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GENERAL NOTICE

NOTICE 752 OF 2010

DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

Call for comments on Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025

I, Angelina Matsie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education, after consultation with the Council of Education Ministers and in terms of the National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996), hereby invite comments from the public and interested parties on the proposed Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025 and background document set out in parts A and B of the Schedule.

Part A is a short version of the Action Plan, whilst Part B provides more details on the Plan. A further document with a detailed discussion of national and provincial statistics and targets relating to the indicators of the Plan has been developed and will be made available for public comment as soon as possible after I have sufficiently consulted with the nine MECs for education.

Comments should be in writing and must reach the Department of Basic Education by no later than Friday, 27 August 2010. Letters with comments should be clearly marked 'Comments on Action Plan to 2014'. All comments should clearly indicate the following information about the commentator:

Name of commentator, and organisation represented;

postal and email addresses; and

telephone, fax and cell numbers (if available).

Comments should be addressed to:

Mr PB Soobrayan, Director-General: Basic Education

For the attention of: Mr P Njobe By post:
Private Bag X895, Pretoria, 0001
By fax: 012 323 5837
By email: Njobe.P@dbe.gov.za

(Signed)

Angelina Matsie Motshekga MP
Minister of Basic Education
24 June 2010

SCHEDULE

Part A

Action Plan to 2014

Towards the realisation of Schooling 2025

The shorter version

19 July 2010

This plan is a draft document of the Department of Basic Education intended to elicit public inputs. It is as yet not an official policy of the Department or of government.

The goals of the Action Plan

The Action Plan has 27 goals. Goals 1 to 13 deal with outputs we want to achieve in relation to learning and enrolments.

1 - Increase the number of learners in Grade 3 who by the end of the year have mastered the minimum language and numeracy competencies for Grade 3.

2 - Increase the number of learners in Grade 6 who by the end of the year have mastered the minimum language and mathematics competencies for Grade 6.

3 - Increase the number of learners in Grade 9 who by the end of the year have mastered the minimum language and mathematics competencies for Grade 9.

4 - Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who become eligible for a Bachelors programme at a university.

5 - Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who pass mathematics.

6 - Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who pass physical science.

7 - Improve the average performance in languages of Grade 6 learners.

8 - Improve the average performance in mathematics of Grade 6 learners.

9 - Improve the average performance in mathematics of Grade 8 learners.

10 - Ensure that all children remain effectively enrolled in school up to the year in which they turn 15.

11 - Improve the access of children to quality early childhood development (ECD) below Grade 1.

12 - Improve the grade promotion of learners through the Grades 1 to 9 phases of school.

13 - Improve the access of youth to Further Education and Training beyond Grade 9.

Goals 14 to 27 deal with the things we must do to achieve our 13 output goals.

14 - Attract in each year a new group of young, motivated and appropriately trained teachers into the teaching profession.

15 - Ensure that the availability and utilisation of teachers is such that excessively large classes are avoided.

16 - Improve the professionalism, teaching skills, subject knowledge and computer literacy of teachers throughout their entire careers.

17 - Strive for a teacher workforce that is healthy and enjoys a sense of job satisfaction.

18 - Ensure that learners cover all the topics and skills areas that they should cover within their current school year.

19 - Ensure that every learner has access to the minimum set of textbooks and workbooks required according to national policy.

20 - Increase access amongst learners to a wide range of media, including computers, which enrich their education.

21 - Ensure that the basic annual management processes occur across all schools in the country in a way that contributes towards a functional school environment.

22 - Improve parent and community participation in the governance of schools, partly by improving access to important information via the e-Education strategy.

23 - Ensure that all schools are funded at least at the minimum per learner levels determined nationally and that funds are utilised transparently and effectively.

24 - Ensure that the physical infrastructure and environment of every school inspires learners to want to come to school and learn, and teachers to teach.

25 - Use the school as a location to promote access amongst children to the full range of public health and poverty reduction interventions.

26 - Increase the number of schools which effectively implement the inclusive education policy and have access to centres which offer specialist services.

27 - Improve the frequency and quality of the monitoring and support services provided by district offices to schools, partly through better use of e-Education.

Why this plan is important to you

During 2010 the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, declared that there would be a plan for schools in South Africa called Action Plan to 2014, and that this would form part of a larger vision called Schooling 2025. It is important that you as a South African should know about the Action Plan, and Schooling 2025, especially if you are a parent or guardian of a learner in a school, if you yourself are a learner, or if you are a teacher or a school principal. The plan is important because it tells you what the government will be doing to make Grades R to 12 schooling better, but also because it explains how you yourself can contribute towards making the goals of the plan and Schooling 2025 a reality.

This Action Plan explains the 27 national goals that lie at the heart of the plan. Thirteen of these goals are output goals dealing with better school results and better enrolment of learners in schools. The remaining 14 goals deal with things that must happen for the output goals to be realised. The goals do not capture everything we must do, but experience has shown that for a plan to work it is important to identify a few key goals that can guide everyone. For all the goals in the plan, it is explained what government is doing and it is explained what you can do to contribute towards success in South Africa's schools.

This is the shorter version of Action Plan to 2014. It is intended for a wide audience, including all teachers, school principals and members of school governing bodies. There is also a long version of the plan which contains more details, for example further details on how goals will be achieved, details on how improvements will be monitored, and what the exact

national and provincial targets are for each goal. The long version includes not just the targets we want to achieve by 2014, but also the targets we want to reach by 2025 as part of the Schooling 2025 vision. If you or your organisation believes that the plan can be made better, you are encouraged to send inputs to the address indicated at the end of this document and to watch for notices in the media for Action Plan and Schooling 2025 stakeholder meetings. The Action Plan may have to change before 2014, as new challenges are identified and lessons are learnt, and for this process stakeholder participation is vital.

Why we need to improve South Africa's schools

Since democracy was won in 1994 much has changed in South Africa's schools. Many more children complete the compulsory Grades 1 to 9 (80% in 1994 against 99% in 2010). In this regard, our situation now compares very favourably to what occurs in other countries at a similar level of economic development. The laws that divided learners by race in the apartheid schooling system were removed, resulting in a situation where race is now a less important factor in determining the kind of schooling a child receives. In historically white schools, around 56% of learners are black and 40% are African. Change in historically Indian schools has been even greater. In 1994 government spending on every African school child was on average one-fifth of what it was for every white child. Today there is almost no difference in government spending. The curriculum and learning materials used in schools today help learners to understand their country, Africa and the world and think critically in ways that are a far cry from the narrow memorisation required of most learners before 1994.

Yet it is clear that much must still change in South Africa's schools. Too many schools are plagued by violence and do not feel safe for learners and educators. In too many schools, buildings and facilities are inadequate or not of a standard that would motivate learners to come to school every day to learn, and teachers to teach. But above all, there are too many learners who, after many years of school, have not mastered the skills they should have mastered. Research has shown, for instance, that many learners who complete Grade 6 are not able to write even simple sentences, or to do basic arithmetic. This problem of an unacceptably low level of learning can be found across all grades. The problem exists not in all schools, and not amongst all learners, but amongst far too many schools and learners. In particular, learners from poorer areas of the country are more likely not to have learnt what they should have learnt.

Poor quality learning in schools affects individual learners and their families negatively in many different ways. For instance, it becomes more difficult for learners to enter an FET college or a university later in life. Poor quality learning also reduces one's chances of obtaining the job one wants. But quality problems in our schools also make it more difficult for the country as a whole to prosper. The development of South Africa depends on the skills and education of her people. A nation where everyone receives a solid basic education is more likely to be a nation which is at

peace with itself and is free of poverty.

The importance of broad participation

The current version of the plan has been discussed with teacher unions and provincial departments of education. These stakeholders support the overall aims and approaches of the plan. The purpose of this version of the plan is to provide more stakeholders with a chance to make inputs on the plan. In particular, the Minister of Basic Education is interested in the inputs of organisations representing school governing bodies, school principals and learners. Higher education institutions, FET colleges, organised business, faith organisations and education NGOs are also strongly urged to become involved. And very importantly, the ongoing participation of teacher unions is vital for the success of the plan.

The Action Plan is not about telling everyone exactly what to do. This would be impossible in a system as large and varied as the South African schooling system. At the same time it is important for the Minister of Basic Education, through this national plan, to guide the very large improvements we need in our schools.

For wide participation to be effective, participants need to be well informed not only of what happens in their local school, but also in the schooling system as a whole. The Department of Basic Education will publish every year a report on how the schooling system is doing and what is happening with regard to learning and teaching, spending by government, collaboration between the Department and teacher unions, and so on. This national report will indicate what complaints are being received by the district, provincial and national complaints officers (these officers are described below), and what action was taken, or will be taken. An easy to follow version of this annual report will be made widely available so that stakeholders have the information they need. If the Action Plan changes, the Department will make sure that these changes are clearly communicated to schools and parents so that there is no confusion around what the plan is saying.

The Department's e-Education strategy is a strategy that involves the use of computers and the internet to get things done faster and better. As part of this strategy, the Department will make sure that the information people need to take part in Schooling 2025 will be readily available on the internet. Even though not all South Africans have access to the internet (by 2009 people in a quarter of households across the country were accessing the internet) we know that this access, especially amongst younger people, is going up fast.

The vision for schooling in 2025

Important steps towards a shared vision of a better schooling system were made in 2008 in Kliptown (the birthplace of the 1956 Freedom Charter) with the adoption by various stakeholders of the Code for Quality

Education. This code, a copy of which appears at the end of this document, drives the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC), also launched in 2008. It is also a point of departure for the following vision of where we would like to be in 2025.

Making sure that every young South African receives quality schooling is an urgent need. Yet we realise that this cannot be realised overnight. We need a clear vision of where we want to be in 2025, or before then if possible. And we must make sure that every year we move a bit closer to our vision, recognising that a large improvement is an accumulation of many smaller changes. By 2025 we must see the following in every South African school:

- Learners who attend school every day and are on time because they want to come to school, the school is accessible and because they know that if they miss school when they should not, some action is taken. These learners understand the importance of doing their schoolwork, in school and at home, and they know their school will do everything possible to get them to learn what they should. Much learning happens through the use of computers and from Grade 3 onwards all learners are computer literate. Part of the reason why learners want to come to school is that they get to meet friends in an environment where everyone is respected, they will have a good meal, they know they can depend on their teachers for advice and guidance, and they are able to participate in sporting and cultural activities organised at the school after school hours.

- Teachers who have received the training they require, are continuously improving their capabilities and are confident in their profession. These teachers understand the importance of their profession for the development of the nation and do their utmost to give their learners a good educational start in life. They are on the whole satisfied with their jobs because their pay and conditions of service in general are decent and similar to what one would find in other professions.

- A school principal who ensures that teaching in the school takes place as it should, according to the national curriculum, but who also understands his or her role as a leader whose responsibility is to promote harmony, creativity and a sound work ethic within the school community and beyond.

- Parents who are well informed about what happens in the school, and receive regular reports about how well their children perform against clear standards that are shared by all schools. These parents know that if something is not happening as it should in the school, the principal or someone in the Department will listen to them and take steps to deal with any problems.

- Learning and teaching materials in abundance and of a high quality. The national Minimum Schoolbag policy, which is widely understood,

describes the minimum quantity and quality of materials that every learners must have access to. Computers in the school are an important medium through which learners and teachers access information.

- School buildings and facilities that are spacious, functional, safe and well maintained. Learners and teachers look after their buildings and facilities because they take pride in their school.

The output goals

In 2009, President Zuma released the policy document Improving Government Performance: Our Approach, which called for all government departments to focus better on changing the lives of all South Africans. For example, the education departments were requested to focus more on what learners learn in schools. Things such as improving school buildings, teacher training and school lunches are very important, but if they do not lead to better educated learners, then something is wrong.

The 13 output goals of the Action Plan are described below. For each goal there is an indication of what government is doing, and what you should do. What should you do if you believe that government is not doing what it should be doing? If this happens, the first step you should take is to discuss the matter with a teacher or the school principal to see what they have to say. You can suggest that the matter be discussed at the next meeting of the school governing body. The school governing body (or the principal) can then bring up the matter with the district office. However, if you feel that working through the school does not work, you yourself are free to contact the district office or the provincial department directly. Every district and provincial department, as part of the Action Plan, will ensure that it has a complaints officer whose job it is to receive complaints, to advise those complaining about their rights, to bring complaints to the relevant people in the Department, and to ensure that appropriate action is taken. If complaining to the district and province does not work, the national department also has a complaints officer. You can phone the national complaints officer, but the national department will also make sure, as part of its e-Education strategy, that information you need and details on steps you can take are easily available on the Department's website.

Goal 1 - Increase the number of learners in Grade 3 who by the end of the year have mastered the minimum language and numeracy competencies for Grade 3.

