



Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
EDUCATION

UMDIBANISI

NEWSLETTER

April / May 2026 Issue

IMPLEMENTING APPROPRIATE AND
RELEVANT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES
THROUGH QUALITY TEACHING



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A NATION
THAT WORKS
FOR ALL





Mrs Nyameka Tokwe-Mgijima
[Acting Director: Communications & Events Management]

Dear Readers,

Welcome to this edition of Umdibanisi.

As we continue to navigate an ever-evolving landscape, this issue reflects the innovation, resilience, and collaborative spirit that define our organization and the communities we serve.

Within these pages, you'll find insightful stories, industry developments, success highlights, and perspectives that showcase both our achievements and the opportunities that lie ahead.

This edition places a special focus on our pockets of excellence, highlighting how individuals and teams are driving meaningful impact through dedication, creativity, and a commitment to excellence.

We are proud to share these stories and celebrate the progress being made across our department and beyond. As always, our goal is to provide content that informs, inspires, and encourages meaningful engagement. We hope the articles featured in this issue offer valuable insights and spark new ideas that contribute to your own journey and success within the education sector.

Thank you for your continued support, partnership, and readership. We trust you will find this edition both informative and enjoyable. Warm regards,
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MID-YEAR MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF EDUCATION (HOD)'S OFFICE

As we reach the midpoint of the academic year, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the journey we have shared so far and express my sincere appreciation to our learners, educators, support staff, and parents for their continued dedication and commitment.

This year has brought both achievements and challenges, and I am proud of the resilience, determination, and growth demonstrated across our learning community. Every lesson taught, every goal achieved, and every obstacle overcome has contributed to building a stronger foundation for success.

To our learners, thank you for your hard work and perseverance. Continue to embrace every opportunity to learn, ask questions, and strive for excellence. Remember that consistent effort leads to meaningful progress.

To our educators and staff, your passion, professionalism, and unwavering commitment make a lasting difference in the lives of our learners. Your dedication is deeply valued and appreciated.

To our parents and guardians, thank you for your ongoing partnership and support. Your encouragement at home plays a vital role in our learners' academic and personal development.

As we begin with our winter classes, let us renew our commitment to excellence, collaboration, and continuous improvement. Together, we can build on our successes, address areas for growth, and finish the year with purpose and confidence.

As the department, through this publication, Umdibanisi, we seek to reach out to every citizen of this province, updating them of the strides made by this government to bring services to the people.

This approach is further entrenched in the Constitution which compels us now and then to update communities of everything we do with the taxpayers' money. Therefore, please find stories that seek to update you on our efforts we undertake to deliver a better life for all. As you may see, working together assists us to do more.

I wish everyone a restful mid-year break and look forward to an exciting and productive second half of the academic year. I urge parents to please support our campaign against drug and alcohol abuse during this period. Let's work together and say No to Pens Down and other illegal parties as they destroy the future of our children.

**Best wishes,
Sharon Maasdorp
ECDoE: Head of Education**

MEC GADE MID-YEAR MESSAGE



As we reach the midpoint of the academic calendar, I would like to reflect on the progress made by the Eastern Cape Department of Education in advancing our mandate to provide quality education and improve service delivery.

Through this publication, Umdibanisi, we hope to update the people of the province on what the government has been busy doing to bring services to the people. Therefore, I will reflect on issues currently on my radar, and these include:

COMMUNICATION, DIGITAL PLATFORMS AND WEBSITE

During this period, we have made significant progress in advancing digital transformation through the introduction of online application systems, digital communication platforms, improved data management systems, and the expanded use of technology to support curriculum delivery.

The Eastern Cape Department of Education continues to recognise technology as a critical enabler for improving teaching and learning, strengthening administration, and enhancing access to educational services. These innovations assist schools, learners, parents, and communities by improving access to information, increasing efficiency, and strengthening transparency and accountability.

The development and successful launch of departmental digital platforms, including our website, have created a centralised space where stakeholders can access important educational services, programmes, policies, announcements, and opportunities.

ONLINE APPLICATION PROCESS

The introduction of the new online application process represents a significant milestone in modernising education administration and improving the overall experience of our learners, parents, and schools. Our digital systems have reduced administrative pressures, improved record management, and enabled the Department to respond more effectively to the evolving needs of our education sector.

DIGITAL HUBS

As a predominantly rural province, we remain committed to ensuring that no community is left behind in the digital revolution. The establishment of digital hubs across the Eastern Cape represents an important intervention in bridging the digital divide.

