



6 January 2017

Ms Angie Motshekga  
Minister of Basic Education  
By email: mabua.s@dbe.gov.za

Dear Minister Motshekga,

**‘Culling’ of learners**

I am deeply concerned by the number of learners in the Grade 10 class of 2014 that did not go on to become candidates for the 2016 Matric exams.

I compared the Grade 10 enrolment in public schools in 2014 with the number of candidates who wrote the National Senior Certificate (NSC) exams in 2016, and the dropout rates are very high. Nationally, 490 699 Grade 10 (2014) pupils did not go on to write the 2016 Matric exams – a dropout rate of 44.6%.

In three provinces, half of the 2014 Grade 10 class in the Northern Cape (54.4%), North West (52.7%) and the Free State (51.6%) dropped out or remain stuck in Grade 10 and 11.

Province	Class of 2016				
	Grade 10 (2014)	Grade 12 (2016) candidates	Dropout rate (%)	Total Gr 12 candidates passed	“Real” Pass Rate (%)
Northern Cape	22 034	10 041	54,4	7 902 (78.7%)	35,9
North West	67 734	32 045	52,7	26 448 (82.5%)	39,0
Free State	55 293	26 786	51,6	23 629 (88.2%)	42,7
Eastern Cape	154 220	82 902	46,2	49 168 (59.3%)	31,9
Limpopo	189 170	101 807	46,2	63 595 (62.5%)	33,6
KwaZulu-Natal	264 816	147 648	44,2	98 032 (66.4%)	37,0
Mpumalanga	94 528	54 251	42,6	41 801 (77.1%)	44,2
Gauteng	174 471	103 829	40,5	88 381 (85.1%)	50,7
Western Cape	75 791	50 869	32,9	43 716 (86.0%)	57,7
<b>National</b>	<b>1 100 877</b>	<b>610 178</b>	<b>44,6</b>	<b>442 672 (72.5%)</b>	<b>40,2</b>

An ongoing problem with the focus placed on final Matric results is that schools are incentivised to move underachieving learners out of the system to improve the pass rate. This practice has been highlighted numerous times in the past, as the Department of Basic Education is keenly aware.

I would like to request a ministerial investigation into the cause of such a high dropout rate, and most importantly, whether 'culling' is being practiced by schools under pressure from districts and provincial departments.

I believe that it is in the best interest of the Department, wider public and, crucially, learners in our schools to ensure that the cause of high dropout rates be determined, and credible solutions be implemented to address the problem.

I look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in red ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Gavin Davis MP