



**education**

Department of  
Education  
FREE STATE PROVINCE

## **PROVINCIAL STRATEGY ON LEARNER ATTAINMENT (PSLA)**

### **FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT**

**IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE: 2012**

## PROVINCIAL STRATEGY ON LEARNER ATTAINMENT (PSLA):2012

### 1. Introduction and background

The Provincial Strategy on Learner Attainment (PSLA) is an initiative that seeks to bring about continuous improvement in learner attainment in relation to the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations. The performance of schools in the NSC examinations remains a matter of national importance and continues to occupy a prominent position in public discourse in relation to education. Across the globe, schools operate in a paradigm of continuous improvement. The aim of schooling is to 'add value' to the learning of every child in order to maximize their education potential (**Hayes, D., Mills, M., Christie, P., Lingard, B. (2006) *Teachers and Schooling: Making a difference***). Intervention in the form of the PSLA is thus a strategic response that focuses on the improvement of schools with a view to build a strong culture of effective curriculum leadership and school organization by the principal. In this culture, the school develops an enabling environment for effective teaching and learning with a view to continuous improvement in learner attainment.

Following the introduction of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), the Free State has continued to perform above the national pass rate. The year 2008 witnessed the first National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations based on the NCS. In this examination, the province achieved an overall pass rate of 71.8% in contrast to 70.4% in 2007. This represented an improvement of 1.4% in learner attainment in contrast to the decline of 1.6% in 2007 when the results went down from 72.2% to 70.4%. With the second Grade 12 cohort on the NCS in 2009, the pass rate declined from 71.8% to 69.4%. Confronted with a decline in the pass rate in 2009, the PSLA adopted an approach that explored additional areas that needed to be targeted for the desired improvement in the schooling system. With this approach, the province achieved an improvement in the pass rate in 2010. The overall performance **improved from 69.4% in 2009 to 70.7%**. This performance represented an improvement of 1.3%. The 2010 NSC results provided a basis for further improvement in relation to learner attainment in the NSC examinations, and the province set a target of 75% in the 2011 NSC examinations. The performance of the province **improved from 70.7% to 75.7% in the 2011 NSC examinations**. For purposes of the PSLA, and to achieve continuous improvement in the medium to long term, the focus of the intervention needs to go beyond the underperforming schools, and also include work in support of schools in relation to the GET band.

### 2. **The strategic agenda of government: An overview**

The PSLA cannot be seen in isolation from the broader agenda of government in relation to the national imperative for improved quality education. The context for the development of the PSLA during 2012 continues to be located in the strategic objectives and targets of the government as outlined in the **Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF)** for 2009 – 2014. For purposes of the PSLA, it is important to recognise that the response of the education sector to the MTSF has taken the form of **Action Plan 2014: Towards the Realization of Schooling 2025**. The implementation of the PSLA during 2012 will continue to give effect to the strategic objectives and targets of the education sector as outlined in Action Plan 2014. The school remains the central place for the delivery of the core mandate of the Department of Education, and for this reason, provides the required educational setting for the implementation of the PSLA. Thus the implementation of the PSLA in 2012 must be guided by a conscious effort to contribute towards the attainment of the

following strategic objectives and targets as outlined in **Action Plan 2014: Towards the Realization of Schooling 2025:**

<b>Focus Areas for Improvement</b>	<b>Output Goals</b>
Quality learner attainment in the National Senior Certificate (NSC)	<b>No 4:</b> Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who become eligible for a Bachelors programme at a university.
Learner attainment in Mathematics	<b>No 5:</b> Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who pass Mathematics.
Learner attainment in Physical Science	<b>No 6:</b> Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who pass <i>Physical Science</i>
Teachers and teaching	<b>No 16:</b> Improve the professionalism, teaching skills, subject knowledge and computer literacy of teachers throughout their entire careers.
Curriculum coverage	<b>No 18:</b> Ensure that learners cover all the topics and skill areas that they should cover within their current school year.
Access to textbooks and other LTSM	<b>No 19:</b> Ensure that every learner has access to the minimum set of textbooks and workbooks required according to national policy.
School governance and management	<b>No 21:</b> Ensure that the basic annual management processes occur across all schools, in the country in a way that contributes towards a functional school environment.
District support to schools	<b>No 27:</b> Improve the frequency and quality of the monitoring and support services provided by district offices to schools, partly through better use of e-Education.

