

OBE INFO

FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CURRICULUM SERVICES JANUARY 2003

FREE STATE IMPROVES FROM NUMBER 7 TO NUMBER 5

As you will have read by now, the Grade 12 pass rate in the Free State improved from 59% in 2001 to 70,7% in 2002, an increase of over 11%.

This improvement enabled us to leapfrog North West Province and Limpopo who were above us in 2001. We are also now only 0.1% behind Kwazulu-Natal. The most important improvement of all is our improvement in relation to the national average. In 1999, the Free State pass rate was 6% below the national average - we were truly a below average, struggling province. By the end of 2002, we were 3% above the national average - now a province leading the way for others to follow, instead of playing catch-up! Well done to all!

CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT IN GRADE 12

PERFORMANCE OF LARGER SUBJECTS

LANGUAGES

The languages have remained consistent with the following pass rates after conversions:

	2001	2002
Afrikaans First Language HG	99,85%	99,83%
Afrikaans Second Language HG	87,80%	92,72%
English First Language HG	99,81%	99,93%
English Second Language HG	95,45%	98,12%
Sesotho First Language HG	99,96%	99,91%
Setswana First Language HG	99,95%	99,95%
IsiXhosa First Language HG	96,47%	99,84%
IsiZulu First Language HG	95,12%	99,85%

There has been a pleasing improvement in Afrikaans Second Language, English Second Language, IsiXhosa and IsiZulu.

The following larger subjects have shown an encouraging improvement from 2000 - 2001 - 2002 (these are pass rates which include the conversions):

Mathematics HG	79,8% to 87,1% to 90,1%	+2,91%
Mathematics SG	36,8% to 46,6% to 62,3%	+15,7%
Biology HG	63,9% to 72,7% to 78,9%	+6,2%
Biology SG	64,1% to 69,2% to 74,4%	+5,2%
Physiology HG	70,0% to 80,4% to 86,25%	+5,85%
History SG	41,5% to 54,4% to 77,1%	+22,7%
Geography HG	51,9% to 71,9% to 77,6%	+5,65%
Geography SG	46,9% to 50,3% to 67,2%	+16,9%
Accounting SG	76,2% to 91,2% to 93,0%	+1,8%
Economics HG	58,1% to 74,9% to 82,0%	+7,1%
Economics SG	77,1% to 91,2% to 92,1%	+0,9%
Business Economics HG	58,5% to 68,6% to 87,1%	+18,5%
Business Economics SG	71,7% to 80,1% to 83,9%	+3,8%

Subjects such as Accounting HG, Home Economics HG and SG and Typing SG maintained their improvement of 2001 without any further significant upward move during 2002.

The quality of the results also improved as the matriculation endorsement rate of the province increased to 18,8%, an improvement of 4,6% on 2001 and 1,3% higher than the target figure for 2002.

The endorsement rate can be improved by an increase in the number of Higher Grade passes in key subjects such as Mathematics, Biology or Physical Science and Geography.

Some Statistical graphs have been included with this publication for your information.

Congratulations to schools and all professional support staff for the continued improvement.

FACTORS CAUSING IMPROVEMENT IN GRADE 12 RESULTS

(The information that follows is extracted from a presentation by Mr M.Rakometsi, Chief Director for Education Development and Professional Services)

- ⇒ **Powerful and focused guidance** from our MEC, Mr Kganare, who has overseen tremendous improvement since 1999.
- ⇒ **Outstanding and innovative leadership** by our SG, Dr Nwaila, for whom this was his first Free State Grade 12 examination.
- ⇒ Strong support and dedication from **Senior Management** who have truly given an holistic contribution.
- ⇒ An extremely **professionally run, leak-free examination**.
- ⇒ **Common Grade 12 exams** in June, coupled with improved management of **Continuous Assessment**.
- ⇒ Dedicated and ongoing interventions by **School Management Developers and Learning Facilitators** bringing about both administrative and subject improvements.
- ⇒ The innovative **Holistic Intervention Programme** which concentrated on schools with a pass rate below 40%
- ⇒ The hugely successful **mentors** who brought about truly dramatic improvements in the schools where they worked.
- ⇒ **National interventions** in the form of special attention given to Mathematics, the Sciences and History as well as various incentive schemes for teachers and scholars.
- ⇒ **Retraining of teachers** in key subjects (e.g. Mathematics)
- ⇒ **Donor-funded interventions** such as the QLP, USAID, SATDP (CIDA) and the MRDP.
- ⇒ Timeous **filling of posts** both at school and departmental levels.
- ⇒ Improvement in the **handling of disciplinary matters**.
- ⇒ Greater involvement of **parents** through SGBs
- ⇒ The start of **Whole School Evaluation**, thus giving the schools models as to how schools should function.
- ⇒ Improved **communication with schools**.
- ⇒ Improved **communication with Umalusi**, keeping them informed as to our interventions. As a result of this, they could understand and accept various subject improvements.

