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Equal Education Campaign for Libraries
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Dear Friends

Response to Equal Education's Memorandum

Thank you for your memorandum and petition. My department has studied the content thereof and shares the view that we need to address education transformation in a concerted manner. I have enclosed a response to the issues raised in the memorandum. For any further information, or discussions on any of the issues you are welcome to contact my office.

May I wish you all the best in your efforts to ensure quality education for all.

Kind regards

Mrs A. Motshekga, MP
Minister of Basic Education

Date: 22 May 2010

Basic Education • Basiese Onderwys • Imfundo Lesisekelo • Ifundo sisekelo • Ifundo Eysisekelo • Ifundo esiSiseko • Dyondzo ya le Henshi
Pfundiso ya Mulheo • Thuto ya Motheo • Thuto ya Motheo • Thuto e Potlana

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The Department of Basic Education's Response to Equal Education's Memorandum

A. Introduction

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) acknowledges the critical role that school libraries and information services play in developing a culture of reading; information literacy; providing access to the much needed information; and providing safe spaces to study for young people; it also acknowledges that there is a lack of centralised school libraries in public schools across the country but sees this model as one of the options of information services provision available to education.

The lack of the centralised school library is directly linked to the past inequitable provisioning of school infrastructure and the DBE is looking at addressing this lack within the broader context of an enabling physical teaching and learning environment in which it exists. Research indicates that learners who achieve at higher levels have invariably come from a well-resourced school infrastructure which includes electricity, sanitation, playgrounds, equipment and access to books and resources. Furthermore, positive learner performance is also affected by school leadership and management, (time on task for both learners and teachers), the adequate provision of books and stationery and improved learning at home (reading and homework). Thorough teacher knowledge and effective teaching practice also define successful learner performance. Ideally learners should have access to support material for the purposes of curriculum support-be they through a centralized school library model or a classroom collection, but there are many achieving schools in the country that are resource poor but which have accepted accountability for learner performance.

B. Infrastructure Provisioning

To enable the DBE to address infrastructure provisioning holistically, the *National Policy for an Equitable Provision of an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learning Environment* has been developed. Through this policy, the department will realise the provision of all essential spaces and facilities, including centralised school libraries.

The policy will be followed by the Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure. In terms of which all new schools will have a centralised library. National Treasury has allocated an additional R2b for the next two financial years. This amount is over and above the infrastructure budget allocated to provinces. The department is also in the process of developing a strategy that aims to accelerate the delivery of schools infrastructure and more specifically, aimed at the improvement of existing schools infrastructure. This is to achieve an Optimum Functionality level in targeted schools within the 2010-2014 Strategic Plan Period and beyond. The targets related to this initiative are being finalised.

C. National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services

) While the infrastructural backlogs are being addressed, and given the fact that availability of school library and information services is critical to the effective delivery of the curriculum, the department has looked at alternative ways within a flexible approach in which it can provide the services. This approach ensures that the department can promptly respond to the provision needs of the schools, as it creates access to services in an incremental manner and in response to the demands of the curriculum.

In line with the department's strategy for providing school library and information services, the *National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services (2010)*¹ have been developed. The title reflects the access to information services in its broader sense and allows for implementation of a range of models of provision that suit the different contexts. These guidelines complement the *National Policy for an Equitable Provision of an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learning Environment*, as they give guidance on provisioning of school library and information services.

The *National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services* targets provinces, districts and schools and are therefore a valuable resource at all levels. It offers guidance on the:

¹ This document is being finalized for release to schools in mid 2010

- (1) *roles and responsibilities* on the four levels of library and information services in the education system, namely national, provincial, district and school levels;
- (2) *development model options and considerations* which include: mobile library; cluster library; classroom library; centralised school library and school community library;
- (3) *physical infrastructure* which includes elements such as building design, location, layout and security including physical and digital security;
- (4) *staffing and training* which includes both accredited INSET and PRESET courses;
- (5) *Administration and management* at school level, advising on the formation of a School Library Committee which will drive the drafting of a whole school library and information services development plan;
- (6) *Resource collection* which includes principles of selection of resources, a multi-language policy and access for learners with disabilities;
- (7) *Programmes and activities* like a Literacy or Reading Promotion Programme and other programmes which emphasise collaboration between teachers and the teacher-librarian;
- (8) *Marketing and advocacy* strategies that schools can use to actively promote the information services and facilities they are providing; and
- (9) *Monitoring and evaluation* plans which will assist schools in ensuring that their goals regarding library and information services are achieved.

The department will soon make the *National Guidelines for School Library and Information Services* available for implementation to all schools and districts.

