

EduUpdates

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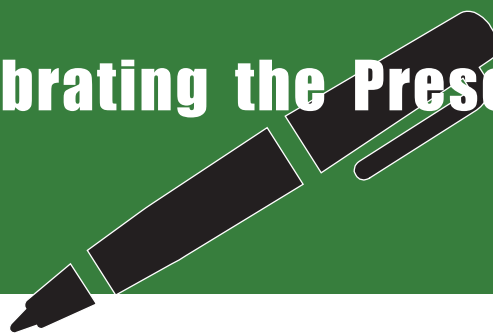
Mpumalanga Department of Education

JUNE Edition



Our Comrades Marathon Champions

Honouring the Past, Celebrating the Present, Building the Future



Dear Colleagues,

June is a month that stirs deep reflection and pride in the hearts of South Africans. It is a time when we pause to remember the bravery, courage and sacrifice of the youth of 1976, young people who stood up against injustice and inspired a movement that would shape the future of our country.

In this edition, we honour that legacy through the voices of today's youth — young professionals in our department who shared powerful reflections on what June 16 means to them.

Their insights are not only a reminder of the past, but a call to action for all of us: to listen, to act, and to continue building a society that truly empowers its youth.

We also spotlight the vital work of our Psychological Guidance and Social Support (PGSS) unit.

Their tireless commitment to the emotional and psychological wellbeing of learners and officials reminds us that support and care are essential ingredients for a thriving education system.

From the track to the workplace, we celebrate the spirit of perseverance and holistic wellbeing. Our colleagues who completed the Comrades Marathon have inspired us with their dedication, reminding us that resilience and endurance are not only for the race but for life itself.

In the same spirit, our recent Wellness in Action event highlighted the importance of caring for the mind and body.

It was a heartening display of togetherness, health consciousness, and community.

As we wrap up Youth Month, may we continue to create spaces where young voices are heard, where wellbeing is prioritised, and where we celebrate the achievements — big and small — that keep us moving forward as one.

Let us honour the past by investing in the present and believing in the future.

Wishing you an insightful and engaging read!

INSIDE

SPOTLIGHT ON PGSS

03

VOICES OF THE YOUTH

06

WELLNESS IN ACTION

08

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Mpumalanga Department of Education



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Spotlight on the Psychological Guidance and Social Support (PGSS) Unit

Supporting Learners Beyond the Classroom



In the heart of our Department of Education lies a dynamic, compassionate, and purpose-driven team – the Psychological Guidance and Social Support (PGSS) Unit. Operating under the Directorate: Inclusive Education and Education Support, this unit plays a pivotal role in promoting the overall wellbeing of learners across Mpumalanga.

Their Mandate: Learning with Dignity and Support

The PGSS Unit is dedicated to ensuring that all learners — regardless of background or circumstance — are supported emotionally, socially, and mentally, so they can thrive both academically and personally.

Their mission goes far beyond traditional education. They aim to foster resilience, prevent mental health issues, and equip learners with life skills to help them overcome challenges and shape brighter futures.

Key Focus Areas and Services

The unit's core offerings fall into three major streams: Career Guidance: From Grade 7 career dress-up days to Grade 12 exhibitions, learners receive support in subject choices, study skills, bursary applications, and aligning personal interests with future careers.

Psychosocial and Psychological Support: Individual and group counselling, trauma response, assessments for learning difficulties, and mental health awareness sessions are offered to learners in need.

Environmental Education: Learners engage with programs on sustainability, water and waste management, gardening, and science-based environmental activities aligned with CAPS.

Educators and officials are not left behind. The PGSS team capacitate teachers to identify psychosocial needs, manage learner behaviour, and support disclosures, all while maintaining key principles like confidentiality, child participation, and the best interest of the child.