What is the problem? In South Africa there has been much focus for many years on how learners do in the Grade 12 examinations. In more recent years there has been a growing focus on how well learners do in lower grades. This has happened partly because we now know that if we want to improve

Grade 12 results in future, we need to improve results in all grades. The education experts agree that if a child does not learn the basics in Grades 1 to 3, that child will have difficulties in all the later grades. Tests of learners in Grade 3 have shown that results are unacceptably low, especially for learners in the poorest parts of the country. For example, the Systemic Evaluation tests have shown that fewer than half of all Grade 3 learners pass their language and numeracy

What is government doing? An important recent step taken by government was the launch of Foundations for Learning in 2008. Foundations for Learning involves getting more materials to primary school learners and making it clearer to teachers how they should teach the curriculum. In 2008 government also began Annual National Assessments, or ANA, which involves testing all Grades 1 to 6 learners in key subjects using national tests. ANA is being improved to ensure that testing leads to better action and better planning within government. The box appearing below describes what ANA means for you. Apart from ANA, government is doing a lot of other things to improve learning in Grade 3, through the different goals explained in this plan.

How ANA will work

As in 2009, in every year moving forward all learners in all schools in Grades 1 to 6 will write national tests in languages and mathematics at the end of the year. The language tests will cover the learner's home language and the first additional language, which is English for most South African learners. Teachers will mark the tests according to instructions provided by the Department of Basic Education. These instructions also indicate how the school principal and specialists from the district office should check that tests are properly marked. Parents will receive ANA results together with other results in the annual report card for each learner distributed at the end of the year. The school governing body (SGB) will receive, at the beginning of each year, a report from the district office that will look more or less the same across all districts in South Africa. This report, the district-wide ANA report, will allow the school to compare its ANA results to those of other schools in the district. It will also indicate what the results are for schools in different quintiles in the district, in other words schools with more or less the same level of poverty amongst learners. Parents on the SGB will be asked to share the district-wide ANA report with other parents at the school and to discuss ways in which parents and the school can work together to improve results. All the district-wide ANA reports from across the country will be available on the internet.

What the district-wide ANA reports will not contain are so-called league tables, or a list of every school in the district and its average scores. Each school will know its own average scores and will be able to compare these to the average of the district, of each quintile, and so on. However, in a system such as ANA, where schools themselves do the marking,

research has shown that if the system becomes too competitive, this just encourages cheating when tests are marked. The main objective of ANA is not to make public the 'winners' and 'losers', but rather to let schools and parents have a better idea of how well they are doing in comparison to schools around them and schools across the country.

In 2011 ANA tests for Grade 9 learners will be introduced, also in languages and mathematics.

How is ANA different to what happened before ANA? The difference is that ANA tests are standardised across schools, so it will be possible to compare results from one school to the results of any other school in South Africa. This will make it easier to know when there are serious teaching and learning problems in your school.

What has just been described is universal ANA. Apart from universal ANA, there will be verification ANA. Verification ANA will be run directly by the national department and is a bit like the old Systemic Evaluation, but better. As part of verification ANA the national department will send people to some, but not all, schools to run tests that are almost the same as the universal ANA tests. Learners in Grades 3, 6 and 9 will be tested. The national department will then produce a report that will tell everyone if the national and provincial results are improving, and will indicate how accurate the results obtained from universal ANA are. The national report will also explain what the national and provincial targets are, and if we are succeeding in reaching our goals.

To start with, there will not be targets for every school, for example a target saying that 64% of learners in Grade 6 in your school must pass their ANA mathematics test by 2014. National and provincial targets for this plan and Schooling 2025 have already been set. What will happen soon is that targets will also be set for districts.

What should you be doing? If you are a parent, there are number of things you can do. If your child is not doing as well as he or she should, for example if your Grade 3 child is not able to read at a basic level yet, then you can help your child by making sure she does her homework and goes to school every day. You should also talk to your child's teacher so that you can understand better what the problem is. You should also make sure you know how well your school is doing in ANA compared to other schools in your area. The problem may be that all or most of the learners in your school are doing poorly. It may not just be a problem with your child. If this is happening, then it is important that all parents, teachers and the school principal at the school meet to discuss what the problem is and to make a plan to improve the situation. What if your child and your school are doing well in the ANA tests? This is obviously a good thing. But that does not mean you should do nothing. We need to improve results in all schools in South Africa if we want to realise our vision as a nation.

How will we know when things are getting better? ANA results will tell us how close we are to achieving our Grade 3 languages and numeracy targets.

Goal 2 - Increase the number of learners in Grade 6 who by the end of the year have mastered the minimum language and mathematics competencies for Grade 6.

What is the problem? As in Grade 3, in Grade 6 there are too many learners who do not learn the basic things they should learn. For example, both the Systemic Evaluation in 2004, and SACMEQ in 2000 indicated that fewer than one in four Grade 6 learners passed minimum standards in mathematics.

What is government doing? Like Grade 3, Grade 6 is covered by government's Foundations for Learning programme. Moreover, Grade 6 is one of the three grades receiving a special focus in ANA. It is important to remember that Grade 6 is the last grade of the three-year intermediate phase in the school curriculum and there are important things that every learner should have learnt by then. Goals 14 to 27 in this plan are aimed at improving learning in schools, including learning in Grade 6.

What should you be doing? See Goal 1 above.

How will we know when things are getting better? ANA results will tell us how close we are to achieving our Grade 6 languages and mathematics targets.

Goal 3 - Increase the number of learners in Grade 9 who by the end of the year have mastered the minimum language and mathematics competencies for Grade 9.

What is the problem? In Grade 9 standard testing across schools began in 2002, when Common Tasks of Assessments, or CTAs, were introduced. In the CTAs all Grade 9 learners went through the same assessments, which were marked by teachers and moderated by school principals. The results from these CTAs indicated that there was room for much improvement. The Grade 9 ANA testing, to begin in 2011, will provide a better picture of Grade 9 learning than the CTAs, which have been stopped.

What is government doing? To improve performance in Grades 7 to 9, the grades of the senior phase of the General Education and Training curriculum, government will pay particular attention to improving support to teachers so that they are able to teach their subjects with greater confidence.

What should you be doing? Support from parents, as described above, is necessary if Grade 9 results are to improve. We know that it is at the secondary level that problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, and unprotected sex, become important risks. Government efforts to educate youths and promote a healthy lifestyle can only succeed if adults in the home play their part.

How will we know when things are getting better? In Grade 9 ANA will be used to measure progress in learner results.

Goal 4 - Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who become eligible for a Bachelors programme at a university.

What is the problem? Presently, around one in every eight youths in South Africa receive a Grade 12 pass that is good enough to allow him or her to enter a Bachelors degree programme at a university. This means that only one in eight is able to study to become a medical doctor, an engineer, a chartered accountant or a teacher. This is not enough, and insufficient results in school, and especially Grade 12, are an important reason why South Africa is presently suffering a shortage of people in these professions. Government's aim is to increase the number of youths who are able to enter a Bachelors programme at a university to about one in five by 2014, and one in three by 2025.

What is government doing? Government will step up its efforts to support learners and their teachers in the difficult Grade 12 year through the distribution of study guides and examples of examination questions. This is largely done through newspapers and materials sent directly to schools. Guidance to Grade 12 learners through radio and television is also important. Government moreover provides support to Grades 10 and 11 learners so that they can be properly prepared when they reach Grade 12. Obviously making sure that every learner in Grades 10 to 12 has the textbooks and materials needed is important. This is discussed below in relation to Goal 19.

What should you be doing? As mentioned in the Code for Quality Education, parents and the families of learners have a special role to play in motivating Grade 12 learners and making sure they have enough time to study, and appropriate space to study.

How will we know when things are getting better? Grade 12 examination results are published in newspapers, and the Department of Basic Education releases a detailed report each year on the Grade 12 results. In addition, districts will be producing a district-wide Grade 12 examination report in which SGB members will be able to see how well the school is performing in comparison to other schools in the district, the province and the country.

Goal 5 - Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who pass mathematics.

Goal 6 - Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who pass physical science.

What is the problem? A very serious problem experienced in South Africa is that there are not enough youths leaving the school system with good mathematics and physical science results. This has caused a shortage of people in certain professions such as medicine and financial management. Presently around one in seven youths leave school with a Grade 12 pass in mathematics. The number is a bit lower for physical science. The aim is to increase this to around one in five by 2014 and one in three by 2025, for each subject.

What is government doing? For a number of years government has been paying special attention to improving mathematics and physical science results in Grades 10 to 12. An important programme of government is Dinaledi, which started in 2001. In 2007 this programme was expanded so that it covered almost 500 schools. Recent evaluations by experts have found that the additional training and resources going to Dinaledi schools did make a difference to Grade 12 results, especially in schools in poorer areas. The challenge is to improve the Dinaledi approach further and to include more schools.

What should you be doing? Passing mathematics and physical science in Grade 12 involves practising certain things again and again. It is important that parents should assist learners to develop the discipline needed for this task.

How will we know when things are getting better? The new district-wide examination reports to schools will help school governing bodies see how well they are doing in Grade 12 mathematics and physical science compared to similar schools.

Goal 7 - Improve the average performance in languages of Grade 6 learners.

Goal 8 - Improve the average performance in mathematics of Grade 6 learners.

Goal 9 - Improve the average performance in mathematics of Grade 8 learners.

What is the problem? Goals 1 to 6 above focus on getting learners to meet minimum standards. However, improving the education situation in South Africa must involve improving results at all levels. We need more schools and more learners to do exceptionally well. International tests that South

Africa participates in indicate that the top 10% of learners in South Africa do worse than the top 10% of learners in other developing countries such as Kenya, Indonesia and Chile. We need to improve results at the top end if South Africa is to have world class scientists, designers, analysts and so on. One way of improving our average scores in international tests is obviously to make sure that everyone, including those near the top, improves his or her results.

What is government doing? Government has been encouraging excellence through the recognition of outstanding learners and outstanding schools, for instance in public ceremonies. One area where government needs to do more work is in giving exceptional learners better access to focus schools. Focus schools, which have been established in a few provinces, are schools that pay special attention to certain subjects, such as art or mathematics, so that learners who do very well in these subjects can spend more time in them, and be taught by teachers with additional training and skills in these subjects. We need enough focus schools, but not too many of them. We should not forget that our goal should be to make all schools in the country work properly. Efforts spent on increasing the number of focus schools should not make us forget about this wider goal.

What should you be doing? It is important for parents and teachers to recognise who is performing exceptionally well, or who has the potential to do this, and then to make sure that these learners are given the right support to develop their strong areas further. This could be through placement in a focus school, but this is not the only option.

How will we know when things are getting better? There are two important international testing programmes that South Africa is involved in that will help us to know how successful we are at achieving the above three goals. SACMEQ, or the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality, involves the testing of Grade 6 learners in languages (mostly English) and mathematics in fifteen African countries. The next tests will be run in 2012. TIMSS, or Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, tests Grade 8 learners in mathematics and science. The next TIMSS is in 2011.

Goal 10 - Ensure that all children remain effectively enrolled in school up to the year in which they turn 15.

What is the problem? The South African Schools Act says that all children should complete Grade 9, or attend school up the end of the year in which they turn 15. We have been fairly successful at realising this. By 2009, only around 2.5% of children aged 7 to 15 were not in school. Yet this 2.5% represents around 200 000 children who are not in school when they should be. There are many reasons why these children are not in school. Some children live very far from a school. Others are children who need special education and who get told that the local school cannot offer

them this. Nearly all those children who are not in school are from poor homes, sometimes with no adults in the home.

What is government doing? Government has taken a number of steps to ensure that all children aged 7 to 15 are in school. One of the reasons why no fee schools were introduced was to make it easier for poor parents to send their children to school. Government will continue to make more no fee schools available, and to work hard at making sure that no fee schools offer a quality of schooling that is no different to that in schools which charge fees. The number of schools offering learners lunches has increased partly to encourage children from poorer homes to come to school. Government has introduced full service schools in certain districts which, together with existing special schools, make it easier for learners to get access to special needs education. A recent improvement is the LURITS system of government. This system, which covers just over half of all schools presently, is a computerised system containing the names plus a special school ID number for every learner. This system is designed to make it easier for the authorities to know when a child leaves the schooling system before he or she turns 15, and to make a follow-up.

What should you be doing? Parents and communities have a vital role to play to ensure that all young children attend school. You must ensure that your own children, or children where you are the guardian, are enrolled at a school and attend regularly. If you are aware of children who are not attending school, you should report this to the nearest education district office. It is the duty of districts to find a school for all children who must be in school, even in the case of children with special needs.