These hubs provide learners and communities with access to technology, connectivity, digital skills development, and learning resources. They create opportunities for innovation, research, creativity, and

lifelong learning while equipping young people with the skills required to participate in the modern economy.

Our digital transformation agenda reflects our commitment to building a future-ready education system where technology promotes inclusive learning, improved governance, and expanded opportunities for young people. A digitally empowered education system is essential for preparing our learners for the demands of the 21st century.

MID-YEAR RECESS

As we conclude the first half of the academic year, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to all learners, educators, support staff, parents, and stakeholders for their dedication, resilience, and commitment.

To our learners, the mid-year recess provides an opportunity to rest, recharge, spend meaningful time with family, and reflect on your academic journey. I encourage you to continue valuing your education, reading, and preparing yourselves for continued success in the second half of the year. To our educators and staff members, thank you for your continued professionalism, patience, and commitment to shaping the future of our learners.

I urge all families to use this period responsibly by prioritising safety, wellbeing, and positive activities. May this recess provide much-needed rest and renewal as we prepare to return with greater focus, energy, and determination. Together, we continue building an education system that creates opportunities and transforms lives.

Regards,
F. D. Gade
MEC for Education
Eastern Cape



Article by: **Bongani Mziba**

ECDOE NUTRITION PROGRAMME STRENGTHENED GOVERNANCE THROUGH ACCOUNTABILITY SESSION

The Eastern Cape Department of Education recently hosted a three-day National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) Strategic Accountability Session at Mpekweni Resort.

The session seeks to bring together stakeholders implementing the programme to account on governance, identify gaps, and explore opportunities for improvement.

NSNP Provincial Director, Pumla Gxuluwe highlighted the 'convention as a way of discussing the programme status and finding solutions to arising discrepancies.'

"Our mandate is to provide strategic oversight to performance trends, risks, and compliance levels where we focus on financial management and conditional grant expenditure to address the audit findings."

Gxuluwe further called for intersectional collaborations. "Let us not wait for audit findings to force collaborations, let us lead with it. We must shift from parallel efforts to coordinated execution because when we align, learners benefit."

"Our mandate is to provide strategic oversight to performance trends."

NSNP is the responsibility of one Directorate on paper-- but in practice, it is the responsibility for all of us."

Department of Basic Education (DBE) Chief Education Specialist, Carina Müller shared their involvement as the oversight body of the programme, highlighting the importance of engaging with the implementing stakeholders on the ground. "It is very important for us to listen to the monitors of the programme and see where we can support them for an improved delivery of a nutritious meal to deserving learners."

Curriculum Delivery and Management Deputy Director General (DDG), Thembanani Mtyida, emphasized the importance of resource allocation.

"We must ensure that the resources injected into our schools to facilitate a nutritious meal delivery as prescribed in the national menu are properly accounted for and not falling through the cracks," he concluded.



EASTERN CAPE EDUCATION RESUMES TEACHER DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY

About 600 educators from the Eastern Cape took part in the Eastern Cape Department of Education's Mandla Makupula Education Leadership Institute (MMELI) and Marematlou Training Institution (MTI) 2026 Advanced Diploma in School Leadership and Management programme, held in Bloemfontein.

The programme seeks to empower aspiring leaders to elevate education in the province.

The orientation week kicked off with a warm welcome and induction ceremony, preparing students for classes starting in 2026.

Marematlou Training Institution Registrar, Dr. Jennifer Bihi, welcomed the learners by highlighting the programme as a game-changer for their educational development. She said, "Today marks the beginning of your new journey with us. You will gain the skills, knowledge, and values needed to lead and manage schools effectively, ultimately enhancing quality education across the province."

MMELI Director, Pula Tabata outlined the mandate of the Teacher Development Programme which also embraced the collaboration with Marematlou. "This collaboration is boosting school leadership, enhancing education quality and driving systemic change through a collaborative leadership development programme." She said

Gobizembe High School Educator, Makazole Mdiya who is part of the cohort expressed his enthusiasm to be part of the programme.

"I am thrilled to develop my leadership skills to make a real difference in my school. The programme is set to profoundly impact the province's education landscape, driving academic excellence and transforming schools. With the institutions' support, we are ready to take our careers to the next level and give back to the communities," concluded Mdiya





MEC GADE CONDUCTS AN OVERSIGHT VISIT TO THREE EC SCHOOLS

The Eastern Cape Department of Education MEC, Fundile Gade recently conducted an oversight visit to Milton Dalasile Senior

Secondary and Gqubeni Primary School in Mqanduli, OR Tambo Inland District, as well as Ntsokotha Senior Secondary School in Lady frere, Chris Hani West District.