REMARKS ON OVERALL RESULTS

- ⇒ The steady improvement, exceeding the national improvement rate, shows that our overall interventions are being successful.
- ⇒ The number of schools under 40% pass rate improved from 71 to 32 – a vast improvement indeed. Of the national number of 240 schools under 20%, Free State has only 5 - Letsie, Sandersville, Roadside, Semajan and Jevington.
- ⇒ A word of caution is in order – the higher the achievement, the more difficult it is to improve. Above 70%, a small improvement requires more work than a 10% increase from 40 – 50%
- ⇒ To maintain and indeed improve at this level will require even greater dedication in 2003 than was shown in 2002, at both administrative and curriculum level as these two aspects work hand in hand.
- ⇒ For now, everyone should be congratulated on their fine contribution to this milestone – above 70% means that we have now started to deliver education of some quality in our province.

QUALITY OF THE RESULTS

- ⇒ The most important indicator of quality results is of course the **endorsement rate**. This is **18,8%**, an improvement of **4,6%** on the endorsement rate in 2001 and **1,3% higher than the 17,5%** aimed for as part of the strategic plan. **It is also 2% higher than the national endorsement rate.**
- ⇒ This is all good news, as well as the fact that **the number of distinctions** also increased noticeably.
- ⇒ On the negative side, the number of learners taking **Mathematics showed a decline** of about 10% (compared to 7.5% fewer candidates) while the numbers for Physical Science also dropped. This will need work during 2003.
- ⇒ The subjects which gained from the drop in Mathematics and Science were the **Commercial subjects** which made significant gains in spite of the smaller number of candidates overall.
- ⇒ It should be remembered that with the new FET, all learners not doing Mathematics will be doing **Mathematics Literacy**, to enable them to deal with everyday mathematical concepts.
- ⇒ This is not the nature of the present Mathematics Higher and Standard grades, and not everyone has the aptitude for these subjects. Thus the fact that **53.9% of Free State learners take Mathematics** is encouraging.
- ⇒ To get a university endorsement, appropriate subjects other than Mathematics can be chosen. Improvement in the pass rate without conversions of **Biology HG and Geography HG** is particularly important for the increase in the endorsement rate.

GENERAL CONCERNS

- ⇒ The first of these is the question of the **falling numbers** of Grade 12 learners. The number of Free State Senior Certificate candidates has dropped 7.5% (2 500 learners since 2001).
- ⇒ It is to be hoped that the desire for better results has not brought about an effort to **ease weaker learners out of the system by excessive failing at the end of grade 11**. This will be investigated during 2003.
- ⇒ **The drop in numbers in Mathematics and the Sciences**, as has been mentioned earlier. As the grade 10s of 2004 will all be taking at least Mathematics Literacy, the problem will partially take care of itself, but the Grade 9s of 2003 need to be targeted to popularise the Sciences for their choice in the new FET curriculum in 2004, particularly in terms of the girl child.
- ⇒ Although subject pass rates have improved, **actual subject averages remain low in some subjects**, mostly because of many learners having their subjects converted to SG or condoned. Teachers should be made aware that a 90% pass rate is not good enough when the subject average is below 40%. 45% is the minimum level for an acceptable average and schools and teachers should work for this in a focused way, not only concentrate on the passing percentage.

