



NATIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
OUR YOUTH. OUR FUTURE.

**OFFICE OF THE
EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON**

**YOUTH EMPOWERMENT, LEARNER SUPPORT
AND OPPORTUNITY LINKAGES
- SITHOKOZILE SECONDARY SCHOOL,
KWAZULU-NATAL**

21 JANUARY 2026

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT, LEARNER SUPPORT & OPPORTUNITY LINKAGES

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Programme Director,
The Minister in the Presidency responsible for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation,
Hon. Maropene Ramokgopa
The MEC for Education, Mr Sipho Hlomuka
The Mayor of the eThekweni Municipality, Cllr. Cyril Xaba
School leadership, educators, parents, and most importantly - abafundi base
Sithokozile Secondary School,

Sanibonani bantu abasha abahle

Ayeye bantu abashe ayeye!
Uzoyithola kanjani?
Kumnandi ukuba la? It's good to be here.
It is truly good to be here with you today.

Programme Director, I would like us to pause for a moment this morning. On Monday, our country woke up to heartbreaking news from the Vaal, in Gauteng, where 12 learners lost their lives in a tragic accident. These were children who woke up in the morning to go to school - with school bags, plans, dreams, and futures ahead of them.

Hon. Minister, when we speak about this tragedy, we must be clear: We do not only see numbers. These are not just statistics. We see missed opportunities. We see future artisans who would have built our country. Future health professionals who would have saved lives. Future art and media practitioners who would have told our stories. Future finance and business leaders who would have grown our economy.

These were not just learners - they were future active participants in the economy, and South Africa is poorer with this loss. As we mourn the learners who lost their lives, we also keep in our thoughts and prayers those learners who are still fighting for their lives in the intensive care unit, and those healing from injuries. We wish them strength, healing, and a full recovery, and we stand with their families during this difficult time.

For this reason, I would like us to observe a moment of silence in honour of these pupils.
Ngiyabonga.

This tragedy reminds us of something very important: As learners, you have a right to go to school safely. Drivers have a responsibility to drive responsibly. And all of us - government, different sectors, communities, parents, and road users - have a duty to protect your lives. Nothing is more important than your safety.

Kodwa namhlanje is a joyous day. Today is a good day to be proud and to be here to witness this. We are here to celebrate excellence. A 100% Matric pass rate does not happen by chance. It happens because learners choose discipline, teachers show commitment, and parents provide support. You have proven that where you come from does not determine how far you can go.

Bantu abasha, let me talk to you about why I am here today. I am here on behalf of the National Youth Development Agency - the NYDA.

(Maybe make this part participatory in asking them if they know the NYDA, what it does, etc)

The NYDA exists for young people like you, from the age of 14 to 35. Whether you are still in school or thinking about life after matric, we are here to support your journey. And my message to you is simple: Your life does not end after matric. There are many paths you can take - and you do not ever have to walk that journey alone.

After school, not everyone will take the same route - and that is okay. Some of you will go to university. Some will go to TVET colleges. Some will learn trades or skills. Some will start businesses. Some will enter the world of work. What matters is not choosing the same path - what matters is making informed choices.

So, here's what the NYDA supports young people with:

- Career guidance and post-school information;
- CV writing and interview preparation;
- Skills development and work readiness programmes;
- Entrepreneurship support, including business training and funding.

When you leave this school, the NYDA will be one of the bridges that helps you cross from school into opportunity. We are intentional about young people, and want them to move from education to opportunity, from potential to progress.

We are also aware that support alone is not enough. Young people must also be connected to opportunities. That is why we focus on market linkages - connecting youth to industries, to markets, and to both government and private sector opportunities, so that skills and businesses lead to real economic participation.

Before I close, allow me speak to you in a language I know you understand. There is a popular Amapiano song called Shela. Ihamba kanjani?

That song speaks on pursuing a lover with commitment, consistency, and determination. But because romantic love shouldn't be a priority at your age - My message to you today is this: Pursue your books, your assessments, and your education with the same energy, eagerness and passion. Because education is different from many things in life - it is the one investment that gives you better results the more you commit to it. When you put time into your studies, education

loves you back with results. When you sacrifice now, education rewards you later with opportunities. When you stay focused, education opens doors that no one can close. Right now, the most important thing you must pursue is your education and your future.

A few things to remember as I take my seat - Your background does not limit your future. Your circumstances do not define your potential. Your dreams are valid. But dreams require discipline. Dreams require responsibility. Dreams require respect for life - your own and others'. So protect your education and your investment in it.

Stay safe, niyphathe kahle kuze nizoshaya omunye u100%, angithi? And never give up on yourself. Know that the NYDA believes in you. Government believes in you. And South Africa is counting on you to be agents of change participating in our economy in future.

Ayeye Bantu abasha, ayeye!
Siyabonga.