When Crisis Calls, They Respond

The PGSS unit is often called upon during crises involving bullying, substance abuse, bereavement, sexual assault, suicide, or learning difficulties. Despite limited resources, their professionals strive to respond within the critical 72-hour trauma window. Whether it's a struggling Grade 8 learner or an entire school community affected by tragedy, PGSS stands ready to offer care and guidance.

Collaborative by Nature

PGSS doesn't work in isolation. Their partnerships span across:

Tertiary institutions, NGOs, SAPS, and other government departments for career guidance and trauma support.

Internal units like Curriculum, Life Skills, MST, School Safety, Legal Services, and Teacher Development, ensuring a holistic approach to learner development.

Their collaboration ensures that psychosocial support complements learning and contributes to a healthier, more inclusive schooling environment.

A Skilled Yet Stretched Team

With only 19 professionals province-wide, the PGSS team includes psychologists, social workers, career guidance specialists, and environmental educators. Each member plays a unique and critical role, yet the

sheer scale of need — nearly a million learners — means they are often overstretched and under-resourced.

Despite the strain, they continue to create impact stories daily — from helping a Grade 4 learner escape abuse, to guiding a high school learner into a top-10 matric spot through sustained career support and encouragement.

Challenges Faced

PGSS faces several challenges:

Being misunderstood or overlooked within the department.

A shortage of mental health practitioners and assessment tools. Budget constraints that hinder outreach, training, and follow-ups. Insufficient mental health literacy among educators.

Lack of psychosocial support for teachers themselves. These issues compound the team's already overwhelming caseload and limit the depth of their intervention.

Looking Ahead with Hope

Despite the hurdles, the vision is clear:

Every school should have Mental Health Champions.

Every learner should have access to screening, support, and referral.

The unit hopes to shift from reactive to preventative care, building more awareness and resilience in schools. A major development is their involvement in a national telehealth pilot, which will give learners, teachers, and parents access to virtual mental health support — a game changer for the sector.

Another exciting collaboration is with Kingdom Kome's "The Elements" series, which integrates GRIT and Constitutional Literacy into CAPS-aligned learner development programmes.

Final Word from the CES

"We are not just here to respond to crises — we are here to protect the learner's potential, to ensure that no child is left behind due to circumstances beyond their control. Our work is hard, but the reward is in the difference we make — every single day."

Led by Ms. KA Malapane, and supported by a passionate provincial team, the PGSS Unit embodies the values of Ubuntu, resilience, and compassion. They remind us all that education is not only about

Our Comrades Marathon Champions We Salute You!



We are filled with pride as we honour and celebrate our remarkable colleagues who took part in the 2025 Comrades Marathon — one of the most prestigious and grueling ultramarathons in the world.

This isn't just about running over 89.98 kilometers, this is about heart, discipline, and pushing the human spirit beyond limits. These champions trained with consistency, showed up with courage, and crossed the finish line with grace. Their journey is a powerful reminder of what's possible when determination meets purpose.

Please join us in congratulating these extraordinary individuals who carried the torch of excellence and resilience on behalf of us all:

Mr. Shadrack Nhlapho – from HR, Gert Sibande District Office, proudly completed his 7th Comrades Marathon. A true veteran and example of unwavering endurance.

Mr. Jan Naudé – another valued colleague who took on the challenge with incredible resolve.

Mr. Petros Ndlangamandla – from Simtfolile Secondary School, Mpuluzi Circuit, represented his school and district with pride.

Dr. Sebakane William Mashaba – from the Bohlabela District, ran with the strength and spirit of a true leader.

Mr. Ronald Mathebula – from Shobiyana School, Green Valley Circuit, who took each step with purpose and pride.

Mr. Samson Mnisi – Departmental Head at Khunjuliwe Secondary School, proved that leadership also means leading by example.

Mr. David Tshepo Tsotetsi – Principal of Nyandeni Primary School, who showed that principals don't just run schools — they run marathons too!

To all of you — we are so proud! Your determination has inspired not just your colleagues, but your schools, learners, and communities. You have proven that greatness is not only achieved in the office or classroom, but also on the road — where grit meets glory.