SUBJECT AVERAGES OF LARGEST SUBJECTS

SUBJECT	Total	Ave
* English Second Language HG	22808	46.88
* Afrikaans Second Language HG	16350	39.13
* SeSotho First Language HG	16166	56.09
* Mathematics SG	12047	35.40
* Biology SG	8376	35.30
* Business Economics SG	7395	39.26
* Accounting SG	7341	46.07
* Physical Science SG	5773	35.16
* Geography SG	4996	31.52
* Economics SG	4406	40.29
* Biology HG	4378	43.30

The subjects in bold have unacceptably low averages.

THE WAY FORWARD

- ⇒ Continue to run a **quality assessment** system with a secure Grade 12 examination of a high standard.
- ⇒ Continue giving **subject support** to all schools with the necessary curriculum guidance, particularly in terms of university endorsement. The subjects which will need special attention are History, Geography, Mathematics, Physical Science (especially in terms of the girl child), Biology and English Second Language (where although the quality of the passes has improved, this tendency must continue, particularly as this is the LoLT for the vast majority of our learners).
- ⇒ Give **focused attention to subjects with the majority of candidates**, e.g. Sesotho and other languages, Mathematics SG, Biology SG. Failures in these subjects have an adverse effect on the overall pass rate.
- ⇒ The **division of LFs into FET and GET** must be completed in order to ensure quality service.
- ⇒ Focused support in terms of the **Holistic Intervention Programme**.
- ⇒ The necessary support in terms of **textbooks** ordered and delivered timeously.
- ⇒ Constant linkage with and support for **national and international interventions**.
- ⇒ Strong involvement of **Whole School Evaluation**.
- ⇒ Continued quarterly visits and unannounced visits by the MEC and Senior Management.

GRADE NINES AND THE CTAs

Free State took the bull by the horns at the end of 2002 and completed the CTAs in all schools.

School principals should be congratulated on their spirit of co-operation. Of course, as this was still a pilot, not everything went as smoothly as it could have and thus it is important for us to learn from the experience. The following points should be noted:

- ◆ The CTAs from 2002 should be used as learning programmes in 2003 to prepare the new grade 9 learners.
- ◆ A mind shift still needs to be made in terms of what the required percentages mean. 50% is the minimum expected of a learner for promotion purposes in grade 9. However, this 50% represents the better efforts of a learner from a wide variety of assessment evidence - not simply an average of a few tests which was often the case in the past. Consequently marks should be higher than previously - this is not a 'drop in standards', but simply a different way of assessing.
- ◆ The same topographical maps used in 2002 will be used in the CTA again this year. Please use them to skill the learners during the course of the year.
- ◆ The importance of continuous assessment became clear during the course of 2002. Please continue your good work with portfolios and remember to make sure that the learner does the work in keeping it up to date. Collections of exercise books are still acceptable as part of a portfolio - the important principle here is the collection of evidence.

The following is just a reminder of the purpose of Common Tasks for Assessment:

- ◆ The CTA is used as an external summative assessment instrument.
- ◆ It provides information on the validity, the reliability and the fairness of the CASS.
- ◆ It contributes to credibility and public confidence.

The following are benefits from the CTAs:

- ◆ Examples of tasks and activities according to Outcomes based assessment principles, using rubrics to assess outcomes and linking marks to descriptors.
- ◆ The CTAs will provide benchmarking and standardisation across provinces, districts and schools.
- ◆ The CTAs from the previous year can be used by teachers in their learning programmes i.e. to strengthen CASS.
- ◆ Inclusion is promoted.

The following are a few highlights from the implementation schedule for 2003:

- ⇒ November 2002 / January 2003 - Development of the CTAs.
- ⇒ February - March 2003 - Translation of CTAs.
- ⇒ February 2003 - Quality control by Umalusi.
- ⇒ March 2003 - Distributing the final print-ready CTAs to provinces
- ⇒ April / June 2003 - Training of provincial officials
- ⇒ February / August 2003 - Training teachers in the administration of CTAs
- ⇒ July / September 2003 - Distribution to schools
- ⇒ Fourth term 2003 - Administering the CTAs
- ⇒ October / December 2003 - Moderation of CTAs

EVERYTHING OF THE BEST FOR 2003. REMEMBER THE HOT LINE NUMBER -