



GAUTENG PROVINCE

EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

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Att: News Editors
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10 December 2022

MEC CHILOANE SCHOOL SAFETY INDABA KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Gauteng Education MEC Matome Chiloane hosted a School Safety Indaba on Saturday, 10 December 2022 at Birchwood Hotel & O.R. Tambo Conference Centre in Boksburg where he delivered a keynote address to all stakeholders present:

Let me first take this opportunity to first and foremost express my gratitude to all of you for responding positively to our invite to come participate in this indaba.

Your mere presence here today is by itself a demonstration that just like us, you are also concerned about the safety of our schools.

As we begin, it is important that as we address the topical matter of school safety, we must not do so devoid of context.

In laying the context and parameters for our discussions today, we must all acknowledge that our schools are a microcosm of our communities.

By implication, a school will always reflect the community in its immediate environs. In a way what transpires in our communities will without fail manifest itself in our schools.

Just as non-violent communities breed peaceful schools, the contrary is also true.

Schools that are in violent communities will exhibit traits of violence. These are the schools wherein the learners attend with very life threatening weapons such as knives, pangas and in some instances pistols.

Another example is that communities where drugs are easily accessible and substance abuse is rife will invariably have a spill-over effect on our schools.

We must find a way to cushion our schools from the social ills that are troubling our communities. It goes without saying that social ills such as violence and substance abuse cannot coexist with a conducive quality learning and teaching environment.

Colleagues, the learner to learner and learner to teacher violence that is now so prevalent because it is usually captured on phones and made to trend on social media must be condemned with all contempt it deserves.

It is for this reason that when dealing with possible solutions to school safety, we will need a collaborative, holistic and comprehensive approach that involves all stakeholders.

These solutions must not just be limited to infrastructure safety, they must include how we will ensure the safety of our learners, educators and the entire school community at large.

We must also focus on training and building the capacity of our SGB's, SMT's and other relevant stakeholders on the National and Provincial School Safety legislation and policies.

Program director

This is a provincial dialogue that brings all relevant stakeholders in order for us to facilitate possible action and strengthen the security posture of our schools. It is my belief that our communities must be the first line of defence for our schools.

Our communities must be mobilized to treat our schools as their own assets and as a result selfishly guard against anything that poses itself as a threat to their survival. Our schools must be protected under the theme “Isikolo sethu”.

More importantly, we need to drive a paradigm shift that will see disgruntled communities changing their brazen view which makes them treat our schools as easy targets during protests in order to warrant the attention of decision makers.

We must discuss here, how is it possible that a community that has a grievance such as inconsistent water supply can easily resort to vandalizing our schools, and in some instances going as far as setting them alight. This is the absurd behaviour that our communities must rise against. Our schools are centres of community development and must be treated as such.

When we leave this place later today, we must leave with a clear strategies and plans that will promote safety in schools.

During the last School safety summit, the delegates agreed that collaborative efforts between various departments will be critical for us to succeed in protecting our schools. This collaborative effort is the cornerstone of safe schools.

An example on this matter was when a learner was found in possession of drugs in the school, the department of social services assisted the child with counselling and all other possible measures but failed to involve the SAPS so that they could follow up on the source of drugs.

In this regard the development of a solid integrated school safety protocol, policies and strategies that will enable all departments to work together is of paramount importance.

Colleagues

In the last indaba, it was agreed that all regions must convene their own safety summits as this will go a long way in coming up with localised solutions.

The questions that were asked during the 2019 are still relevant today. We must find time to determine ‘where we were’, ‘where we are’, and where we are heading as it relates to school safety.

As part of our immediate interventions, almost all our no fee schools will have a minimum of 4 patrollers keeping our schools safe during the imminent holidays. In total, we will have 5378 patrollers deployed to our schools and Visible policing (VISPOL) unit has also been alerted to pay particular attention to the 245 identified hotspots.

We must emerge out of here with a solid Gauteng School Safety Strategy that will also assist us to revive school safety committees.

Colleagues, I feel compelled to also share that to address the backlog of school infrastructure in the province, the Department has introduced a Self Build program. This program enables schools that are competent and able to build additional classrooms to accommodate the needs of the school.

Through this program we will cumulatively upgrade and refurbish 100 schools by the end of this term of office. This program sees the department transfer funds directly to schools and this fund is then managed by our principals.

Today, as we speak there is now an unbecoming emerging trend that sees unscrupulous characters kidnap and hold hostage our principals with a sole intention to influence the processes to appoint the service providers that will execute our self build program.

The brazenness with which such acts are committed must be condemned. In this regard, this summit must find some time to also discuss how we plan on arresting this phenomenon because we will not be deterred by anyone on our plans to roll out this important infrastructure program that will see the African child being the main beneficiary.

In conclusion, let me take this opportunity to also plead with all delegates that let us steer clear of reducing this indaba into a talk show. Emerging out of here, we must have an implementable program with set deadlines.

Our schools must act decisively on learners found guilty of theft, vandalism, drug peddling and violence. It may not be enough to leave such disciplinary measures to the police when the school should also send a deterrent message to the would-be offenders. Currently, it seems that our learners can continue after dealing with the police as if the school is toothless to institute its own disciplinary measures.

For more information, contact the Gauteng Department of Education's Spokesperson, Steve Mabona on 072 574 3860.

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