### 3. Taking on the challenge: Intervention for improvement

The initiative to improve learner attainment must be understood within the context of different underperforming schools who are confronted by a combination of different factors in relation to poor learner attainment. Many studies in education have revealed that the most “consistent features” of underperforming schools include the following:

- Underachievement and low levels of attainment on the part of learners.

- The quality of teaching and learning is to a large extent poor in the majority of cases. In this connection, research has over the years revealed that there is a direct correlation between poor teaching and low levels of attainment on the part of learners.
- Punctuality is very poor and absenteeism is often the order of the day
- Weak and ineffective management and leadership (**From Failure to Success (2001), OFSTED**)

### 3.1. Sustainability and Performance Categories in relation to Performance in the NSC Examinations

The need to reduce the number of underperforming schools, combined with the need for sustainability and qualitative improvement in the results, calls for a broad categorization of schools for targeted intervention. For purposes of the PSLA, the schools have been categorized as follows:

Performance Category	Description	Total Number	Focus and expected outcome
1. Underperforming Schools	Schools with a pass rate of below 70% in the 2011 NSC examinations	107	Improve pass rate to 70% and above in the 2012 NSC examinations
2. Trapped Schools	Schools with a pass rate of below 60% since the introduction of the NSC examinations from 2008	11	Improve the pass rate to 70% and above in the 2012 NSC examinations
3. Schools at Risk	Schools with a pass rate of below 40% in the 2011 NSC examinations	09	Improve the pass rate to 60% and above in the 2012 NSC examinations.
3. Fluctuating Schools	Schools that have improved by 20% and more in the 2011 NSC examinations but have a history of underperformance	29	Sustain the 2011 improvement and begin to establish a culture of excellence in learner attainment
4. Declining Schools	Schools that have declined by 10% and more in the 2011 NSC examinations	15	The schools must turn around the decline by way of an improvement of 10% and more in the 2012 NSC examinations
Potential 100% Schools	Schools with a pass rate of 95% and more and a history of performance in the 90s.	25	Improve quality of passes and achieve a 100% pass rate.
Township schools with big enrolment of 100 and more			

### 3.2. Target-setting for Improved Learner Attainment

The categorization of schools according to performance in the NSC examinations is closely linked to the concept of target-setting. It is critically important to clarify and reinforce expectations in relation to the need to improve learner attainment. Target-setting must be recognized as an integral part of school improvement, as well as organizational improvement with regard to the district and provincial levels of education provisioning. Setting targets in relation to provincial expectations for improving learner attainment must be applied for implementation at all levels of the system.

Focus for Improvement	Performance: 2011	Target: 2012 NSC
Provincial Pass Rate	75.7%	80%
District Pass Rates	Motheo: 74.7%	85%
	Xhariep: 79.5%	80%
	Lejweleputswa: 80.0%	85%
	Thabo Mofutsanyana: 74.2%	80%
	Fezile Dabi: 73.8%	80%
Quality in Learner Attainment: Bachelor's passes	26,3% (6 817) of candidates obtained Bachelor's in the NSC examinations of 2011	30% of candidates in the 2012 NSC examinations
Districts contribution to Bachelor's passes	Motheo: 29.7%	34%
	Lejweleputswa: 25.6%	30%
	Xhariep: 24.5%	28%
	Thabo Mofutsanyana: 24.3%	28%
	Fezile Dabi: 24.3%	28%
Reduce the number of schools performing below 70% by 50%	107 schools performing below 70%	53 schools performing below 70%
Districts contribution to reducing number of schools performing below 70%	Motheo: 28	14
	Xhariep: 06	03
	Lejweleputswa: 19	10
	Thabo Mofutsanyana: 32	16
	Fezile Dabi: 22	11
Increase the % pass in Mathematics, Physical Science and Accounting	53.94% of Mathematics passes 55.21% of Physical Science passes 60.23% of Accounting passes	Mathematics: 65% Physical Science: 65% Accounting: 70%
Increase the % pass in other subjects that performed below 70%	61% Economics 65% Geography 62% History	All these other subjects must perform at a minimum of 75%

