

**Address by the Mayor of the Greater Tzaneen Municipality, Cllr
Maripe Mangena on the occasion of the 2018 NCS Excellence
Awards, held at Karibu Leisure Resort in the Greater Tzaneen
Municipality on Friday, 25 January 2019.**

Programme Director;

Deputy Minister Mathale;

The Executive Mayor of Mopani District Municipality

All mayors and politicians from our office

Traditional leaders present here;

Officials from the Municipality;

The Department of Education Director;

Circuit Managers and Former Circuit Managers;

General Mathebula;

Principals;

Educators;

SGB Members and Parents;

Social Partners and PYA;

Pastors present here;

Learners who are present here today;

ABSA Bank Management;

Members of the Media;

All distinguished guests;

Good Morning, Avuxeni, Thobela, Goemoore

We are all gathered here today to celebrate and appreciate the great performance by the class of 2018 who made the Greater Tzaneen Municipality proud.

As the Greater Tzaneen Municipality we have agreed to have an event of this magnitude, just for us to appreciate and honour the class of matric 2018 and educators for the sterling performance they displayed during the previous academic year. My basic principle and believe is that education is the key to success, as the former President and Freedom fighter Tata Nelson Mandela alluded and I quote: **“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. The power of education extends beyond the development of skills we need for economic success. It can contribute to nation building and reconciliation. A good head and good heart are always a formidable combination”**

As we celebrate with you today, we are aware that it was never easy for the learners who receive education from some kind of dilapidated infrastructure and poor learning environment that we are having in our schools.

Program Director

I want to take this opportunity and commend our top achievers for the work they have done, despite all the societal challenges that we are facing in our communities. We are aware of the existence of gangsterism in our townships and villages. This norm has turned some parts of our municipal area to a haven for violent crimes where our children are mostly victims.

Through dedication, some of the learners we are honouring today, made it despite all these challenges. Their hard work did not start when they set behind the desks for the National Senior Certificate exams in October last year. Your presence here is the culmination of the hard work and the extra hours you have put in the past few years, and you are very deserving to be here, and we are equally proud to celebrate your achievements with you.

Ladies and gentlemen

Education has been the apex priority of the democratically elected government over the past years, and our focus now is on improving the quality of basic education. The fifth democratic administration

has recorded significant gains, especially around our performance in the National Senior Certificate exams as a country, but also as a province.

We are happy that the province has been recording improvement in the National Senior Certificate over the past few years. In 2017, we were at 65,6% pass rate which was an increase of 3,1 percent from the 2016 results. We registered 69.4% in 2018 which is an increase of two percent from the previous year. What also gives us comfort is that we are amongst the top provinces with the highest percentage of bachelor passes.

We have also seen that most of our “no-fee” schools have produced more distinctions than the fee-paying schools, which proves that hard work pays off even those in our previously disadvantaged communities.

We are aware of the challenges that remain, as inequality still exist between our rural and urban schools. Many of you have had to defy the odds to be here today. As we celebrate your achievements here today, we also need to remind each other of the journey we have travelled as a country since 1994, especially as it relates to our efforts of improving the quality of our basic education and the education system in general. Our ultimate goal is to create an education system that provides equal opportunities for all South Africans, black, Indian, coloured and white.

We have made significant strides to cater for the needs of our previously disadvantaged communities. The democratically elected government has made scholar transport available in the rural areas and our learners are no longer walking long distances to receive education.

Our school nutrition programme is running very well at schools across the district and the province at large. Government is also investing on programmes around Early Childhood Development.

Programme Director

The ANC-led government is implementing free higher education as envisaged in the Freedom Charter, which says that the **“The doors of learning and of culture shall be opened.”** The Freedom Charter also states that **“Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children; higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit.”**

As am standing before you today, delighted and proud that free education is being realised at various institution of higher learning. This as a result of an effort by the ANC led government that is caring for the poor.

As the Greater Tzaneen Municipality we have set aside a budget of a million rand for the success of this Mayor’s Excellence Awards and

also to give necessary support to our learners who are academically deserving from within our municipal area. Important to note is that our District Municipality also have funds set aside to assist learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, where we are giving them start-ups to their lives at institutions of higher learning. This is an indication that the local government sphere is also taking the interests of learners very serious.

Myself and other Councillors have recently embarked on a back to school campaign, so as to encourage the class of matric 2019 to see to it that they do their best in ensuring that there is improved matric results for this academic year.

Program Director

I want to take this opportunity to urge our shining stars to go out there and explore your potential to the fullest. I also know that some of you may not necessarily have been the most intelligent, smartest or naturally gifted in your classes, but it was hard work that saw you through. Former president Mandela further said, and I quote **“It always seems impossible until its done. Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. There is no passion to be found playing small-in settling for a life that is less than you are capable of living.”**

We are faced with the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality and education is at the centre of our solutions to this challenges.

But we are saying to our learners here today, do not be deterred by the high unemployment rate. Reality is that when you have a tertiary qualification, you have improved your chances of finding a job. The more qualifications you have, the greater the chances. But most importantly when you have a degree or a national diploma you have a greater chance of earning a higher income than someone with just a Grade 12 certificate.

Our economy is not growing as we had envisaged when adopting the National Development Plan, and may not be able to create enough jobs for our people. While I know that you have already applied your minds on what career paths you shall be pursuing this year, I do hope that you shall be choosing courses or careers that will prepare you, extensively for more than one occupation. It would even be better if you can be choosing careers that will prepare you to be your own employers.

Upon completion of your studies in various universities and TVET colleges, you should be armed with the skills and knowledge to meet the present and future needs of the economy as per the expectations of the NDP.

To our Principals and Educators

A quote by an unknown author reads as follows; **“The dream begins with a teacher who believes in you, who tugs and pushes you to the next plateau, sometimes poking you with a sharp stick called truth. I like a teacher who gives you something to take home to think about besides homework. A good teacher is a master of simplification and an enemy of simplism.”**

What i am picking from this quote is that today we are gathered here to celebrate the great achievement by our learners and if it was a not an extra effort put in place by our educators we wouldn't be here today.

Program Director

As the political leadership of the Greater Tzaneen Municipality, we respect and acknowledge the great strides that are being made by school principals and teachers despite all the challenges we are facing at some schools. We are aware of the extra parental roles you play to these learners. Some of you sacrifice so much of your time for the good of these learners. We celebrate with you today, because we know how much you value your work, and your commitment to building a better future for our children.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We are going to the general elections in the next few months, and the IEC has announced dates for final registration weekend which is the 26 and 27 January 2019. We are therefore appealing to all eligible voters to go and register to vote in the upcoming national elections. Those of you who have not updated your addresses on the voters roll, must also do so. Elections are important in safeguarding our democracy.

The first democratic elections on the 27th of April 1994, gave birth to our constitutional democracy. For the majority of South Africans who had never voted before their dignity was restored and the country transformed to a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society. We can't undermine the significance of that breakthrough, and then becomes important for us to appreciate the importance of participating in elections. Many countries have collapsed in Africa because of elections won through the barrel of a gun, and South Africa remains a shining example of what a constitutional democracy is.

Let us use this opportunity to exercise our democratic rights, which Madiba, Mama Sisulu, Mark Shope, Sharlotte Maxeke, Oliver Tambo, Norman Mashabana, our own Ignatius Mathebule and others have spent their entire lives fighting for. We must appreciate and

defend with all our might the right to vote for our preferred government.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate our top achievers from the 2018 National Senior Certificate exams, and wish all of you a productive 2019 – the Year of united action.

God bless you.

Ke a leboga Ha khensa Thank you