How will we know when things are getting better? Statistics South Africa visits homes across South Africa every year as part of the General Household Survey. The information that Statistics South Africa collects allows us to see how close we are to 100% enrolment of children aged 7 to 15. The 2011 Census will also be important for seeing how close we are to our target.

Goal 11 - Improve the access of children to quality early childhood development (ECD) below Grade 1.

What is the problem? Studies from around the world, including South Africa, have shown that good pre-primary schooling below Grade 1 makes it easier for a child to learn at primary school. Yet not all South African children get to attend pre-primary classes. The situation has improved in recent years. Between 2003 and 2008 the percentage of Grade 1 learners who had received some pre-primary schooling increased from 60% to 80%. But we want that figure to be 100%, and government's target is in fact that all children who will be starting Grade 1 in 2015 should be in Grade R during 2014.

What is government doing? Spending on pre-primary schooling by government has increased more than spending in any other area in education. By 2011, spending on ECD will be four times what it was in 2006 in real terms (in other words, after inflation has been taken into account). Much of the additional money has been transferred to public schools so that schools themselves could employ Grade R teachers and pay for materials. Some provincial departments have also employed teachers for Grade R in public schools. Currently government is focussing on ensuring that all Grade R teachers have the minimum qualifications required. It is important that Grade R in public schools should be of a high quality.

What should you be doing? It was not possible for government to introduce Grade R in all public primary schools at once. Those schools which still do not offer Grade R will begin to offer this according to a timetable put together by the provincial department. This timetable prioritises schools in poorer areas. If your local school does not offer Grade R yet, ask when it is supposed to begin offering Grade R according to the timetable. It is possible that Grade R will be introduced in your local school when your child is old enough for Grade R (the year in which your child turns six). Grade R is not compulsory yet, but you should try by all means to enrol your child in Grade R as this can make it easier to learn in later grades.

How will we know when things are getting better? The General Household Survey will help us to know whether we have reached our target of 100% enrolment in Grade R by 2014. Government will also ensure that more studies are done looking at whether more Grade R in South Africa is resulting in better learning in later grades.

Goal 12 - Improve the grade promotion of learners through the Grades 1 to 9 phases of school.

What is the problem? Repetition of grades in public schools has gone down over the years. However, it is still high. In 2009, 9% of all enrolled learners were repeating their grade (repetition is highest in Grades 1, 10 and 11). The problem with grade repetition is that it causes classes in schools to be larger than they should be. It also results in more over-aged learners in the class. If there are too many over-aged learners in class various problems, including discipline problems, can arise. Learners who repeat grades can also become discouraged, and leave school, sometimes before they have turned 15. This Action Plan places a lot of emphasis on improving results in schools, especially in Grades 3, 6, 9 and 12. What we must avoid is a situation where schools try to bring about better results in these critical grades by keeping learners back unnecessarily in the earlier grades.

What is government doing? Government does not think that grade repetition should be prohibited. There are cases where grade repetition is

in the best interests of the learner. But there should be limits on how many times a learner can repeat, and for this reason repetition is limited to once for every three-year phase. The best way to reduce grade repetition is to improve learning and teaching so that more learners learn what they should in each grade. District offices will be checking that schools do not use grade repetition to make their results appear better.

What should you be doing? By supporting your child at school you improve learning and reduce the chances that your child will repeat. If you believe that teachers in your school are repeating learners unnecessarily in order to make its results appear better, you should bring this to the attention of the principal and the school governing body. If this does not help, you should report the problem to the complaints officer in the district.

How will we know when things are getting better? In 2009 the General Household Survey started measuring grade repetition in schools. This information will be used together with information gathered from schools through the Annual Survey of Schools to see how successful we are at reducing grade repetition. The ultimate aim of Schooling 2025 is that only 5% of learners should be repeating their grade by 2025.

Goal 13 - Improve the access of youth to Further Education and Training beyond Grade 9.

What is the problem? Presently around 40% of South Africa's youths obtain a National Senior Certificate from a school, and only around 1% obtain some other post-Grade 9 certificate. This means that more than half of South Africa's youths are left with no qualification beyond Grade 9. This obviously makes it difficult for these youths to obtain a job, enrol in a university or feel that they have benefitted from the years they have spent in school. It is clear that getting more youths to obtain qualifications that serve their needs at the Further Education and Training (FET) level (the level after Grade 9) is a key challenge if we are to tackle unemployment and disillusionment amongst youths. Enrolments beyond Grade 9 are fairly good by international standards. Around 75% of learners reach Grade 10, 65% reach Grade 11, and 50% reach Grade 12. A large part of the challenge is getting more learners to 'survive' to the end of Grade 12 and to obtain their National Senior Certificate, but also for more learners to obtain qualifications from FET colleges.

What is government doing? FET is a responsibility of both the Department of Basic Education (which deals with Grades 10 to 12 in schools) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (which deals with FET colleges). Opportunities for youths in FET colleges have increased recently, with the introduction the NSC(V) qualifications, one for each of the three years of FET college training and increased government funding of colleges. One area which must be improved in the coming years is guidance

to learners in secondary schools regarding their options at school, at FET colleges, and beyond. This guidance is provided through the Life Orientation curriculum in schools, but needs strengthening. Above all, it is important for teachers and learners in secondary schools to have more opportunities to meet people from FET colleges, and from companies and organisations that employ FET college graduates. Government is currently working together with employers, unions and higher education institutions on a new plan to deal specifically with the challenges relating to when youths leave school, and what their options are after school. This new plan will influence the shape of the Action Plan and Schooling 2025.

What should you be doing? Parents and learners should make use of the available information on what subject combinations to take for the Grade 12 examinations to improve one's chances of passing, what the options are in FET colleges, and what the best grade and age is to move from a school to college (if this move is made). Government is committed to making better information on these matters available.

How will we know when things are getting better? Statistics South Africa provides information on the highest education level obtained by young South Africans. But we must also monitor how employers and higher education institutions react. We will know that we have truly succeeded when fewer universities complain that school leavers are not ready for university studies, and when fewer employers complain about the abilities of school and college leavers who seek employment.

How our desired outputs are to be achieved

If we are to achieve Goals 1 to 13 above, how are we to do this? The task is not an easy one but it is made easier if everyone is informed of how the schooling system works. The diagram on the next page provides a picture that might help in understanding how different people and actions can contribute towards better schooling.

[Click here to see abovementioned image on page 24](#)

Goals 14 to 18 deal with teachers and the teaching process.

Goal 14 - Attract in each year a new group of young, motivated and appropriately trained teachers into the teaching profession.

What is the problem? For many years, the number of newly qualified teachers joining the teaching profession has been too low. On average, around 10 000 teachers leave public service every year, but only around 5 000 have been joining. The main reason why the total number of teachers has not declined is that older people qualified to teach have entered the public teaching force, largely from the private sector. There are many

reasons why there have not been enough young people joining teaching in recent years. There have been many other job opportunities for young South Africans as the economy grew. Another reason is that the schooling system itself has not been producing enough people who are ready to enter a Bachelors programme (for example a Bachelor of Education degree). It is vital that enough newly qualified teachers enter public schools every year if we are to avoid serious teacher shortages in future.

What is government doing? The Funza Lushaka bursary scheme for those leaving school who want to train as teachers was introduced in 2007 to encourage young South Africans to train as teachers and teach in public schools. Presently just over 9 000 students training as teachers are receiving Funza Lushaka bursaries. Government has also improved the salaries of teachers in recent years, partly so that the teaching profession can become a more attractive career option. Between 2000 and 2009 the purchasing power of the average teacher improved by around 40%. But apart from money, there are other things that influence teacher satisfaction and it is important that attention is paid to this (see Goal 17 below).

What should you be doing? If you are choosing a future career, or know someone who is, you may want to take a closer look at teaching. The conditions for teachers have been changing over the years so what you have been told about teaching may no longer be true. There are now more options for teachers, for example promotion options within the classroom for those not wishing to become school principals or managers.

How will we know when things are getting better? When the personnel records of government show that the number of new graduates entering the public schooling system each year equals the number of teachers who retire or leave for other reasons, then we will know that we are on the right track.

Goal 15 - Ensure that the availability and utilisation of teachers is such that excessively large classes are avoided.

What is the problem? Although teaching posts are given to schools more or less in proportion to their enrolments, class sizes are very different across different schools. Around half of South Africa's public school learners sit in classes with over 40 learners, and around 15% sit in classes with over 50 learners. Very large classes obviously make learning and teaching more difficult. There are three main reasons why very large classes exist. One is that it is difficult to attract teachers to certain areas, for instance remote rural areas, and so teaching posts remain empty. Another is that the timetable and the use of each teacher's time in some schools is not as good as it should be. Thirdly, many schools still suffer from classroom shortages.

What is government doing? In 2007 government passed policy on additional pay for teachers in remote rural areas. Various reasons, including a lack of funding, have made it difficult for this policy to work properly. In the coming years government will pay special attention to the proper implementation of this policy. The policy on the distribution of teaching posts to schools has been changed slightly so that it now makes it clearer to each school how teaching time should be used. District offices will monitor carefully whether schools are in fact timetabling correctly and will take action when it is clear that poor planning in the school is resulting in over-sized classes.

What should you be doing? Making sure there are enough teachers in a school with the right qualifications, and that teaching time is effectively used, requires a good working relationship between the Department, the school principal and the school governing body. Parents, in particular parents on the school governing body, can assist in making sure that the right decisions are taken.

How will we know when things are getting better? When the Annual Survey of Schools shows that we no longer have learners sitting in classes with over 60, or 50, or 40 learners, then we will know that we have succeeded in tackling this problem.

Goal 16 - Improve the professionalism, teaching skills, subject knowledge and computer literacy of teachers throughout their entire careers.

What is the problem? Many, and perhaps most, of South Africa's teachers have not received all the training they need to cope with the responsibilities of teaching. Over 90% of our public school teachers have more than 3 years of training. This compares well to other similar countries. However, often this training was not of a sufficient quality. We should remember that most of our teachers became teachers before 1994. SACMEQ and a few other testing programmes have tested not just learners, but also teachers, and found that when it comes to subject knowledge teachers are too often lacking. Government and the teacher unions agree that this is a serious matter that requires urgent attention.

What is government doing? The problem has been recognised for a long time, and there have been many initiatives to provide teachers with in-service training to try and fill the gaps. For example, just over a third of primary school teachers say that they have received formal in-service training recently and three-quarters of these teachers said the training helped them to teach better. However, we have not trained enough teachers and too often the training has been of an insufficient standard. An important step in the right direction was a large Teacher Development Summit in 2009, involving all stakeholders. Presently the recommendations from that summit are being used to put together a new strategy for teacher

development which will make it easier for large numbers of teachers to access the training they need. Some of the training will be through distance education where teachers will access materials over the internet. This use of e-Education can greatly assist us in achieving the goal of better skilled teachers. Government's Teacher Laptop Initiative is one important project aimed at improving computer literacy amongst teachers and school principals. We know that many teachers develop excellent teaching materials. As part of e-Education, the internet will be promoted as a way for teachers to share these materials with each other.

What should you be doing? If you are a teacher, then the actions you take as an individual, and in collaboration with the teachers you work with, are vital. Government is committed to making more and better teacher training courses available. However, we will only move forward if teachers show a commitment towards their own development. Most do show this commitment, but some do not. A survey of teachers in 2007 found that 30% of primary school teachers admitted spending no hours on their own professional development, when it is a teacher's responsibility to spend 80 hours a year. Access to good formal training and materials has been part of the problem. However, teachers should also take the initiative themselves. Above all, it is important to strengthen the culture of reading and professional debate amongst teachers. Teachers should also make a special effort to improve their computer literacy and to use the internet to access interesting materials that can be used in the classroom.

How will we know when things are getting better? Government will continue to support research where teachers themselves are tested in order to see where the gaps are in subject knowledge and teaching skills. This research will be an important way of seeing whether we are making progress. The research will respect the dignity of teachers. Results of individual teachers will not be revealed to anyone and will not be used in any way in the management of individual teachers. The aim of the research will be to get an overall national picture of what the training gaps are.

Goal 17 - Strive for a teacher workforce that is healthy and enjoys a sense of job satisfaction.

What is the problem? Even if teachers are properly trained, we will not achieve our goals if teachers are not satisfied with their jobs and feel that society does not value the teaching profession. Teaching is a challenging job, especially if learners are from poor homes. Almost every teacher will experience times when the frustrations are great. What we must avoid, however, is a situation where teachers feel that the education policies and the curriculum are poorly designed, or unfair. Teachers cannot decide on the education policies on their own, but these policies must be sensitive to what teachers experience and feel. The challenge is to make our policies, and their implementation, more teacher-centred.