The visits aimed to assess progress on school functioning and ongoing construction projects, address challenges affecting the completion of projects and overall education system for better support and development opportunities. Among the school performance reports presented, Gqubeni Primary School principal, Nomaphelo Rhexe highlighted a solid foundation phase performance with a 100% pass rate in Grade R and Grade 1 despite the infrastructure and scholar transport challenges among others.'

Gqubeni Great Place Chief, Mkhanyiseli Dalisizwe Dudumayo pledged his support to education by ensuring that policing forums are in place to protect those attending evening classes.

"As the community, our policing forums are working tirelessly to ensure learners' safety while making sure that our sons are not the reason education is lacking", said Dudumayo.

Furthermore Dudumayo stated in his vote of thanks speech that the visit came after a plea to the MEC which was also motivated by the school's academic performance despite the circumstances.

The delegation also visited the Ntsokotha SSS construction project, the progress report presented by Physical Resource Planning and Property Management Director, Tsepo Pefole highlighted financial constraints resulting from the disaster backlogs as the main challenge.

Pefole emphasized that funds initially meant for new and ongoing projects were utilized in disaster relief, hence the delay. "Out of R469 million we utilized, we only managed to get R170million back from COGTA and that is far from sufficient", said Pefole. EC Education MEC, Fundile Gade ordered the project contractor and the

department to speedily resolve their outstanding issues, therefore any monies owed to the contractor should be paid in the next 7 days. "We should be wary of encountering problems resulting from the current situation of the old hostel versus the sacrifice of getting this project out of the way", said Gade.



INTEGRATED HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT PLANNING

The Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) successfully hosted an Integrated Human Resource Development and Management Planning Session at the Mandla Makupula Education Leadership Institute.

The session brought together senior officials and social partners to strengthen clean administration, accountability, and strategic workforce planning across all levels of the Department.

Human Resource Management and Development (HRM&D) Acting Chief Director, Lukhanyo Sidiya expressed the importance of unity and planning. She said, "HRM&D must function as one unified system.

We have a collective responsibility to support the ECDOE mandate through collaboration, and to guide the Department to spend 80% of its time planning and 20% on implementation, so that roles are clear and service delivery is strengthened." Human Resource Development Deputy Director, Luvuyo Mgijima outlined the Workplace Skills Plan as a key driver of the programme.



He explained, "Districts are consolidating training needs across unemployed youth programmes, teacher development, content gap training, inclusive education, and Early Childhood Development. This ensures that skills development responds directly to what is happening in our schools."

ECDoE Basic Education Employment Initiative Assistant Director, Justice Muchineripi, outlined the vital impact of aligning the district inputs with provincial priorities. He said, "The programme consolidates district training needs for presentation to the Provincial Workplace Skills Plan Task Team. This alignment ensures that our plans support strategic priorities and improve service delivery on the ground. HRD is mandated to present these inputs after the completion of District Consultation Sessions."



ECDOE LAUNCHES CODING HUB IN KWAMAQOMA TO BRIDGE RURAL DIGITAL DIVIDE

"ACCESS TO DIGITAL SKILLS IS NOT A PRIVILEGE, IT IS A RIGHT"

KWAMAQOMA — The Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) has recently taken a major step towards strengthening digital learning in rural schools with the official launch of the Likwezi Cyber Young Minds Hub at Cape College in the Amathole West Education District.

The event is the partnership between the Department and Likhwezi Technologies, Software AG. This partnership aims to enhance teaching and learning by introducing learners to digital content creation and multimedia classrooms in the rural district.

According to Amathole West Education District Director Simon Ncapayi, the hub will give young people hands-on access to coding, robotics, and digital literacy. He said, "The opening of this Innovation Classroom will help learners build their critical thinking, problem-solving, and programming skills aligned with the Fourth Industrial Revolution, therefore, this will bring pathways to careers for rural learners".

Public Protector Advocate Kholeka Gcaleka delivered remarks on accountability and youth development during the launch. "Access to digital skills is not a privilege, it is a right," said Gcaleka. "When we invest in accountability and transparency, we ensure that programmes like this reach the learners who need them most,



equipping young people to shape their own futures with integrity." said Gcaleka. Accepting the donation on behalf of the learners, Thubalethu High School Grade 12 learner Sinawo Mxotwa said: "Being here today feels like a door just opened for all of us. I have always wanted to learn more about robotics and coding, but we did not have the space or tools.