#### **4. Mode of Implementation: Key Thrusts**

The school remains the central place for the delivery of the core mandate of the Department of Education, and for this reason, provides the required educational setting for the implementation of the PSLA. Thus, the PSLA has been designed for implementation on the basis of the following thrusts:

##### **4.1. Improvement Plans with Performance Targets.**

In order to encourage the attainment of good results and inculcate a sense of ownership and accountability, improvement plans have been put in place with a focus on improved learner attainment. These plans will take the form of an Academic Performance Improvement Plan for all underperforming schools as well subject specific improvement plans at the level of both Head Office and District Offices. It needs to be recognized that every school's challenges are unique, and no single solution will serve as a remedy to poor performance that confronts schools. Thus an **evidence-based approach** must be adopted in the development of improvement plans. Each school must be supported to find its own route along the route to improving learner attainment. In terms of the **Education Laws Amendment Act**, schools identified as underperforming must be supported to put in place an **Academic Performance Improvement Plan (APIP)** for presentation to the Department.

##### **4.2. Teacher Capacity and Practices**

Teacher development for improved curriculum implementation remains a critical pillar in the implementation of the PSLA with a focus on subject content, assessment including examination guidelines in the NCS subjects. Here the focus is on subject specific interventions with emphasis on the **critical subjects** in relation to **Mathematics, Physical Sciences, Accounting, Business Studies, Economics, History and Geography**.

##### **4.3. School Leadership and Management**

Dedicated focus on the quality of leadership at "serial underperforming schools" with a view to bring about fundamental change that might include professional development or reallocation to institutions that are less demanding or implementing disciplinary measures where there is evidence of incapacity to perform.

##### **4.4. Assessment and Examinations**

Teaching and learning must be supported by way of sharing of exemplary assessment practices amongst schools as well as provincial common quarterly assessment tasks and the Grade 12 preparatory examinations during September 2012 to prepare schools adequately for the NSC examinations.

##### **4.5. Direct Learner Support**

Learners remain an important target group in relation to specific activities in the implementation of the PSLA. The initiatives regarding direct learner support include advocacy and communication in relation to pass requirements to achieve a bachelor's pass, access to high quality learning materials including study guides, supplementary tuition and provision and supply of abridged pace-setters to clarify provincial expectations in relation to curriculum coverage.

#### **4.6. Multi-disciplinary Teams**

This takes the approach of quarterly visits to schools with a view to provide subject specific support to schools that is based on the difficulties that teachers may experience in subjects with a view to strengthen teaching and learning to enhance learner attainment. Furthermore, the teams will also identify areas for additional support to schools with a view to improved curriculum management.

#### **4.7. Tracking Progress including Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting)**

The implementation of the PSLA will be guided by a framework of monitoring and evaluation and reporting that includes the following:

- Provincial and District co-ordination in collaboration with DoE within the context of the National Strategy for Learner Attainment (NSLA).
- Ongoing monitoring and support visits to schools in relation to the implementation of the Academic Performance Improvement Plans.
- Quarterly PSLA reports to HOD and MEC.
- Quarterly reports to DoE for updates to HEDCOM and CEM.
- Updates to Free State EXCO and Social Cluster whenever required.
- Quarterly reviews with Districts and the different categories of schools targeted for improvement.