What is government doing? As mentioned above, teacher pay has improved in recent years. In 2008 new promotion options for teachers were introduced. A key challenge that government is working on together with teacher unions is a better system to reward those teachers who are exceptionally good teachers and who go the extra mile. We hope to have this system in place and running very soon. In 2009 the learner assessment rules were simplified so that teachers would need to do less paperwork and could focus more on teaching. This was in response to complaints from teachers themselves. Above all, government is committed to listening more to what teachers need. This will be done both through consultation with the teacher unions and through better use of surveys looking at what teachers see as the problems and the solutions. Part of the task is to look more closely at the health issues teachers face, including HIV and AIDS. As part of government's overall strategy on HIV and AIDS, we must be honest and open on these matters and combat all forms of stigma and prejudice.

What should you be doing? As a parent, you can make a difference by complimenting your child's teacher when you feel that the teacher is making a special effort. School Governing Bodies should acknowledge outstanding performance amongst the teaching staff, keeping in mind that positive feedback can be as effective, if not more effective, than monetary rewards. Teachers and union activists have an important role to play in providing constructive criticism of our education policies. These policies are never cast in stone.

How will we know when things are getting better? Surveys of teacher job satisfaction will be an important tool for government to see what the challenges are and what progress we are making.

Goal 18 - Ensure that learners cover all the topics and skill areas that they should cover within their current school year.

What is the problem? Recent research has shown that too often teachers reach the end of the year, but have not completed the teaching programme for the year. This causes great problems for the teacher in the next grade, who then finds it difficult to complete his or her programme for the year, and so the problem continues through all the grades. The problem is partly caused by insufficient time being spent in the year on teaching and learning. Time is lost because teachers and learners arrive late, or leave early. Time is also lost during the school day when breaks are extended and teachers are not in class when they should be.

What is government doing? A new system will be introduced to monitor schools and teachers in order to see who does not complete the learning programme for the year, and why. This new system will involve at least one visit to each school by the district office each year in order to monitor how successful teachers were at completing the previous year's programme, and whether teachers are on track in the current year. Where there are

problems, the district office and the school will have to come up with a plan to deal with the situation. Some of the schools selected as ANA verification schools every second year will see the ANA officers (who are employed by the national department) spend more time in the school so that the school's work programmes and learner's workbooks can be checked. This will provide a national picture of the situation. It is obviously important that schools and teachers should not rush through the year's programme, or pretend that things have been done when they have not. The new monitoring system will have to check not only whether the year's programme has been completed, but how well it has been completed.

What should you be doing? All School Governing Bodies should pay attention to whether learning programmes for the year are being completed. If they are not, the members of the SGB should know this and should help finding solutions to the problem.

How will we know when things are getting better? As part of the new monitoring system district offices will need to submit reports on the situation in their schools to assist monitoring by provinces and the national department. If these reports suggest that there are requirements in the curriculum that have to change, those changes must be made. Ultimately all schools and all teachers must finish their year's teaching programme every year.

This and the next goal deal with textbooks, workbooks and other educational materials.

Goal 19 - Ensure that every learner has access to the minimum set of textbooks and workbooks required according to national policy.

What is the problem? Although the situation has improved in recent years, there are still, far too many learners who do not have access to the textbooks, workbooks, exercise books and stationery they need. We cannot expect proper learning and teaching to take place where learners do not have access to these materials. Spending on materials such as textbooks has gone up in recent years, and information that Statistics South Africa collects from parents indicates that the percentage of parents complaining about a shortage of books for their children at school has gone down, from 16% in 2005 to 11% in 2008. Yet if 11% of parents are complaining this is still much too high. As recently as 2007 one in eight Grade 3 learners did not have their own literacy workbook (the figure for numeracy was the same) and 4% of Grade 6 learners did not have any exercise book or workbook to write in. This is unacceptable.

What is government doing? There are different reasons why learners do not have the materials each learner should have. The Department may not have delivered the materials it was supposed to deliver, or the school may not have bought the materials it was supposed to buy with the funding it

received from the Department. Funding that was supposed to arrive from the Department may not have arrived. It is important to keep in mind that because of the way the funding policy works many schools buy materials themselves using funds received from the Department. For instance 30% of schools buy textbooks this way. Materials may not be available because they are not well looked after (so next year's learners are unable to use them) or because of crime (which could involve theft between learners). Government is working on all these problems. One thing that research has shown is that very often there are fewer problems if schools themselves manage the purchasing of materials, using funds from the Department. The national department will be announcing very soon clearer policy on what each Grade 1 learner should have, what each Grade 2 learner should have, up to what every Grade 12 mathematics learner should have. These lists of things different learners must have will be known as the Minimum Schoolbag lists.

What should you be doing? Parents can assist by making sure that where learners take books and materials home, these things are well looked after.

How will we know when things are getting better? There will be better monitoring and action to ensure that every child has his or her Minimum Schoolbag. We will know that we have reached our goal when every child has access to everything in the Minimum Schoolbag, from the first school day of the year, to the last.

Goal 20 - Increase access amongst learners to a wide range of media, including computers, which enrich their education.

What is the problem? Apart from the Minimum Schoolbag, every learner needs access to a library of good books and materials such as newspapers. It is also clear that children who do not have access to computers during their schooling end up disadvantaged later in life. Around 15 000 schools, or over half of all schools, have no library, and where schools do have a library it is not always sufficient. When it comes to computers, in a way the challenge is to catch up to what learners are already experiencing outside of school. Statistics from 2007 indicate that 50% of Grade 6 learners have used a computer somewhere, but that only 37% have used one inside their school.

What is government doing? As part of government's new plan to speed up improvements to school buildings (see Goal 24), media centres, or libraries, will be built in schools. New standards for what a school must have, developed by the national department in 2008, indicate what kind of library or media centre a school should have, depending on whether it is a primary or secondary school, and depending on the total enrolment of the school. Government will also continue to promote mini-libraries within classrooms, which can assist in giving learners access to materials until the school has a fully-equipped library. As part of the e-Education

strategy, government will continue to support the establishment of computer centres in schools. The growth in the number of computers in schools in recent years is partly a result of government action, but also of action taken by schools, sometimes in collaboration with the private sector. Obviously schools cannot promote computer literacy amongst learners if teachers are not computer literate. Better computer literacy amongst teachers is a key aim of government (see Goal 16 above).

What should you be doing? If you are working in the private sector, has your company considered assisting a school to set up a library, a media centre or a computer centre? Getting your company to do this could greatly improve the educational opportunities for the school's learners. Many companies have already shown that this is an excellent opportunity for the private sector to make a difference.

How will we know when things are getting better? As part of the Action Plan, government will monitor the percentage of learners who have access to library books and computers of an acceptable standard. The number of children and youths who are computer literate will also be an important measure: of our success.

This and the next goal deal with school governance and management.

Goal 21 - Ensure that the basic annual management processes occur across all schools in the country in a way that contributes towards a functional school environment.

What is the problem? A school where learners learn and there is a sense of harmony is often a school with an outstanding school principal. The schooling system has many such principals. However, there are also many principals who need support and training in order to do their jobs properly. For good management and leadership, some basic building blocks must be in place. The school needs a budget, a school development plan, properly completed learner and staff attendance rosters, schedules of learner assessment scores, annual financial statements and an annual report. These things on their own are not enough, but if they are not in place it becomes much more difficult to create a functional school environment. We know that these basic building blocks do not exist in all schools.

What is government doing? Training and support is offered fairly regularly to most school principals. For example, over 90% of principals say they receive support in financial management and most say this occurs on average once a year. The problem is that only 40% of principals who receive this support rate it as being good. Government will improve training and support to principals, and ensure that everyone who needs it receives it. There will be a special effort to ensure that all schools have the 'building blocks' mentioned above, and that these documents not only

exist, but are put together in a way that contributes to a better run school. As more schools gain access to computers and the internet, more of the administration of schools will become computerised.

What should you be doing? School management is another area where schools and the private sector could work more closely together. If you are in the private sector, consider whether your company could organise joint management and leadership workshops for school principals in your area.

How will we know when things are getting better? There will be a more logical way than in the past for districts to rate the management and basic functionality of schools. Districts will provide some of the information we need to see if we are reaching this goal. But the national department will also monitor schools directly to check that improvements are happening.

Goal 22 - Improve parent and community participation in the governance of schools, partly by improving access to important information via the e-Education strategy.

What is the problem? Parent involvement in school governance is fairly good, but it should be strengthened. A 2009 study found that two-thirds of parents had at some time voted for school governing body members. In 61% of schools parents are actively involved in deciding what the school budget should look like. Involving parents in school governance is nearly always a bigger challenge in poorer areas. Parents there may find it difficult to get to meetings at the school and school budgets and reports may not be put together in a way that is understandable to all parents.

What is government doing? ANA will give parents better information than before on what is happening in the school. This should make it easier to get parents interested and involved in discussions on how learning can be improved. Having parents involved is important if one thinks of the vital role that parents play in making sure that learners attend school regularly and do their homework at home. There has been much training of parent members of the SGB over the years. Around 77% of parents currently on SGBs say they have received some training. This training will now have to include training on how to understand ANA and how to take decisions on improving learning. It should also focus on how e-Education makes parent access to information easier. This training should focus strongly on parents in poorer communities.

What should you be doing? Parents should make a special effort to understand this Action Plan and Schooling 2025 so that they can have a clearer idea of what they can expect government and schools to do, and how they can contribute to the realisation of the goals.

How will we know when things are getting better? Both the district offices and the national department will be monitoring parent participation

and the success of School Governing Bodies and providing reports on this.

This goal deals with school funding.

Goal 23 - Ensure that all schools are funded at least at the minimum per learner levels determined nationally and that funds are utilised transparently and effectively.

What is the problem? A 2009 study revealed that although non-personnel funding for schools has gone up in recent years, a third of schools are paid less than they should be paid according to the national policy. A further problem is that provincial controls over the funding often cause difficulties for schools. For example, when the provincial department spends on behalf of the school (because the school does not have section 21 status) goods often arrive late. And where money is transferred to schools the provincial department may have requirements on how the money should be spent that are impractical for the school.

What is government doing? The national department is presently using the report from the 2009 study to see what parts of the school funding policy should change. The national department is especially interested in ensuring that no fee schools work properly, that concerns around the use of quintiles to classify schools as being poorer or less poor are dealt with, and that schools granting fee exemptions to poorer learners should receive some compensation for this. Government aims to publish the amount of funding that must go to individual schools on the internet so that parents are better informed and there is less room for confusion between schools and the Department.

What should you be doing? Parents and school principals have a right to receive clear information about how much funding the school is supposed to receive, how much was transferred into the bank account of the school, and how much the Department spent on behalf of the school. If this information is not clear, or if not all funds have been paid to the school, you have a right to complain.

How will we know when things are getting better? Financial reporting systems need to improve so that it becomes clearer what is spent on each school. When schools all receive at least the amount indicated in the national policy, schools no longer complain about unnecessary restrictions and there are no reports of fraud in schools, then we will know we are achieving this goal.

This goal deals with school infrastructure.

Goal 24 - Ensure that the physical infrastructure and environment of every school inspires learners to want to come to school and learn, and

teachers to teach.

What is the problem? In 2008 the national department came up with a new way of classifying the quality of school infrastructure so that it would become easier to decide which schools to refurbish or rebuild. In the new classification, some schools have reached a basic functionality and better schools have reached an optimum functionality. We would want all our schools to reach an optimum functionality. Around 5 600 schools (out of a total of around 26 000) have not even reached the level of basic functionality. This is our biggest concern in the period up to 2014. For example, we still have 1 700 schools without water and 700 schools with no toilets. This not only makes learning difficult, but is very bad for the health of learners.

What is government doing? There has been much focus over the years on improving school infrastructure and we have seen improvements. For example, since 1996 the number of schools without water has gone down from 9 000 to 1 700 and the number of schools without electricity has gone down from 15 000 to 2 800. The percentage of classrooms with more than 45 learners has gone down from 55% to 25%. Government will continue to work hard at making all schools functional at the basic level by 2014 but also at taking more schools up to the optimum level. The national department is working closely with the Development Bank of Southern Africa to look at better ways of funding new school infrastructure.

What should you be doing? In many schools the infrastructure problem is not a problem of missing buildings or a shortage of desks and chairs, but the poor state of these things. Parents, teachers and communities in general can do more to ensure that school facilities are well looked after.

How will we know when things are getting better? Government now has a better reporting system for school infrastructure. This will make it easier to see where the gaps are and how close we are to reaching our goal.

This goal deals with learner well-being.

Goal 25 - Use the school as a location to promote access amongst children to the full range of public health and poverty reduction interventions.