Now with this innovation class, I can finally build what I have been imagining."

JUMBA SECONDARY SCHOOL RISES WITH NEW FACILITIES AND LASTING TRIBUTE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

The Eastern Cape Department of Education MEC, Fundile Gade handed over newly renovated and newly constructed facilities at Jumba Secondary School in Mthatha, including technical workshops, a multipurpose hall and refurbished classrooms.

The upgrades were delivered through a partnership between Gift of the Givers Foundation and its benefactors; Shell, Cell C and BTKM following the devastating June 2025 floods that claimed the lives of 10 learners from the school. A memorial stone and Garden of Remembrance were also unveiled in honour of the learners, with memorial chairs engraved with their names and trees planted in their memory.

Speaking during the handover ceremony, MEC Gade described the occasion as emotional and significant, saying the contribution made by the partners extends far beyond infrastructure development.

"Education is the heartbeat of a thriving nation, this is not just about infrastructure, but about touching lives and restoring hope to communities. Though the learners may have passed on, they have not been forgotten", said Gade.

Gade also called for stronger public-private partnerships to help improve education infrastructure across the province. Furthermore, Gade addressed the progress made in rebuilding schools following the June 2025 floods. Gade said the disaster forced the Department to redirect its infrastructure priorities towards 235 affected schools across the province.

"Learner safety remains a priority during severe weather conditions. We can recover curriculum losses, but we cannot recover lives", added Gade.

Founder of Gift of the Givers Foundation, Dr Imtiaz Sooliman said the memorial and upgraded facilities would ensure future generations remember the learners and the tragedy that affected the community.

Shell Downstream South Africa Country Chair, Aluwani Museisi noted that the floods prompted an immediate disaster response from Shell. "Education is extremely important to us because it gives young people the best opportunity to change their lives, which is why we shifted our focus towards rebuilding the school's infrastructure to create safer and more conducive learning spaces for learners," said Aluwani Museisi.

Among those attending the ceremony was surviving learner Milani Mdlalo, now in Grade 11, who said the memorial deeply touched her as it honoured the friends and classmates lost during the tragedy.



"You could see the emotion from the parents during the unveiling of the memorial stone and the depth of the pain they still carry, and today is all about those ten learners. The upgraded workshops and memorial garden stand as a lasting tribute to both the learners who lost their lives and the survivors who continue to live with the trauma of that day" expressed Sooliman.

"Thinking about that day makes me relive the horror. I lost my friend during the tragedy. It's not something you forget overnight. Seeing the memorial and the trees planted for the learners was very emotional, but it also showed that they will always be remembered", concluded Mdlalo.





EASTERN CAPE CHAMPIONS READY TO SHINE AT NATIONAL ATHLETIC CHAMPIONSHIPS

In partnership with the Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture (DSRAC), the Eastern Cape Department of Education successfully hosted the four-day Event, Provincial High Schools Athletics Championships in Gqeberha, Nelson Mandela Bay Education District.

The championships brought together talented young athletes from all districts across the province to compete in a range of track and field events. The main purpose of the competition was to identify and select the best-performing athletes who will represent the Eastern Cape at the upcoming National Athletics Championships.

Following outstanding performances throughout the event, 120 young athletes have been selected to represent the province at the national stage, with all districts proudly represented in the Eastern Cape team.

Eastern Cape School Athletics Chairperson, Dalindyabo Nqadini, delivered a message of support and congratulations to the champions who will represent the province at the national championships.

One of the top-performing athletes, Endinako Jola from Sarah Baartman District, who achieved one of the highest scores in the competition, expressed his gratitude and excitement about the opportunity. "I am very proud of myself because the journey was not easy.

I became sick along the way, but I pushed myself hard. I am proud of this moment and happy to make my parents proud. I also dream of becoming a professional athlete. I started this journey in 2019 and then in 2025, I had the opportunity to represent South Africa in Swaziland," he said.

Another young athlete, Kyler Van Tonder from Nelson Mandela Bay, also shared her experience preparing for the competition. "I prepared for this every day and did a lot of training. It was not easy, but I am proud of myself," Van Tonder said.

In conclusion, the Chief Director of School Safety and Learner Enrichment, Lulamani Zenzile, congratulated all the athletes and wished them success as they prepare to represent the Eastern Cape at the National championships.



