

The Weekly

FIRST STEP TOWARDS A LONG EDUCATION JOURNEY

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Hesitant at first ... The first day of school can be quite daunting for some Grade 1s.

Thousands of bright-eyed learners completed their first day of schooling in the province this week. The Weekly accompanied one of these children as they took their first steps to lifelong learning.

Little Nompumelelo Jwalane could not contain her excitement when she woke up at 6:00 on Wednesday ready for her first day of school. The thrilled six-year-old was already carrying her school bag when The Weekly arrived at her house to see her off.

A guardian of Nompumelelo packed her lunchbox, and dressed and groomed her for school. The small girl's mother could not see her off but asked a close friend to help out on the big day.

Nompumelelo walked out of her RDP house in Namibia Square, Bloemfontein, proudly wearing her brand new uniform and shiny shoes. Her hair was combed back and she looked neat as a pin.

Every day Nompumelelo will walk to the Daluxololo Primary School, which is 15 minutes away from her house, with her brother Mbulelo.

Grade R had already prepared the girl for school and she bravely waltzed into the school grounds without any fear.

Nompumelelo shared some of her plans for the future, and said in a small voice, that she wanted to work at Spar when she grows up.

In preparation for this first school day, Nompumelelo's mother, Nomfazo, made sure that her child had the correct uniform and stationery and it cost her quite a lot.

"She is so excited and can't wait to begin her first day of school. She was in Grade Zero last year but because of the new uniform, she is feeling very excited about school. She's even boasting to her friends about the clothes I bought her and it's difficult for me to pry her away from her school bag."

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Nomfazo registered her child at a Xhosa school although she is not familiar with the language. "I don't know Xhosa but the people I live with are Xhosa speakers, they have learned it at their schools and will be able to guide her."

She registered her child on time and did not suffer the same fate as many families do this time of year.

Mami Moilwa did not register her child on time because of a family member's sudden death.

"My child was still living with her grandmother in Edenburg and now the grandmother died on Monday. The family then called me to come and fetch the child and that's why I only just registered him."

According to the HOD of Daluxololo Primary School Thembisa Makgisa, the school has already registered two classes of Grade 1 learners and the registration process was well underway.

Many parents were queuing outside the reception area of the school waiting to register their children and according to Makgisa, the problem of late registration still persists. Most of the parents come from outside the province, many from the Eastern Cape, and this was one of the reasons attributed to the late registration.

Makgisa said residents of Freedom Square and far flung townships have been coming in numbers to register their children. "People need to be notified in advance about registering their children in November rather than January; they still have that mentality that one can still register in January."

Mangaung Primary School is also experiencing the challenge of late registration.



Leaving for school ... Nompumelelo Jwalane leaving for school with her brother Mbulelo for the first time.

Many parents were hoping to squeeze their children into classes at this no-fee school. HOD Morwesi Makhetha said that so far the school has enough Grade 1 learners to fill three classes but even more were expected to register. The school received textbooks and stationery on time.

"The only thing we need is pens and we have already told the department about it, so it is not a problem," said Makhetha.

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With regards to food supplies for the school's feeding scheme, Makhetha said they still have foodstuffs such as tinned food and porridge left over from the previous year.

The spokesperson for the department of education, Howard Ndaba, said the department does not have a final figure of the number of Grade 1s registered in the province this year.

"The schools are still in the process of registering the pupils, some register late while others have not yet registered."

He said the department began distributing stationery and books to schools adding that they would hopefully reach the schools in time.

With regards to the challenge of overcrowding in schools, Ndaba said that the department has communicated with teachers and parents to encourage them to register their children on time.

"We have a learner registration programme in which parents and educators have responded positively. It aims to educate the parents and encourage them to register their children on time." Ndaba stated that mobile classrooms will be used to prevent overcrowding in classrooms.



"We will ensure that teachers are employed in those mobile classrooms. Tomorrow, the senior departmental heads are visiting schools and if there is a problem with shortage of teachers, they will solve it promptly."

The department now wants to focus on the foundation phase to ensure that by the time the learners reach matric they have been well prepared. The department also wants to make sure that Free State foundation learners do well in the Annual National Assessment (ANA) tests which evaluate literacy, numeracy, and language.

The Executive Mayor of the Mangaung Metro, Thabo Manyoni, also paid visits to various schools in the city to motivate learners and teacher for the year ahead. In his address to St. Andrews school for boys he quoted Malcom X: "Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today".

[Source: www.theweekly.co.za]