What is the problem? Proper schooling cannot happen if learners suffer from desperate poverty, malnutrition or illness, or even if they have hearing and eyesight problems. Though the main responsibility of the school must be good teaching and learning, there are things schools can do to ensure that learners are healthy and have access to government programmes aimed at reducing poverty. Around 90% of enrolled primary school learners have never had an eye test and yet poor eyesight can be an important reason

why learners find it difficult to follow in class. Around 7% of learners do not have Road to Health cards, when they should all have this.

What is government doing? An important initiative of government is the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP). Around a quarter of all learners receive food directly delivered to the school whilst another one quarter receive school lunches paid for by money that is transferred from the Department to the school. The aim of government is that by 2014 75% of learners should be receiving school lunches. Moreover, the School Health Survey Programme will be implemented in more schools as part of the cooperation between the departments of health and education. Action will also be taken to ensure that learners who are recipients of child support grants do not pay school fees. This is something that is already in policy but we know that in too many schools this policy is not being followed.

What should you be doing? Parents should assist in ensuring that children are tested at a local clinic for eyesight and hearing problems. Parents should also understand that if a child receives a child support grant, then the child cannot be charged a school fee by a public school.

How will we know when things are getting better? Information from schools and households will be used to monitor access to school lunches and other health issues affecting learners.

This goal deals with inclusive education.

Goal 26 - Increase the number of schools which effectively implement the inclusive education policy and have access to centres which offer specialist services.

What is the problem? An important reason why around 200 000 learners aged 7 to 15 are not in school is that there are not enough schools able to offer special needs education. There are also many learners in school who do not receive the special needs attention they need.

What is government doing? There has been training of teachers in ordinary schools to assist them to deal with special needs amongst learners. Around 40% of schools have begun to use the new methods introduced by the national department to identify which learners need what special attention. In 35% of schools specialists from outside the school have come to assist teachers take the inclusive education policy forward. These initiatives need to be expanded so that all schools are covered. So far 20 full service schools have been established in 20 districts. These schools provide special needs support that are difficult to provide in ordinary schools. The aim of government is for there to be one full service school in every one of the 92 education districts in the country.

What should you be doing? If you believe that your child needs special

needs support, speak to your child's teacher about this. You should also find out whether your district is one of the districts that already has a full service school.

How will we know when things are getting better? The national department will clearly indicate the minimum staffing and equipment a school should have to be qualified to implement inclusive education. The number of schools which fulfil all the criteria will be monitored to see that we make progress.

This goal deals with support by district offices.

Goal 27 - Improve the frequency and quality of the monitoring and support services provided by district offices to schools, partly through better use of e-Education.

What is the problem? For many of the goals mentioned in this Action Plan, the districts carry a lot of responsibility. For example, they are expected to produce the district-wide ANA report, monitor whether schools teach everything they should within the year, and so on. The problem is that many district offices do not have enough staff or find that the existing staff do not have all the skills they need. This means they are not able to provide the quantity and the quality of support to schools that is needed, nor are they able to do all the monitoring they should.

What is government doing? Recent statistics indicate that over 90% of schools are visited by district officials at least once in a year, and that 35% of schools are visited four or more times. All schools should be visited at least twice every year and certain schools, especially those needing more support, should be visited more frequently. The national department, together with the provincial departments, will put together a clearer list of support that schools can expect from districts, and information that schools need to provide districts with. This will make it easier for schools and districts to focus on what is really important. When verification ANA occurs every second year, selected schools will be asked to evaluate the support they get from districts so that it becomes clearer what support services need to be improved. Through e-Education the sharing of information between schools and the district office will become easier.

What should you be doing? As a parent on the SGB you should be aware of what the district office requires of the school and what support the district can give the school.

How will we know when things are getting better? The number of visits per year by district officials to schools and the rating that school principals give of the services of the district will be important measures of how well we are doing.

Appendix

CODE FOR QUALITY EDUCATION

The power to improve education lies with all of us. We call on all department officials, teachers, students, parents and community members to make a commitment to a 'Code for Quality Education'.

As a DEPARTMENTAL OFFICIAL, I promise to:

- ensure all schools receive the necessary resources in time for teaching to commence;
- ensure all schools have their full staff allocation, and that any vacancies are filled without delay;
- improve my own knowledge and skills base to be more effective;
- always be available to assist schools, principals and teachers;
- respond to requests or concerns of education stakeholders;
- visit all schools within the district on a regular basis;
- monitor teacher and student attendance, and ensure no child is out of school;
- assist all schools to improve their performance, ensuring regular tests are conducted, and results are reported to parents.

As a TEACHER, in line with the SACE Code of Professional Ethics, I promise to:

- teach, to advance the education and the development of learners as individuals;
- respect the dignity and rights of all persons without prejudice;
- develop loyalty and respect for the profession;
- be punctual, enthusiastic, well prepared for lessons, and of sober mind and body;
- improve my own knowledge and skills base to be more effective;
- maintain good communication between teachers and students, among teachers themselves; and between teachers and parents;
- provide regular information to parents on their children's progress;

- eliminate unprofessional behaviour such as teacher-pupil relationships, drunkenness, drug use, assault, sexual harassment and others;

- make myself available to provide extra-mural activities. As a LEARNER, I promise to:

- accept that the main reason for being in school is to learn and develop academically, socially and culturally;

- adhere to school rules;

- respect the legitimacy and authority of teachers;

- participate in Learner Representative Councils (LRCs) to safeguard

- show respect to other learners and not to discriminate;

- avoid anti-social behaviour like theft, vandalism, assault, sexual harassment, alcohol and drug use, and other activities that disrupt the learning process.

As a PARENT, I promise to:

- involve myself actively in school governance structures;

- have regular discussions with my children about general school matters;

- cultivate a healthy, open and cooperative relationship with my children's teachers;

- create a home environment conducive to study;

- assist in the protection of educational resources such as textbooks, chairs, tables and others.

As a COMMUNITY, we promise to:

- ensure that every school-going child is at school;

- ensure a safe and crime-free environment for schooling, and to protect the school and its assets from vandalism;

- monitor the performance of schools, and report problems to relevant authorities.

We pledge to undertake these responsibilities to ensure quality education for all.

PART B

Action Plan to 2014

Towards the realisation of Schooling 2Q25

Draft for discussion dated 1 June 2010

This version of the plan does not include an initial summary, partly because a summarised and more 'people-oriented' version of the plan exists as a separate document (the 'shorter version').

Introduction

1. In 2009 the Presidency released a Green Paper on national strategic planning, as well as a guiding document titled Improving Government Performance: Our approach. These documents capture important shifts that are occurring in the way Government plans and implements policy. Above all, there is a shift towards better use of information to monitor successes and problems and to guide planning, there is greater emphasis on clarifying where we are heading in the long term, and there is a recognition that effective planning will require the right mix of central planning and empowerment of local entities (such as education districts and schools).

2. The current document describes what should be achieved by 2014 to improve schooling in South Africa. The focus is to a large extent on a set of goals, indicators and targets, and the activities that are required by the education departments but also people in schools and in civil society to achieve the goals. The plan to 2014 is located within a longer range vision, known as Schooling 2025, which includes long term targets for South Africa's schooling system. What we want to achieve by 2014 is therefore seen within the bigger picture of what we want to achieve a quarter of the way through this century. The current document represents the basic education sector's response to the challenge of a more innovative and effective delivery of services across Government as a whole. The Action Plan to 2014, in other words this document, will be further revised until the Minister for Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, is satisfied that there has been sufficient consultation with stakeholders and experts.

3. Many of these goals in this plan are not new. They have been expressed previously in the President's State of the Nation Address, various documents released by The Presidency, in particular the 2009 Medium Term Strategic Framework, and in the speeches and documents of the Ministry of Basic Education. Many goals are already widely supported, for instance through the multi-stakeholder Quality Teaching and Learning Campaign, launched in 2008. The full set of goals and indicators in this report are supported by the members of the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) and

take cognisance of inputs from Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Basic Education and teacher unions, following presentations by the national department to these structures. In the case of some goals, there is already considerable agreement amongst the experts how their attainment should be measured. However, all the goals put forward in this document should at this stage be considered as being open to debate. The purpose with this document is in fact to stimulate vigorous debate around the plan.

4. There are two documents that accompany this one. One, titled Goals, indicators and targets for Action Plan to 2014 and Schooling 2025, provides details on targets by province, as well as; a proposed list of goals and indicators relating to the inputs and processes aimed at realising the output goals put forward in the current document. The second document, called the 'shorter version' of this plan, puts together the Action Plan for 2014 and Schooling 2025 information that parents, teachers and school principals would have a direct interest in.

5. Details on how to make inputs on the process appear at the end of this document. One option is to make inputs through the Department's website, which now includes a facility for stakeholder organisations and individuals to post comments and to view the comments of others. **THIS WEB FACILITY IS IN THE PROCESS OF BEING SET UP.**

Purpose of the Action Plan to 2014 and Schooling 2025

6. Must contribute towards an improved schooling system. The overriding purpose of the Action Plan and Schooling 2025 is to contribute in concrete ways to the realisation of a better schooling system, one which adequately prepares young South Africans for the challenges of a rapidly changing society. The schooling system should above all ensure that our youth have acquired the basic skills and knowledge they require for life and instil the values needed for a united and democratic nation. It is widely recognised that achieving these overriding goals is vital if society-wide scourges such as poverty and crime are to be eradicated and South Africa is to prosper and develop.

7. The need for long-term planning. Schooling 2025, within which the Action Plan is located, represents South Africa's first ever long-term vision for schools. The reasons why a country like South Africa needs long-term planning are explained in the Green Paper on national strategic planning in relation to the envisaged country plan South Africa Vision 2025. Schooling 2025 in fact embodies the schooling sector's participation in the larger South Africa Vision 2025 process. Essentially a long-term planning approach for schooling is required to discourage ad hoc and fragmented planning, to encourage everyone to think of the long-term implications of decisions taken, or not taken, now, and to provide inspiration in our current work by means of a clear picture of where we want to take South Africa's schools.

8. Practical uses of the Action Plan. On a practical level, the Action

Plan must be able to explain in clear terms what the existing best evidence says about improving schools so that education managers can be better informed in this area, bearing in mind that how to improve schools is not a straightforward matter and the evidence can be conflicting. The Action Plan must also provide guidance to schools, districts, provinces and non-government stakeholders on what key issues to include in their plans. It should be remembered that improvements in schooling are dependent on the effectiveness of literally thousands of plans that are formulated on an annual basis throughout the system. The national plan should also offer The Presidency and a range of government and non-government monitoring bodies with a clearly stated set of goals against which to hold the leadership and management in the schooling sector accountable. The plan must moreover instil confidence amongst South Africa's trading and investment partners across the world that we are committed towards ongoing improvements in the country's human resource base.

9. A dynamic plan that is not cast in stone. The Action Plan cannot be cast in stone. Clearly there will be a need for periodic reviews. In this sense, the Action Plan and Schooling 2025 provide a framework for organising the national debates on how to improve schooling. In fact, the plan should encourage these debates, not stifle them. The Action Plan will support fully the planning philosophy put forward in the Green Paper whereby planning must embody a right mix of bottom-up activities, in which the national department takes cognisance of planning and best practices at the provincial, district and school levels, and top-down activities, whereby the national department and the Minister provide sufficient direction and leadership for the sector. In fact a major component of the Action Plan is monitoring and action on the part of the national department to ensure that provincial departments adhere to their own annual and medium-term plans in a more consistent manner.

10. Moving forward on the basis of existing building blocks. It is not the purpose of the Action Plan to re-invent the policies of the schooling system. Fundamental changes will need to occur in future, but it is acknowledged that many important building blocks have been laid since the advent of democracy in 1994. A school governance system that enjoys wide support, even if it is need of better levels of participation, exists. A system of pro-poor public financing of schools that is largely in line with best practices elsewhere has been established. Monitoring of the learning outcomes in schools below the Grade 12 level through standardised national assessments was started in 2001, and has become more widespread in the last couple of years. This too follows best practices elsewhere. All the education programmes that exist are in need of at least some change, and in a few cases there is a need for fundamental change. Certain details in this regard as explained in this document. However, the Action Plan needs to focus largely on realigning what exists, rather than on re-inventing the education policy landscape completely.

11. Promotion of more rigorous monitoring. One purpose of the Action Plan is to bring greater rigour into the monitoring of the schooling

system, and promote better research into the challenges faced by the sector. The Green Paper of The Presidency states clearly that for government action to succeed, it must be based on good data and sound research. The monitoring of schools, in particular the monitoring of issues such as the quality of learning, time use in schools, the professional needs of teachers and grade repetition amongst learners, runs into a variety of problems, not just in South Africa but across the developing world. The measurable targets put forward in this document need to be carefully researched on an ongoing basis to ensure that they are realistic and indeed measurable. Moreover, the monitoring reports that must flow from the Action Plan should be seen as accurate and reliable. The approach towards education statistics needs to be a critical and professional one, and wherever feasible the latest methodological improvement advocated by UNESCO and other key organisations should be followed.