From all of us, thank you for representing us with such honour. We celebrate your commitment, your strength, and your unbreakable spirit. May this achievement continue to inspire others to chase their own goals — on and off the road.

Halala, Comrades!

We are cheering for you — today and always!

Voices of the Youth: What June 16 Means to Us



In the spirit of Youth Month, we gave the mic to the young voices within our department to share what June 16 means to them. Through their reflections, we hear not only the echoes of history but also the hopes, concerns, and dreams of a generation determined to shape a better tomorrow. Here's what they had to say.



What does youth month mean to you?

Youth Day is a powerful reminder of the strength, potential, and resilience of young people in shaping the future. To me it's a day to reflect on the sacrifices made by youth in history especially those who stood up for justice and equality and to recognize the importance of empowering the next generation. Today it feels like just another public holiday that people talk about without real action or change.

What can Government implement in order to bring back the significance of the youth day

To bring back the true significance of Youth Day/Month, the government needs to stop using it for publicity and start implementing real policies like job creation programs, better access to education, mentorship, while creating platforms that amplify their voices and encourage critical thinking, empathy, and youth representation in decision-making. Until then, it just

feels like a reminder of broken promises rather than a tribute to the youth who fought for freedom.

I suggest we stop pretending it's a celebration and start treating it as a serious call to action because without real support and accountability, Youth Day/month is just words.

Dr IS Cossa
International bursaries



What does youth month mean to you?

Youth month is a time to reflect on the power, potential, and resilience of young people. It reminds me of the sacrifices made by past generations of youth who fought for justice equality. Its also a reminder of the importance of uplifting young voices today to shape a better future.

What can Government implement in order to bring back the significance of the youth day

The Government can bring back the significance of youth day by investing in Educational Programs that teach the history and importance of the day organizing youth-led forums and events, funding youth entrepreneurship programs, and partnering with schools and communities to create platforms for youth to express their ideas and concerns. Government can also create a database system for graduates to make our youth a top priority when it comes

to employment. More job creation can decrease the high rates of unemployment youth in South African. Government can create an environment where young people feel valued, empowered to contribute to their communities and the nation's future.

Veronica Nonyane:

Secretary in the Chief Directors Office (Financial management)



What does youth month mean to you?

Youth month commemorates the bravery of young people. It serves as a reminder of the struggle for freedom and how imperative youth activism is in shaping a better future.

To me youth month emphasizes the importance of youth empowerment, it encourages young people to engage and take part in decision making that will foster change in our communities. It's a reminder that young people have a voice and have a lot of more influence, especially now that we live in the digital age where their voices can be heard far and wide. An example of this is how the youth used their voices and caused an uproar in the country over #CweCwe, all 9 provinces heeded to the call for a national shutdown to fight for justice. That alone serves as a reminder that the youth is here, loud and standing firm in fighting for change.

What can Government implement in order to bring back the significance of the youth day

The Government should engage more with the youth; the future of our nation is in the hands of the youth. The government should engage more with the youth not only on youth day but also with policy making. They should utilize the youth in-order to get a fresh and direct perspective on challenges faced by young people, the government needs to evolve with the times and use this day to address issues that relate to the youth not relay the past, but they need to meet the youth at the point of their need. They need to open a channel of communication between them and the youth.

Nonjabulo Nkosi

Intern : Communication



What does youth month mean to me?

Personally, I could say it's a day to honour the bravery and sacrifices of the youth who protested against the apartheid regime's education policies. Beyond remembrance, Youth Day also can also serve as catalyst reminder to empower young people, promote unity, and encourage their active participation in shaping a better future.

What can Government implement in order to bring back the significance of the youth day

Firstly, it is crystal clear that all our heroes whose lives were lost on the 16th of June 1976 would be happy to see the youth elevating the level of education. The 16th of June is not just a holiday but a day to embrace our freedom, freedom our young heroes fought hard for.

