2030 at page 362. Accessed from https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/ndp-2030-our-future-make-it-workr.pdf