12. Communicating the plan to the nation. The Action Plan must be clear enough to be understandable to the great majority of our parents. Two versions of the plan should exist. A more comprehensive one will include all the technical details that managers, including school principals, and researchers need to know (currently this document and the Goals, indicators and targets document comprise the comprehensive version of the plan). A summarised version of the Action Plan has also been produced to communicate to the nation as a whole, and in particular to parents, what improvements can be expected and what ordinary citizens can do to contribute towards better schooling.

13. The e-Education strategy. As part of the Department of Basic Education's e-Education strategy, the web presence of the Action Plan and Schooling 2025 will be strong.

Goals, indicators, targets and activities - how these terms are used

14. A variety of goals. At the heart of the Action Plan is a set of long-term goals. A number of these goals are described in this document. There are three types of goals. Output goals focus either on what the quality of learning outcomes should be, in measurable terms, or how grade attainment indicators should be improved. Output goals are the pre-eminent goals in the plan as they refer to improvements that society will benefit from directly. All other goals in the plan are designed to support the output goals. This does not mean the other goals are unimportant. Clearly, if the desired quality of learning outcomes is to be achieved, the schooling system as a whole must function well. Foreground goals refer to improvements that are not output goals, but which parents and learners can observe directly, such as smaller classes or better school lunches. Finally, background goals refer to important improvements that may not concern parents and learners directly, such as improvements to administration systems of schools. The Action Plan currently includes 27 goals. Of these 13 are output goals. It is easy to formulate more goals than this, but best practice in this kind of planning indicates that exceeding this number of goals can confuse people and result in a loss of

focus.

15. Indicators and targets. Most goals have one indicator that can be measured, ideally, on an annual basis. A few goals have two such indicators. Technical documentation that will accompany the Action Plan will state very clearly how each indicator should be measured, and what alternative approaches may be used if the expected data are not forthcoming, or are not sufficiently reliable. There should be no room for confusion over what indicators are actually telling us. Baseline and target values, at the national and provincial levels, have been specified for the 13 output indicators, and will be specified for every indicator in the near future.

16. Activities. As far as possible, the Action Plan indicates for each stakeholder in the system what activities they should be engaged in to realise each goal in the plan.

The desired educational quality outputs

17. The importance of tackling poor learning outcomes. There has been a critical shift in educational policy in recent years in response to a key realisation, namely that that far too few learners are achieving even a basic minimum set of competencies at school. The country's own Systemic Evaluation programme has indicated that the majority of primary school learners it has assessed have not mastered the basic skills applicable to their grade. International assessment programmes such as SACMEQ and TIMSS that the Department has participated in have shown that South Africa's schools perform poorly compared to those in countries at a similar level of development. A critical problem is the under-performance of a high percentage of African and coloured learners, reflecting the pervasiveness of the apartheid legacy of poverty in the homes of learners, under-trained teachers and poor school infrastructure. Yet it is noteworthy that improvements are required across the whole spectrum of the system. Even South Africa's best performing learners do not perform well when compared to the best in other similar countries. The poor performance of the schooling system as a whole has been brought to the fore each year in unsatisfactory Grade 12 examination results which reflect a serious under-representation of, in particular, African and coloured learners, especially in subjects such as mathematics and physical science which are linked to critical career opportunities. Improving learning outcomes in schools is a key priority for Government as a whole. Allowing the present situation to continue will not just compromise the lives of millions individuals leaving schools with insufficient capabilities, it creates a huge stumbling block for the economic and social development of the country as a whole.

18. A two-pronged focus on learning outcomes. Long-term planning in basic education must focus on increasing the percentage of learners who have achieved the minimum set of competencies for their grade. However, it must also focus on improving the performance of every learner, and increasing the number of learners, particularly those from historically

disadvantaged backgrounds, who excel. This explains why the output goals dealing with educational quality in the Action Plan deal both with the percentage of learners achieving minimum outcomes, and the overall average level of performance of each grade. Goals 1 to 6 in the following table deal with the former, and goals 7 to 9 in a subsequent table deal with the latter. It should be kept in mind that the exact wording of these goals, and the indicators, is still under review, as well as the determination of 2009 baseline values. Moreover, detailed specifications for each indicator must be developed.

OUTPUT GOALS FOCUSING ON THE ATTAINMENT OF MINIMUM QUALITY STANDARDS

Goal	Indicator	Baseline and targets
- 1 Increase the number of learners in Grade 3 who by the end of the year have mastered the minimum language and numeracy competencies for Grade 3.	Percentage of Grade 3 learners performing (literacy) and 43% (numeracy) at the required level according to the country's Annual National Assessments (two indicators, one for each learning area).	2009 (baseline): Around 48% 2014: 60% for both subjects 2019: 75% for both subjects 2024: 90% for both subjects
- 2 Increase the number of learners in Grade 6 who by the end of the year have mastered the minimum language and mathematics competencies for Grade 6.	Percentage of Grade 6 learners performing (literacy) and 19% (mathematics) at the required level according to the country's Annual National Assessments (two indicators, one for each learning area).	2009 (baseline): Around 37% 2014: 60% for both subjects 2019: 75% for both subjects 2024: 90% for both subjects
- 3 Increase the number of learners in Grade 9 who by the end of the year have mastered the minimum language and mathematics competencies for Grade 9.	Percentage of Grade 9 learners performing determined after the 2010 Annual National Assessments. (two indicators, one for each learning area).	Baseline and targets to be determined after the 2010 Annual National Assessments.

- 4 Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who become eligible for a Bachelors programme at a university. national examinations.

Number of Grade 12 learners who become eligible for a Bachelors programme in the public national examinations.	2009 (baseline):	Around 110 000
	2014:	175 000
	2019:	250 000
	2024:	300 000

- 5 Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who pass mathematics subject mathematical literacy is not counted within this indicator).

Number of Grade 12 learners passing mathematics (the subject mathematical literacy is not counted within this indicator).	2009 (baseline):	Around 125 000
	2014:	180 000
	2019:	270 000
	2024:	350 000

- 6 Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who pass physical science

Number of Grade 12 learners passing physical science.	2009 (baseline):	Around 120 000 (2008 figure)
	2014:	170,000
	2019:	250,000
	2024:	320,000

19. Ambitious but feasible primary school improvement targets. The Grades 3 and 6 target values referred to in the above table represent substantial improvements over the baseline situation. However, the desired level of improvement is based on what has been achieved in other ambitious countries that were suffering from low educational performance. The improvements are thus ambitious, but feasible.

20. Annual National Assessments (ANA). The Department's Annual National Assessments programme, started in 2008, will be critical for monitoring improvements in learning outcomes below the Grade 12 level. In 2009, this programme involved sending national tests for Grades 1 to 6 plus marking memoranda to all schools offering these grades. Schools were asked to administer the tests following certain quality control criteria and to submit results to the provincial department. In addition, the national department contracted a service provider to re-mark the tests from a sample of around 600 schools in order to verify the quality of the schools-based marking that had occurred. Two important new elements will be introduced to ANA in 2011. Firstly, Grade 9 tests will also be distributed (this is being piloted in 2010). Secondly, the actual administration of tests will be externally managed by a nationally appointed agency within the verification sample. In the coming years, a key priority of the Department will be to fine-tune ANA as new lessons are learnt, and on the basis of best practice in other countries.

21. How monitoring will influence performance. A key challenge not just for South Africa but also other countries that have initiated assessment

programmes similar to ANA is to ensure that the quality monitoring process and the use of results leads to tangible improvements in learning outcomes. It must be emphasised that ANA has not been used nor will it be used to shame schools that do not perform well, nor will it be used as a basis for providing physical or monetary rewards to schools that perform well. Rather, ANA must be used as a means for knowing where to direct special efforts to improve schooling, and what schools may be demonstrating the right approaches to teaching and learning. ANA is expected to influence performance in schools in four ways: (1) It is expected to improve the experience of teachers in applying appropriate assessment standards. (2) It is expected to improve the ability of districts and the provincial department to direct human and physical resources where it is most needed. (3) It is expected to provide an incentive for schools to do well, not because they receive monetary rewards, but because teachers want to belong to a school that performs well according to objective criteria. (4) It is expected to improve the focus on learning outcomes in the school governance process.

22. Better assessment practices in schools. Anecdotal evidence from ANA suggests the programme has allowed teachers to become more aware of how the outcomes expressed in the curriculum statements should be assessed. The past practice of allowing schools to design assessments largely on their own has clearly not been optimal. An external evaluation of the impact of ANA thus far is about to commence and this will provide a clearer idea of how ANA can be used to strengthen good assessment practices, and hence better learning, in schools.

23. Better targeted support by districts. ANA results will be used as a basis for determining targets at the level of the school. As explained below, these targets will be sensitive to the socio-economic status of the community around the school. Schools which do not attain their targets will be examined closely by districts to establish what the reasons for the under-performance may be. Capacity problems amongst teachers will be dealt with through ensuring that teachers receive the right in-service training. Where poor management by the school principal is clearly an important factor, special attention will go towards capacitating the principal or, if necessary, taking disciplinary steps in accordance with regulations governing the contract between the principal and the provincial department. Where a lack of teachers, or learning materials, or physical infrastructure such as classrooms or toilets is seen to be a contributing factor, these problems will be dealt with through the existing resourcing policies. For instance, special efforts may go towards recruiting a teacher to fill a vacant post. It is important that schools should be treated fairly. A situation should not arise where schools benefit materially from deliberately performing poorly in the ANA assessments. Rather, the focus should be on making the existing pro-poor resourcing policies work properly so that all schools have, as a minimum, the basic package of human and physical resources needed to deliver the curriculum.

24. Encouraging all schools to do better. As mentioned earlier, the

educational quality problem in the schooling system is not limited to the worst performing schools. There is considerable room for all schools to do better. The number of individual learners and whole schools which excel must be increased if South Africa is to tackle the host of scientific, social and cultural challenges facing the nation, and if we want to make a greater impact on the betterment of the African continent and the world. ANA provides new opportunities to recognise and celebrate schools, and perhaps even individual learners, who perform exceptionally well, or bring about exceptional improvements in their performance over time. In this regard, it is important to recognise that the most powerful factor underlying learner performance is the home background of the learner. Learners with better educated parents and with more physical resources in the home to facilitate learning, are at a distinct advantage. There are of course many exceptions, but research from around the world indicates that socio-economic status, and poverty, are decisive factors. Any system to recognise good performance must take into account the obstacles faced by schools serving poorer communities. Solutions applied in other countries include recognising best performing schools, and the largest improvements, within each poverty quintile, so that schools are compared to other schools that face similar obstacles. Such an approach seems appropriate for South Africa.

25. Raising the profile of learning outcomes in the school governance process. As stated in the President's 2010 State of the Nation address, the results of nationally standardised assessments in schools should be shared with parents. To some extent, this has already been the practice with respect to ANA. This programme provides new opportunities for parents to become involved in the debates within the school on how to improve learning outcomes, and for schools to emphasise to parents how parents can provide support to learners in the home. Each school will receive the average results for the district, broken down by socio-economic quintile, partly so that the school governing body can gauge how well the school performs relative to other surrounding schools. Averages for the province, and the country, also broken down by quintile, will be received by each school. The average results per province and district will moreover be made public through reports by the national department.

26. Encouraging improvements in Grade 12. To some extent the above approaches described in relation to ANA are already being pursued at the Grade 12 level, using National Senior Certificate examination results. There is room for these Grade 12 quality improvement activities to improve. There are two areas of special importance. One is ensuring that all schools and learners receive relevant support materials, such as exemplar examination papers and study guides, through the official channels but also through newspapers. The other is providing guidance to learners in Grades 10 to 12 on what subject combinations are best for them, partly through media such as the radio. There is evidence that poor Grade 12 results come about partly because learners are unable to make the right subject choices.

27. Learning outcomes, grade repetition and dropping out. Experience

shows that focussing on learning outcomes in isolation from grade repetition and dropping out can have very damaging effects. Ambitions to improve a school's learning outcomes in standardised assessments must not lead to the exclusion or unnecessary holding back of learners who do not perform well. A number of different approaches are pursued around the world to reconcile pressure to improve learning outcomes with the imperative of providing all learners with the opportunity to learn. In a following section, goals and indicators relating to the grade promotion and retention of learners are described, as well as ways in which these goals will affect schools. Obviously reliable measures of grade repetition and dropping out will be necessary in the long term monitoring process. Such measures are expected to improve in the coming years as a result of additional questions in the General Household Survey and data on individual learners flowing from the Learner Unit Record Information and Tracking System (LURITS) developed by the national department in recent years and currently being rolled out across all schools.