### **5. Creating an Enabling Environment for Implementation of the PSLA**

The Department is bound to benefit a great deal if the implementation of the PSLA happens within an environment that is responsive to the **emerging demands and needs** of schools in relation to the following:

- Budget allocation for intervention programmes
- Skills Levy Budget allocation for Teacher Development
- Quintile status of focus schools
- Norms and standards funding to cover extra tuition - NSNP
- Staff establishment of schools in relation to key subjects
- Strong leadership and management at school level (support system for new teachers, monitoring curriculum, discipline etc.)
- Functional Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
- Accountability at senior management level
- Approach in relation to round table discussions
- Integrated approach to school support visits
- Better communication channels with focus schools
- Support programme for parents to support their children

### **6. Implementation Plan**

The section that follows on the next pages provides the necessary details in relation to the implementation plan.

## **PART 2: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The implementation plan gives effect to the overall objectives of the PSLA in relation to the imperative for improved learner attainment in the NSC examinations and represents an attempt to make a contribution towards the attainment of targets as set out in Action Plan 2014: Towards the Realization of Schooling 2025. Most importantly, it provides clarity and impetus to the work of the Free State Department of Education to improve the quality of education. It is important to recognize that the PSLA represents a strategic initiative that directs the focus of the education system in the Free State on continuous improvement with regard to learner attainment in the National Senior Certificate examinations (NSC), and thus an emerging demand and challenge is for a well managed and coordinated approach that provides clarity of purpose to all the activities that constitute the PSLA.

### **Teacher Capacity and Practices**

<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Target / Focus</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Per item and error analysis of learners' responses (grade 11 & 12.	Targeted schools	E& A Directorate and PSCs	January 2012
Support schools in the development of credible APIPs	Underperforming schools, declining schools, schools at risk.	Curriculum CESs and SMGDs	January 2012
Intensive teacher training on the use of assessment guidelines in all subjects	Underperforming schools, declining schools, schools at risk.	Provincial Subject Coordinators	February 2012
Conduct a residential in-service content and assessment training programme in Maths, Science, Accounting, B. Studies, History, Geography & Economics	Underperforming schools, declining schools, schools at risk and schools that improved by 20% and more, schools with big enrolment	Subject Experts (teachers, Subject Advisors)	March – August 2012 (2 weekends per month per subject)



### Teacher Capacity and Practices (Cont. 1)

Intervention	Target / focus	Responsibility	Timeline
Conduct topic focused teacher development programmes in Accounting, Geography, Mathematics Physical Science, Life Sciences, Economics & Business Studies	All Schools	Subject Advisors and Provincial Subject Coordinators	Quarterly throughout 2012
Provide an 'on call' support to teachers – 5 days a week from 14h00 to 17h00 in focus subjects	60 identified schools	ICITISE Presenters	February – October 2012
Enrichment teacher development programme in Life Sciences (40% new content)	All schools	Subject Advisors and PSC	Quarterly throughout 2012
Subject focused twinning programme (10 big subjects)	Trapped and declining schools = 26	SMGDS	March – August 2012
Create platform for sharing of best practices through content and instructional practices workshops (cluster , District and Provincial)	All Schools	Subject Advisors	Quarterly throughout 2012
Deployment of SAs and PSCs to schools for classroom support	Underperforming schools, declining schools, schools at risk.	District Directors, Curriculum Director and CESS	Quarterly throughout 2012

## Teacher Capacity and Practices (Cont. 2)

Intervention	Target / Focus	Responsibility	Timeline
Provide support system for new Grade 12 teachers	All schools	District Directors, Curriculum Director and CESS	March 2012
Retraining of Maths Literacy teachers towards 1 <sup>st</sup> year maths university level	120 educators	Curriculum FET and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU)	January – September 2012
Appointment of itinerant educators in critical subjects to supplement and complement less competent educators in these subjects	All schools	HRM Directorate	March 2012
Filling of vacant Mathematics, