

OPENING REMARKS BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF MATJHABENG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, ME MATHABO MOKAPO ON THE OCCASION OF THE AWARD OF MAYORAL BURSARIES ON 29 JANUARY 2007, WELKOM

Programme Director
Honourable MEC for Education - Me Ouma Tsopo
Honourable Councillors
Management of the Dept. of Education
Principals and Headmasters
Students
Members of the Business Fraternity
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am grateful to be afforded the opportunity to address you on this important occasion, which is the award of bursaries to 10 students who were successful in the selection process, including recognition that will be given to five categories, i.e. best five performing students, best student in Mathematics HG, Physical Science HG and English Second Language HG.

Recognition will also go to the best educators in the subjects mentioned above. We shall also acknowledge the performance of the top five schools from the previously disadvantaged communities. The performance of the five improved schools will also be recognized plus the best overall school.

For us to be able to comprehend today's proceedings with the same conceptual prism, I believe it is necessary to provide a background on the processes that culminated into the event that we shall be witnessing today.

As the Matjhabeng Local Municipality, we made a realization that in our area of jurisdiction there is a serious lack of skills in specialized fields, particularly among the youth from previously disadvantaged communities due to disparities and inequalities that are associated with our past.

Also, in line with government policy as elaborated in both ASGISA and the JIPSA initiatives, a need was identified to enhance the quality of skills at our level through the introduction of a Mayoral Bursary Scheme.

Subsequent to the analysis we made, a Mayoral Bursary Policy was developed and submitted to council for endorsement.

In line with the contents of the Bursary Policy, adverts were issued to encourage deserving students within Matjhabeng to apply. In the same vein, criteria were developed and a selection committee constituted, to finalize the process of selection and arising from that process 10 students were selected.

As the Matjhabeng Local Municipality, we attach great significance to matters that relate to education.

Informed by the understanding that the monstrous system of apartheid coupled with separate development, deprived our communities quality education and opportunities,

we are committed to ensuring that we redress past imbalances within the constraints that we might have with regard to resources.

We commit ourselves to ensuring that we play a meaningful role in assisting our local schools to improve on their performance during this academic year. In this light, we shall ensure that our councilors who adopted schools in line with the Adopt A School Campaign work intimately with the schools and submit quarterly reports to the Executive Mayor on progress.

As a municipality we move from the premise that, as government at our level we should make a positive contribution in redressing the inequalities that we inherited as the new government. Hence the Matjhabeng community, as the custodian of this project made this investment to the youth, who will ultimately serve the same community.

I believe that most of us would concur that in the current epoch of a globalized world economy and information technology, and also because we want to drive our country into the trajectory of high growth, we cannot afford to ignore the development of skills. Particularly those that were a domain of an elite in the past dispensation.

The reality I have painted above, brings to the fore the important role that our educators must continue to play in ensuring that the doors of learning are indeed opened to all.

The achievements we shall recognize today can largely be attributed to your efforts and contributions in the sphere of education.

Despite the challenges that have confronted us since the democratic breakthrough with regards to overhauling our education system, educators have remained steadfast in ensuring that the performance of our students is concomitant with our expectations as a nation.

I also wish to acknowledge the efforts that were put by individual students in attaining the results we shall be recognizing today. Students need to understand that education is a key to all doors in life and therefore it should be taken seriously.

Those of you who will proceed to tertiary institutions need to understand that the setting is different at tertiary compared to high school. To be able to cope and achieve your goal, you will be introduced to an array of skills that include among others, time management, study skills, three dimensional thinking and the ability to cope with voluminous reading.

You shall therefore need to adapt onto this environment with an understanding that you will also be managing your own lives.

I wish to emphasize that students should be committed to their studies and exercise maximum discipline as they pursue their studies, informed by the understanding that they dare not fail the community of Matjhabeng.

In responding to the many developmental challenges that confront us as we traverse the roadmap to transformation, an integrated approach to our work will constitute an important ingredient. Therefore partnerships that manifested themselves when we mooted this project should be sustained.

Government alone cannot resolve the many problems that confront our communities. It is important for other social partners-in the form of business, labor and civil society to come on board as we grapple with the mammoth task of transforming our country.

Lastly, I wish to congratulate schools, learners and educators whom we shall honour today.

A word of welcome within Matjhabeng goes to all of you who have graced this event.

Thank you.

CLLR MATHABO MOKAPO
EXECUTIVE MAYOR