28. Improvements in the international context. The following table expresses goals for improving the average level of performance for two key grades in the schooling system. The indicators rely on internationally standardised assessment programmes, given the importance of viewing our educational quality in a global context. South Africa will continue to participate in the regional SACMEQ programme (the mean scores for Grade 6 below indicate values on the SACMEQ scale). South Africa has moreover registered for the 2011 wave of Grade 8 TIMSS and targets for Grade 8 are expressed on the TIMSS scale. The future timetable of these international programmes is not entirely predictable, meaning that there is a chance that the timing of targets in the following table would need to change. The important thing is that improvement trends more or less in line with what is illustrated in the table should be seen in the coming years. The desired improvements are ambitious, but achievable. A few other developing countries have seen improvements of this magnitude previously. One international assessment programme which is important, though it is not linked to any indicator in the next table, is PIRLS. South Africa is preparing to participate in this programme, which focuses on reading in primary schools, in 2011 and will continue to do so thereafter.

OUTPUT GOALS FOCUSING ON THE AVERAGE LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

Goal	Indicator	Baseline and targets
- 7 Improve the average; performance in	Average Grade 6 languages result obtained in SACMEQ.	2009 (baseline): 495 2012: Current level of

languages of
Grade 6
learners.

countries such as Mozambique
(+-520)

2017: Current level of
countries such as Kenya and
Tanzania (+-550)

2022: Current level of
countries such as Mexico and
above the best performing
country in SACMEQ 2007
(Seychelles) (+-600)

- 8 Improve the average performance in mathematics of Grade 6 learners. Average Grade 6 mathematics result obtained in SACMEQ. 2009 (baseline): 495 countries such as Botswana and Tanzania (+-520)

2017: Current level of
countries such as Seychelles
and Algeria (+-550)

2022: Current level of
countries such as Mexico and
above the best performing
country in SACMEQ 2007
(Mauritius) (+-600)

- 9 Improve the average performance in mathematics of Grade 8 learners. Average Grade 8 mathematics result obtained in TIMSS. 2009 (baseline): 264 countries such as Ghana and Qatar (+-300)

2015: Current level of
countries such as El Salvador
(and just under the current
level of Botswana) (+-340)

2019: Current level of
countries such as Chile and
Morocco (and above the current
level of Botswana) (+-380)

2023: Current level of
countries such as Uruguay and
Tunisia (+-420)

29. The following three tables illustrate where South Africa stands currently, and where we would like the country to go in the coming years. Though different groups of countries participate in different assessment programmes, a combined picture is obtainable by making use of the figures from countries that participate in more than one programme. In the first two tables, apart from the SACMEQ scores, scales that are the equivalents of the PIRLS Grade 4 reading scale and the TIMSS Grade 4 mathematics scale are provided.

[Click here to see abovementioned image on page 51-52](#)

The desired grade attainment outputs

30. The next table proposes output goals relating to grade attainment and enrolment levels.

OUTPUT GOALS FOCUSING ON GRADE ATTAINMENT

Goal	Indicator	Baseline and targets
- 10 Ensure that all children remain effectively enrolled in school up to the year in which they turn 15.	Enrolment ratio of 7 to 15 year olds according to Stats SA household data.	2008 (baseline): 97.4% 2014: 99% 2019 (and thereafter): 100%
- 11 Improve the access of children to quality early childhood development (ECD) below Grade 1.	(1) The percentage of Grade 1 learners who have received formal Grade R. (2) The enrolment ratio of children aged 0 to 5.	Indicator 1 2008 (baseline): 51% 2014: 80% (but 100% if non-formal ECD is included) Indicator 2 2019 (and thereafter): 100% (only formal)

2008 (baseline): 25%

2014: 37%

2019: 44%

2024: 50%

- 12 Improve the grade promotion of learners through the Grades 1 to 9 phases of school.
- (1) The percentage of children aged 9 at the start of the year 2008 (baseline): 59% who have completed Grade 3. 2014: 65%
- (2) The percentage of children aged 12 at the start of the year 2019: 75% who have completed Grade 6. 2024: 85%
- Indicator 2

2008 (baseline): 46%

2014: 52%

2019: 60%

2024: 75%

- 13 Improve the access of youth to Further Education and Training beyond Grade 9
- (1) The percentage of youths who obtain a National Senior Certificate from a school. 2008 (baseline): 40% 2014: 50%

(2) The percentage of youths who obtain any FET qualification. 2019: 60% 2024: 70%

(This is an indicator of concern to both education Ministries.)

Indicator 2

2008 (baseline): 41%

2014: 65%

2019 (and thereafter): 100%

31. Fulfilment of our statutory obligations regarding compulsory schooling. The South African Schools Act obliges the state and parents to

ensure that all children are enrolled in school from the year in which they turn seven to the year in which they turn fifteen. This requirement covers South Africa's commitment within UNESCO's global Education for All (EFA) campaign to attain universal primary schooling by 2015. Currently the enrolment rate for this age range is high, at over 97%. Yet the figure implies that there are still around 250 000 children who are not participating in compulsory schooling. Many of these children are vulnerable and require special needs schooling, so a part of the challenge is to strengthen the implementation of the inclusive education policy and provide more access to special schools for the poor. In addition, there are children of compulsory school-going age who are formally enrolled at school, but whose day-to-day attendance is very poor. Assisting these learners must be an integral part of our efforts to realise compulsory basic schooling.

32. More quality early childhood development. The enrolment figures for early childhood development (ECD) have displayed major improvements in recent years. For example, the percentage of Grade 1 learners who had access to some form of preprimary education increased from 60% to over 80% in the last five years, largely due to improved public spending on Grade R and pre-Grade R ECD. However, just as there are concerns around the quality of primary schooling, there are concerns around the educational quality of Grade R and other forms of ECD. One measure of quality is whether the pre-Grade 1 education received by learners was formal or informal. Annual survey data indicate that by 2008 51% of Grade 1 learners had participated in formal Grade R. It is Government's aim to increase this figure to 80% by 2014, but also ensure that 100% of Grade 1 learners have received some form of ECD, whether formal or informal, by this year. By 2019 all Grade 1 learners should have participated in formal Grade R. The 2001 White Paper on ECD had envisaged a gross enrolment ratio of just under 30% for the ages 0 to 5 by 2010. By 2008 a level of 32% had already been reached. This figure is comparable to those in other middle income countries. It is envisaged that the enrolment ratio for ages 0 to 5 should increase to 50% by 2024, which would correspond to an average of three years of ECD per child. In addition, Government will need to focus on improving the quality of all types of ECD as it is not enrolment in ECD as such, but rather enrolment in good quality ECD that contributes towards better learning outcomes in primary schools.

33. Age and grade. Currently repeater rates in schools are high, at almost 20% in Grade 1 and between 15% and 5% in Grades 2 to 11. Putting a greater emphasis on learning outcomes, as is done in the Action Plan, increases the risk that schools will hold back learners in lower grades to an even greater degree in order to improve their average ANA results. In order to counteract this, it is important for schools and departments to pay careful attention to trends in the repeater and drop-out rates. More generally, there is a need to reduce repetition in order, for instance, to reduce class sizes. This should be achieved not through automatic promotion but through better teaching and learning that reduces the need for grade repetition in the first place. Two indicators are proposed to monitor

improvements in the flow of learners through their grades: (1) The percentage of children aged 9 at the start of the year who have completed Grade 3. (2) The percentage of children aged 12 at the start of the year who have completed Grade 6. A gradual movement towards 85% and 75% for the two indicators respectively by 2024 is envisaged. These target levels allow for a repeater rate of around 5% per grade, in other words a situation is envisaged in which grade repetition would still exist, but at a substantially lower level than is currently the case. In the coming years, when districts monitor improvements in learning outcomes, they will also pay attention to equivalent grade attainment indicators at the school level, partly to ensure that learners are not unnecessarily being forced to repeat.

34. Further Education and Training and the transition out of school. Much needs to be done to make the Grades 10 to 12 Further Education and Training (FET) band in schools more responsive to the labour market and life challenges faced by youth. Clearly, planning in this area must occur in a way that takes into account trends in public FET colleges and private FET institutions. Currently, around 40% of youths successfully complete Grade 12 and obtain a National Senior Certificate. The percentage of youths who obtain any FET qualification is only around 41%, meaning that general schooling accounts a very high proportion of all FET, and that around 60% of youths are left without a formal qualification other than a certificate issued by the school. The picture has been changing, with public FET college enrolments having increased sharply in the last five years. Yet we are still far from the point at which we can say we are providing adequate FET to sufficient numbers of youths. The target for schools is to substantially increase the percentage of youths who obtain a National Senior Certificate, reaching 70% by 2024, and to contribute towards a joint target, shared by the two education Ministries, of having 100% of youths obtain a qualification at the FET level by 2019. These targets would place South Africa in a very favourable position relative to the situation in other middle income countries. Even rich countries have currently not reached universal completion of secondary schooling. In the United States the figure is just under 80% and in the United Kingdom it is 90%. Moreover, South Africa's current enrolment ratio for upper secondary schooling, at around 92%, is relatively good compared to those of Botswana (58%), Mexico (61%), Cuba (91%), Malaysia (53%) and Turkey (72%). The challenge in South Africa at the FET level is partly to increase the current enrolment levels, but the challenge is also largely about creating more variety and better learning outcomes. The Action Plan and Schooling 2025 must chart a clear way forward for FET schools, based on a holistic view of FET generally. For this, further consultation and thinking is required.

Our framework for improving schools

35. Mobilising the basic education system in order to achieve the output goals described above is a complex task involving sufficient alignment between many different actors and processes, yet alignment that does not over-bureaucratise the system or stifle innovation. The following

diagram provides a basic and inevitably incomplete picture of the public schooling system as we would like it to function. The diagram will be referred to in the discussion that follows on what action to take to improve the system, and in particular to improve learning outcomes.

[Click here to see abovementioned image on page 56](#)

36. A summary of current medium term challenges relating to improving schools are explained below, as well as likely goals (and in some cases indicators) to guide action over the longer term. Goals and especially indicators are explained in less detail here than was the case for the output goals described above. How action for better schooling is organised over the coming years in support of the sector's output goals requires much consultation and careful technical work. There is no shortage of plans at the national and provincial levels currently to deal with the improvement of schools, at least in the medium term. The challenge will be to assess carefully how to streamline existing plans, some of which are excellent and well-focussed, into this Action Plan. Assessment is not discussed below as this has already been discussed above (see paragraphs 20 to 26).

37. The curriculum. The curriculum lies at the heart of the schooling process. It specifies what should be taught and how, and how learning in the classroom should proceed. A 2009 curriculum review led to a set of recommendations for changes that would make the school curricula easier to implement. Some recommendations have already been followed through. For instance, the requirement that teachers maintain individual learner portfolios was dropped given that records can be kept in a more consolidated fashion by teachers. The recommendation that more specific learning programmes be developed to guide teachers has resulted in the establishment of teams to develop such programmes, drafts of which will be released in 2010. It is important that we should not lose sight of overarching principles that must guide curriculum development as we move forward. The curriculum must be educationally sound and based on appropriate pedagogic theory. It must be practical, easily understandable and implementable in the context of South African schools. As this context changes, the curriculum must be modified if necessary. The 2003 e-Education strategy for the education sector offers new opportunities and challenges in this regard. The curriculum should also strike the right balance between prescription and opportunities for teacher innovation in the classroom. The current shift towards clearer prescriptions is necessary, but this should not stifle genuine innovation and creativity by teachers. The ongoing struggle for a better treatment of language of teaching and learning in the curriculum must continue. We need more research into how the use of language in the classroom can reinforce the learning process. The Constitution's imperative that the status of our nine indigenous languages be elevated should be taken seriously. Capacity within the country to assess and develop school curricula is not what it should be. Such capacity is currently being strengthened within the national department, which should clearly play a key role in this area.

38. Teachers. Teachers are primarily responsible for implementing the curriculum. In many ways the future economic and social development of the country depends on the capabilities, commitment and well-being of the approximately 365 000 teachers who teach in the classrooms of South Africa's public schools. Current challenges with respect to teachers can be broken down into the following four policy areas.

- An adequate supply of young and inspired teacher recruits. Effective long term government planning is crucial in ensuring that there is a sufficient supply of suitable young teachers entering the schooling system for the first time every year. For many years this supply has been below what it should be and consequently the average age of teachers has been gradually increasing. Fortunately this trend has slowed down in recent years due to efforts to increase enrolments in teacher training (partly through the Funza Lushaka bursary scheme), and to make teacher remuneration more attractive relative to that in competing professions. However, it will take some years before the situation is fully normalised. Monitoring this trend, as well as the trend in the retention of teachers, is an important matter that must receive more attention in future. In determining the right policy interventions, there must be a greater dependence on information from teachers themselves regarding what kinds of incentives, whether monetary or non-monetary, they prefer, and what the critical factors are that make teaching unsatisfactory. Promoting teacher satisfaction must be a central concern for Government, teacher unions and school principals. The teaching profession must be seen as an attractive one that committed and able South Africans can be proud of belonging to.