ECDOE STRENGTHENS 21ST CENTURY TEACHING THROUGH AI AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES



The Eastern Cape Department of Education's Curriculum: E-Teaching and Learning Directorate, in partnership with the Department of Basic Education (DBE), hosted a five-day Capacity Building on Artificial Intelligence (AI), Moodle Orientation and Digital Skills programme kuGompo, Buffalo City Education District. The programme brought together Subject Advisors, specialists, educators and specialist teachers to strengthen digital teaching and learning skills. This focused on content creation, Moodle Learning Management Systems (LMS) and the ethical integration of Artificial Intelligence in education.

Deputy Chief Education Specialist for Professional Development, Patricia Nofumba explained that the workshop aimed to upskill participants in developing and curating curriculum-aligned digital lessons accessible both online and offline.

"Considering the largely rural context of the Eastern Cape, the Moodle platform provides an inclusive solution that allows learners to access educational content anytime and anywhere, even in areas with limited connectivity", said Nofumba.

Nofumba added that Subject Advisors developed subject-specific lessons for upload onto the Department's Moodle platform and YouTube channel to support teaching and learning in the province.

"The DBE Cloud is a Moodle-based Learning Management System developed through a collaboration between the Department of Basic Education and the Sasol Foundation. It enables teachers and learners to access curriculum content developed by educators and curriculum specialists", explained Lara.

DBE Chief Education Specialist for MST, Curriculum Innovation and E-Learning, Dr Rannosi Motene highlighted the importance of ethical and responsible AI integration in education. "Artificial Intelligence has the capability to enhance learning outcomes and reduce administrative tasks for teachers. However, educators must also understand the risks associated with AI, including bias, plagiarism and misinformation", said Dr Motene.

As part of the programme, specialist educators also recorded virtual lessons at the ECDoE Broadcasting Studio for digital distribution to schools across the province. E-Learning Deputy Chief Education Specialist for Lesson Curation and Broadcasting, Vusumzi Sigodi stated that the initiative focused mainly on difficult Grade 12 topics identified by examiners and markers ahead of the June examinations.

"We invited specialist educators to record lessons that would later be edited, quality assured and uploaded onto the Department's YouTube platform to support both teachers and learners", said Sigodi.

Reflecting on the programme, Senior Education Specialist, Monique Du Plessis described the training as a collaborative and empowering experience.

"Sharing challenges and exchanging ideas helped us improve the way we teach and support learners. This programme encouraged us to make better use of the digital tools already available to create more inclusive and impactful learning experiences", concluded Du Plessis.



MEC FUNDILE GADE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF COMPUTER LABORATORY AT LAVELELINGA HIGH SCHOOL

Eastern Cape Department of Education MEC, Fundile Gade, in partnership with the Vodacom Foundation, officially launched a fully equipped computer laboratory at Lavelilanga High School in Komani, Chris Hani West District Municipality.

The initiative forms part of a broader effort to integrate connectivity, digital learning resources, teacher development, and strong community partnerships to create an inclusive and future-ready learning environment. By providing both learners and educators with access to modern technology, the programme aims to enhance teaching and learning outcomes while promoting digital literacy in schools.

Speaking during the launch, MEC Fundile Gade highlighted the importance of bridging the digital divide. "Technology is no longer a luxury but a necessity in modern education. Through partnerships such as this one with the Vodacom Foundation, we are ensuring that our learners have access to digital tools that will prepare them for the demands of the 21st century and the evolving world of work," said Gade.



Vodacom Managing Executive for the Eastern Region Zakhele Jiyane said the initiative demonstrates the organisation's commitment to supporting education and bridging the digital gap. "Our goal is to ensure that learners and teachers have access to technology that can transform the learning experience. We believe that access to connectivity and digital learning resources can unlock potential and open doors for young people across the country," said Jiyane.

Sisanda Hexana principal of Lavelilanga Senior Secondary School expressed appreciation for the initiative. "This laboratory will transform learning at our school. It will allow our learners to develop ICT skills, access digital learning resources through the eLearning platform, and make lessons more interactive, especially in subjects like Life Sciences where complex concepts can be demonstrated using the smart screen. We are grateful to the Eastern Cape Department of Education and the Vodacom Foundation for investing in the future of our learners with this game-changing initiative," said the principal.



OUR PICTURE GALLERY



VISION

All learners provided with opportunities to become productive, responsible, and competitive citizens through an inclusive quality basic education system.

MISSION

To achieve the vision, we will:

- Implement appropriate and relevant educational programmes through quality teaching and learning
- Mobilise community and stakeholder support through participation;
- Institutionalise a culture of accountability at all levels of the Department.

VALUES

High Performance
Responsiveness
Accountability Empathy
Access Equity Integrity

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