D. Provision of Library Resources

Central to the provision of library and information services is the availability of high quality, current and age-appropriate reading resources which promptly and accurately respond to the readers' needs. The department has over the years, through its programmes, worked at expanding library resources to schools and learners. In recognition of the fact that access to books enhances literacy levels the DBE has the following initiatives in place:

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- through the Ithuba Project and 100 storybook project more than 4000 schools and approximately 10 200 learners respectively received reading materials developed in all languages;
- the Drop All and Read campaign has to date provided more than 30 000 learners and parents with books in all languages. Learners are given age-appropriate storybooks to foster a sense of ownership, thereby laying a solid foundation for the love of books and reading. The campaign goes beyond the school walls by engaging parents as they are called upon to read the storybooks with and to their children;
- the Foundations for Learning Programme reinforces this notion by encouraging schools to set aside time for daily reading for enjoyment, thereby inculcating the culture of reading;
- Reading Toolkits that provide comprehensive reading resources in all languages were provided to almost 1 800 schools;
- the Department has also partnered with the Sunday Times to initiate the storybook campaign to put 500 000 books in 2 600 schools. The department has purchased 100 000 of these books to be placed in school libraries in 2009/10. Over the next two years (2011- 2012) books will be placed in classroom libraries; and
- the Qids Up programme was initiated in 2006 to resource the poorest of the poor schools. To date 5671 schools have been provided classroom library collections. The resources provided to schools include Mobile Libraries; Reading Kits; Literacy Packs; Library Books; Reading Books; Wall Charts as well as Library Computers and software.

The primary vehicle through which the department seeks to deliver quality education to learners is through the curriculum and that it is the curriculum that defines what is taught; why it is taught and how it is taught and that schools provide the enabling conditions for the delivery of the curriculum with the purposeful goal of learning achievement as an outcome. This has prompted the department to make careful decisions about providing access to quality resources. The department has spent R30b over the last 15 years on Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM) with the poorest resourced schools having received a larger allocation of the budget. LTSM includes textbooks, library

books, charts, models, computer hardware and software, televisions, videos recorders, videotapes, home economics equipment, science laboratory equipment and musical instruments.

Leading experts in the field of literacy indicate that classroom libraries provide learners with immediate access to books; they can provide teachers with the opportunity to put the right book in a learner's hands at a moment's notice. Learners who have ready access to books in their classrooms have better attitudes about reading, reading achievement, and comprehension than their peers with less access to books in the classroom. Moreover, learners are likely to spend more time reading when they are in classrooms with adequate classroom libraries.²

Further, research indicates that decentralising the school library has currency in the 21st century. The advent of technology allows for anytime, anywhere learning and is complementary to a localised print library in the classroom, which is a realistic option for our schools.

Through the roll-out of classroom libraries, a model provided for in the Guidelines, the department will be able to expand access and enhance impact in a short space of time, as this model quickly brings the services to both the teacher and learner that is cost-effective way and also ensures that teachers inculcate information skills in a focused way and encourage the culture of reading. The department is planning to provide 2 820 classroom libraries to 940 primary schools in quintile 1 in the 2010/11 financial year.

Availing these resources for both our teachers and learners is one of the department's means of fulfilling its mandate of turning schools into institutions of knowledge acquisition.

² Allington, RL & Cunningham, PM (1996) Schools that work: Where all children read and write. New York: HarperCollins.
Krashen, S.D. (1998). Every person a reader: An alternative to the California Task Force report on reading. In C. Weaver (Ed.), Reconsidering a balanced approach to reading (pp. 425-452). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
Routman, R. (2003). Reading essentials: The specifics you need to teach reading well. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

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E. Partnerships that provide library and information services to schools

Key to the DBE's strategy of provision of school library and information services is the involvement and strengthening of partnerships with organisations that provide library and information services to schools. The department will play its role of providing guiding principles for these partnerships.

There are partnerships that have already been formed, with partners supporting some of the models provided for in the guidelines:

- Vodacom Foundation has partnered with the department to provide 50 mobile library units to primary schools in Northern Cape, Free State, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu Natal provinces. This is in addition to 10 mobile library units that they have already provided to the Eastern Cape province in 2009. These have been availed to QIDS UP schools which are situated in areas where there is a lack of access to library services.
- South African Primary Education Support Initiative has provided 21 mobile libraries which were sent to 5 provinces and 12 more are expected by June 2010.
- TSB Publishers is a new partner planning to build and equip 10 new stand-alone libraries per year over the next 10 years, commencing in 2011.
- A Book for Every Child Foundation is planning to establish 15 libraries in each province, using space that is available in schools.

F. Further Investigations

The department will look into the following and report on:

- Purchasing books directly from publishers;
- Vat exemption on books bought for school libraries; and
- Lowering of import tariffs on books for school libraries