The government must launch a range of additional measures to create job opportunities, enhance skills development, support young entrepreneurs and enable the full participation of young people in the economy of the country.

Themba Usiba

PL1 Educator

Mahuvo Secondary School



Wellness in Action

Department Hosts a Fun - Filled Sports Day

As part of its ongoing commitment to employee wellness, the department recently hosted a dynamic and vibrant Sports Day, bringing together officials from various units in a spirited display of teamwork, fitness, and fun.

The event formed part of the department's broader Wellness Programme, aimed at promoting physical health, mental wellbeing, and social connection among staff.

Held under clear skies and high energy, the Sports Day featured a variety of activities, including soccer, netball, running, tug of war, and several fun games designed to accommodate all fitness levels.

From the first whistle to the final sprint, the day was filled with cheers, laughter, and the unmistakable buzz of friendly competition.

"This wasn't just about winning," one participant shared. "It was about reconnecting with colleagues, taking a break from the desk, and reminding ourselves of the importance of taking care of our health."

Officials came dressed in colourful team kits, ready

to represent their directorates with pride. The soccer matches drew crowds with exciting goals and impressive saves, while the netball games showcased great coordination and team spirit.

The running events pushed many out of their comfort zones but were met with applause and encouragement from the sidelines.

Apart from the physical activities, the day also offered wellness education, hydration stations, and spaces to unwind between events.

It was a holistic celebration of health, reminding everyone that wellbeing is a shared responsibility and a collective goal.

The Sports Day was not just a highlight on the wellness calendar, but a powerful reminder that a healthy workforce is a productive and happy one.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to all who participated, organized, and supported this successful initiative.

Here's to more movement, more laughter, and a healthier department!





A HARMONY OF UNITY, TALENT AND FREEDOM

The 2025 SASCE Provincial Eisteddfod unites districts in song, spirit, and shared pride

June in Mpumalanga has echoed with harmony, pride, and the powerful voices of our youth as the ABC Motsepe South African Schools Choral Eisteddfod (SASCE) took centre stage.

From the first note to the final applause, this provincial installment has reminded us that when we invest in the arts, we invest in the soul of our nation.

Hosted in the heart of Mbombela at Church Unlimited, this year's SASCE was nothing short of extraordinary. More than 150 choirs from across our four districts came together—not just to compete, but to celebrate unity, diversity, and the beauty of musical expression.

Our young choristers delivered unforgettable performances across various categories, showcasing discipline, teamwork, and raw talent that left audiences in awe.

Special recognition must go to our winning choirs who will now represent Mpumalanga on the national stage—an achievement that fills us with immense pride.

Congratulations also to Ms. LN Dlamini, whose original composition “Nonkululeko” touched hearts and minds, reminding us all of the cost of our freedom and the responsibility that comes with it.

To every teacher, conductor, official, adjudicator, parent, and learner who played a role—thank you. Your dedication breathes life into this platform and shapes future leaders who sing not only with passion but with purpose.

As we continue to build a capable, caring, and culturally grounded society, let us never forget that music speaks where words sometimes fail. Indeed, this is a province at work for all and it sounds glorious.



Choirs from across the province came together through music and excellence.



Spectators Celebrating the voices shaping tomorrow



*one note, one song, one dream at a time
Our Winners!*



SAY HELLO TO E-SUBMISSION

The Department is going paperless!

Introducing the New **E-Submission System**. Our department is **migrating** to a fully digital e-submission system — making document submissions easier, **more secure**, and environmentally friendly.

- ✓ Streamlined process
- ✓ Faster turnaround
- ✓ Trackable submissions
- ✓ Less paper, more efficiency

Effective Date: 01 JULY 2025

For assistance or training, contact :Mr Muzikayifani Dlamini on 5554/ 076 265 4228
Ms Gift Nondudule on 5271/ 082 414 8243

Mpumalanga, A Province that Works for All