- An optimal distribution of teachers across the country. The total number of teachers in South Africa is below what it should be if one makes an international comparison. However, we also experience problems with respect to the distribution of existing teachers across schools. The problem of large classes is in part a result of a skewed distribution of teachers. Around half of South Africa's public school learners are in classes with more than 40 learners. This is a problem which must be tackled. The solution partly lies in improving the implementation of incentives aimed at filling unfilled posts in rural and difficult urban areas. Such incentives were introduced in 2007. The policy that distributes teaching posts across schools ensures an equitable distribution of posts, yet it could be better designed to reduce over-sized classes, for instance through better alignment with rules governing time usage in schools. There is moreover a need to monitor the extent of unfilled posts, and the reasons why posts are left unfilled, in a more proactive manner. Research has indicated that large classes, apart from being a result of unfilled posts, also arise as a result of inadequate infrastructure and poor time management within schools, matters which are discussed below. The fact that South Africa has a high learner/educator ratio is partly linked to the fact that compared to countries with a similar level of economic development, South Africa's teacher salaries are generous. We would like them to be more generous, yet we cannot deny that by international standards, they are already above the average. This limits the degree to which the

learner/educator ratio can be reduced at present. Limiting the ratio by a few points, from its current level of around 33, is something that can be considered in the medium term. However, taking it down to, for instance, the level enjoyed in Botswana of around 22 would require a very significant redirection of resources in the country over the longer term. Undoubtedly, as the economy grows new opportunities for tackling the high learner/educator ratio will present themselves.

- Effective in-service teacher development. For many years to come, the majority of South Africa's teachers will be teachers who received their pre-service training during the apartheid era. Considerable effort over the last fifteen years has gone into providing in-service training to induct teachers into the new curriculum and more effective teaching methodologies. However, these efforts have been inadequate and recent developments have pointed to the need for a much better coordinated and massive in-service training strategy. Assessments of teacher knowledge and skills within a number of research projects have confirmed that not only are many teachers lacking with respect to effective teaching methodologies, their subject knowledge too is seriously lacking. The 2009 Teacher Development Summit led to a shared statement by teachers, teacher training institutions and the Government on how to move forward. There needs to be a better diagnosis of teacher development needs. In this regard, districts have a vital role to play. Moreover, e-Education presents exciting opportunities for teachers to diagnose their needs themselves and access appropriate teacher development programmes and materials. Programmes such as the laptops for teachers initiative, launched in 2009, can greatly facilitate this. There is a need to evaluate carefully what teacher development programmes currently exist, to identify what the key gaps are, and to fill these gaps with new and well-focussed programmes. The principle should be upheld of basing the evaluation of existing programmes to a large degree on what participating teachers themselves say. There needs to be a recognition that some needs are widespread amongst teachers, whilst others are very specific to grades, subjects and the individual teacher. One of the lessons learnt from the past years is that there needs to be better monitoring of how much teacher development occurs, what its current focus is, and on what gains there are from the development in terms of teaching and learning improvements in the classroom. Teacher development is provided by a wide range of organisations, including universities and NGOs, in a wide variety of formats. This diversity is in many ways an advantage, but there is a need to continually update the overall picture through a process of consolidated national monitoring.

- Support and accountability. Even for well trained teachers, teaching is often a difficult job that places a strain on the individual. Support to teachers should take the form of not just professional development, but also psycho-social support. At the same time, there must be sufficient teacher accountability. Teachers need to prepare for class, spend at least the required amount of time engaged in active teaching in the classroom, maintain the necessary assessment records (which were simplified in 2009) and ensure that they manage their time in such a way that teaching

programmes are completed within the school year. The evidence suggests that too many teachers are not taking these responsibilities seriously enough. Time spent in the classroom has been found to be too low and in many cases programmes are not completed within the year, partly because there is too little accountability within the school and to the Department in this regard. The overarching framework governing support to teachers and teacher accountability must be a social contract between teacher organisations and the employer. Maintaining such a social contract has been found to be critical in many countries. South Africa has seen key successes in this area in recent years. The Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) brought together key stakeholders, including education departments and teacher organisations, around a core set of principles underpinning the improvement of schools. At a more operational level, there needs to be a set of transparent and fair procedures to incentivise good teaching, in monetary but also non-monetary terms, and to deal with under-performance, both through support and, where necessary, discipline. The Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) is not a perfect system, but it provides a basis from which to move forward in this area. Key challenges in future will include finding better ways of incentivising whole schools to do better, recognising that improving results requires a team effort, and to base policy and practices more closely on what teachers themselves like and dislike. Monitoring improvements in the quantity of time spent teaching and in the completion of annual learning programmes should be a key concern.

39. Textbooks and workbooks. To quote from the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign, effective schooling requires 'teachers, textbooks and time'. Research from around the world indicates that sufficient access to good textbooks amongst learners improves learning outcomes and provides an impetus for exploration and additional learning beyond the classroom. Currently access to textbooks is insufficiently monitored. There is a need to formulate better indicators in this regard and track improvements over time. The ultimate aim should be that every learner has access to at least one textbook per learning area (or subject) that he or she can take home after school, even if at the end of the year the book must be returned to the school. A new development has been the introduction of nationally standardised workbooks for learners in Grades 1 to 9. These workbooks, which will be used in schools from the beginning of the 2011 school year, are designed to ensure that learners perform a sufficient number of the right practical exercises during the year. The right balance between textbooks, workbooks and materials developed independently by the teacher must be maintained in the coming years. Ensuring that each school has the right number of textbooks, the right amount of learner stationery and (in the coming years) a sufficient number of workbooks at the beginning of the year will continue to be a priority. Success in this area is strongly dependent on the actions of two stakeholders, the provincial department and the school principal. Departments need to ensure that deliveries of materials are correct, based on verified numbers provided by the school. At the same time school principals should actively promote the re-use of textbooks, which are often costly, from one year to the next. The principle implied by the school funding norms, that schools which are good at re-

using textbooks should reap the financial benefits of this, must be upheld. The unit cost of textbooks, which according to some reports is high by international standards, should be monitored carefully. The national department should continue to pursue ways of reducing this cost.

40. School governance and management. Many of the problems seen in schools and described in this document come about as a result of inappropriate action, or perhaps more commonly, lack of action by the school principal. Amongst the country's more than 25 000 school principals there are many exemplary principals. Yet many principals lack the management skills and sometimes the commitment to execute their responsibilities. A part of the problem is that normal lines of accountability between the principal and the Department are not always functioning as they should. Clearly, a school principal who does not comply with basic requirements such as the regular submission of a credible school development plan to the Department is unlikely to be maintaining proper lines of accountability within the school. Research points clearly towards the critical role of a good school principal in making a school functional. Over the coming years the professional ethos and identity of school principals will need to be strengthened. Steps in the right direction have been taken in recent years, for instance with the introduction of the middle management service (MMS) tier in the conditions of service regulations. Like teacher development, the capacity development of school principals needs to become more massive, more focussed on results and better monitored. The national department has a key role to play in promoting existing training programmes that clearly add value and in improving the institutional arrangements whereby principals access development programmes. Practising principals with a proven track record should play a more direct role in the design of materials and the training itself. Moreover, ways should be found of tapping into the management expertise of NGOs and the private sector. School functionality is defined in several policies, in particular in the policies governing the Whose School Evaluation (WSE) programme. There should be better tracking of indicators that reflect school functionality. Many of the indicators already discussed in this document fall into this category. With regard to school governance, the evidence suggests that the current system of SGB elections and procedures provide a good basis for moving forward. The challenge will be to improve the levels of parent participation, in particular in more disadvantaged communities, and bring about a better focus on improving learning outcomes (as discussed earlier). Not only should improving results through more focussed action within the school become a central concern of the SGB, parents should be encouraged to play a stronger role in supporting learners in the home and insisting that learners attend school on time.

41. School funding. A 2009 study into the school funding system produced some encouraging findings. Schools have indeed reaped the benefit of increased levels of funding over the years and the introduction of formal national spending targets in 2006. Satisfaction with the no fee schools policy amongst principals and parents is high. Importantly, the

study found that principals and schools are happy to take on the financial management responsibilities specified by the funding policy so that resourcing is more responsive to the needs of individual schools. Challenges in the coming years include ensuring that all schools receive financial transfers that are in line with the national targets and that bureaucratic controls by the provincial department that impede effective school management and run contrary to the policy are removed. It is also necessary to find better ways of identifying poor schools in need of preferential school funding. The national funding targets will need to be revisited in the light of the e-Education strategy to ensure that amounts are sufficient to cover the envisaged use of new technologies for improving learning. Currently around 65% of schools use computers for administrative purposes (there has been a vast improvement in recent years in this regard), but only around 25% use computers for teaching, partly due to funding constraints in the majority of schools. This situation must improve.

42. School infrastructure. Spending on infrastructure development in schools increased by 39% in real terms between 2005 and 2009, and indicators on school facilities have reflected significant gains. Yet the infrastructure backlogs challenge is so great that a long term view is necessary. Extreme water and sanitation shortfalls are now low-enough to be resolved in the medium term. Currently 1 700 schools are without a water supply and 700 do not have any toilets. Moreover, 400 schools are still built entirely of mud. However, the estimated shortfall of 63 000 classrooms and the fact that 15 000 schools still have no library call for action that goes beyond the medium term. Considerable effort has gone into improving the processes for tackling infrastructure backlogs. National norms, released in 2008, provide criteria for classifying schools as being at a minimum or optimum level of functionality with respect to safety, functionality and effectiveness. This makes it easier to target schools for infrastructure development in a fair and transparent fashion. The Department is working jointly with the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) to explore innovative financing models that can fast track infrastructure development in the schooling system. Annual targets have been set for bringing schools up to an optimal level of functionality, and these will be released during 2010.

43. Learner well-being. Whilst the current shift towards a better focus on learning outcomes is important, this should not detract from the need to consider the overall wellness of learners. With regard to the national nutrition programme, Government's aim currently is to increase the percentage of learners benefitting from this programme on a daily basis to 90% in the medium term. The success of this must be monitored, as well as the coverage of the School Health Survey Programme, which aims to use schools as a means for providing children with access to basic health services, including glasses for children with impaired vision. To encourage sports the national and provincial departments are currently focussing on the establishment of district-level leagues in certain sporting codes.

44. Inclusive education. Education White Paper 6 on special needs education, released in 2001, provided a long term view for this policy area stretching up to 2021. We are already halfway through the period considered by the White Paper and many challenges remain, including a few basic policy formulation challenges such as the finalisation of equitable national criteria for funding special schools and funding the new needs brought about by inclusive education in ordinary schools. We should reaffirm the principles of the White Paper, in particular the need for greater access amongst the poor to special needs services and the need for a fundamental mindset shift in the way the schooling system regards special needs and disability. Issues that must be tracked over the long term include the extension of the network of special and full service schools (there are currently 20 of the latter whilst one for each of the 92 districts is envisaged), the capacity of districts to support ordinary schools with respect to specialist services and the loan of costly equipment, and the extent to which ordinary schools refer learners to special or full-service schools for full- or part-time attention.

45. Support by district offices. Many of the changes required to improve schools and discussed above involve better organised action on the part of district officials and better resourcing and capacity building at this tier of the system. Districts must essentially support schools, and hold schools accountable, within all policy areas. The introduction of the school-specific targets for learning outcomes discussed above imply new information and management challenges for districts. Recent figures indicate that over 90% of schools are visited by district officials at least once in a year, and that 35% of schools are visited four or more times. Key questions include the degree to which this level of direct interaction must be increased, and what things district officials should prioritise when they support schools. Clearer national criteria that are informed by recent and coming policy developments are needed in this regard. District support is costly and it is important that it should have an impact. Evaluations of district support should partly be based on ratings of this support given by schools and teachers. District officials themselves often complain that districts are treated as 'post offices' and that administrative work squeezes out professional support duties. This tendency must be opposed, partly by streamlining administrative processes and using e-Education to facilitate this work.

46. The role of the national department. The national Minister, supported by the national department, will drive the implementation of the Action Plan. In addition, the national level has a key role to play in promoting the right school interventions within a coherent national framework. Gauging the success of the national department in fulfilling this responsibility should be dealt with within the annual monitoring reports flowing from the Action Plan. It is important that public and school perceptions of the whole range of national policies should be monitored from time to time. The extent to which information provided through the national department's websites is accessed should also be considered a critical indicator of the department's success, in particular

as far as promoting e-Education is concerned.