

**SPEECH BY THE MEC FOR EDUCATION, MS. LINDI MASINA
SOUTH AFRICAN PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION (SAPA)
MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE 2026**

Programme Director, **Mr. Tshehla**

President of SAPA Mpumalanga, **Pastor Never Nthane**

Leadership of SAPA National Office, **Dr Mashudu Ramulumo**

Officials from the Department

Distinguished speakers, partners and exhibitors

School principals, deputy principals and members of School Management Teams

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning. Sanibonani.

We are grateful for the invitation to be part of this important gathering of educational leaders under the theme, *“Forward Future Leadership.”*

At the outset, allow me to express our sincere appreciation to the organisers of this conference.

Platforms such as these create space for reflection, engagement, and professional growth.

They strengthen collaboration and ensure that, as leaders, you remain empowered, informed, and future-focused.

We encourage SAPA to continue convening such constructive and developmental programmes that build leadership capacity across our province.

Programme Director, we share the view that the theme “*Forward Future Leadership*” is a call to action.

It demands that we, as leaders, move beyond routine administration and embrace transformative leadership.

It calls on principals to lead by example, inspire excellence, and take full responsibility for the performance and culture of their schools.

The sessions outlined in this programme speak directly to the leadership we must embody.

The focus on developing and empowering others reminds us that leadership is not about position, but about impact.

As principals, your responsibility is not only to manage schools, but to build strong teams, mentor and invest in your educators, and cultivate future leaders.

As Mama Albertina Sisulu taught us, “*If you can rise, lift others.*”

A strong school is built on unity of purpose, visionary leadership, and empowered people.

The emphasis on safe and healthy schools highlights a fundamental truth that teaching and learning can only thrive in environments that are safe, disciplined, and supportive.

It is your duty as leaders to create and sustain such conditions.

A school that is unsafe or poorly managed cannot deliver quality education and will not inspire public confidence.

The discussions on legal accountability and institutional liability remind us that leadership carries responsibility.

Schools are governed by policies, rules, and regulations, these must always guide your decisions.

As principals, you must never be disconnected from knowledge.

Reading, continuous learning, and professional networking must define your leadership character.

Trust your staff, empower them, and help them believe in themselves.

Share a clear vision and build collective ownership of your school's success.

We know that Mpumalanga has a repository of well-managed schools where learners perform exceptionally well, teachers are motivated, and the environment is clean, disciplined, and inviting.

These are schools where there is no infighting, and everyone is committed to a shared purpose.

We must learn from these schools, strengthen collaboration, and replicate best practices across the system.

You are entrusted with public resources, the care of learners, and the responsibility to uphold the law. Compliance with policy is not optional, it is a professional obligation.

Equally important is the focus on professional ethics and the SACE mandate.

Ethical leadership must remain the cornerstone of our education system.

Your conduct sets the tone for your school, lead with integrity, fairness, and accountability.

Colleagues, academic performance improvement and reading with understanding across all grades go to the heart of our provincial priorities.

Let me be clear, you must drive academic performance Improvement Plans in your schools.

You must actively monitor teaching and learning, ensure curriculum coverage and hold educators accountable while also supporting them.

Reading for meaning must become a non-negotiable priority in every primary and secondary school.

A learner who cannot read with understanding will struggle across all subjects.

As principals, you must lead reading initiatives, track progress, and ensure that every teacher takes responsibility for literacy.

At the same time, we must promote the uptake of Mathematics and Science and embrace innovation in teaching and learning.

Programme Director, we are also encouraged by the fact that you focused on digital platforms, SASAMS modules, and future-forward leadership.

These tools must improve efficiency, accountability, and decision-making in schools.

However, tools alone do not change outcomes, **leadership does.**

Principals must ensure that systems are used effectively, data is analysed, and decisions are informed by evidence.

A well-managed school is one where systems function, information flows, and accountability is enforced.

Yesterday, I tabled the Policy and Budget Speech in the Provincial Legislature.

We emphasised that we are at a defining moment, one that calls for bold action, strengthened accountability, and commitment to improving the quality of education in our province.

We stated that we are guided by the priorities of the 7th Administration, which include:

- Increasing access to Early Childhood Development
- Improving learner competency in reading, languages, and mathematics
- Enhancing Grade 12 results and improving the quality of passes
- Providing school infrastructure and digital learning technologies
- Ensuring accountability for poor performance across the system

At the centre of these priorities is the sustainable impact on the **1.2 million learners** in our province and ensuring that each one reaches their full potential.

Improving learner performance remains at the heart of our mandate.

Our target is to achieve a **91% pass rate**, with improved performance in STEM subjects.

We are encouraged by the solid foundation of the 86.55% pass rate achieved by the Class of 2025 in the National Senior Certificate examinations.

This class surpassed expectations and demonstrated the resilience and strength of our education system.

But we must do more.

We therefore call on you, as principals, to partner with us in achieving these targets within our lifetime.

The discussions on inclusive education remind us that no learner must be left behind.

Every child matters. As leaders, you must create schools that are inclusive, supportive, and responsive to the diverse needs of all learners.

As I conclude, let me remind you that the success of our education system in Mpumalanga will not be determined in boardrooms, it will be determined in schools under your progressive leadership.

Lead with purpose, enforce discipline, create conditions for learning and deliver results.

Mpumalanga Province Loves you, we care for you and we wish you all of the best in your schools.

Thank you once more for inviting us.

Nginyabonga.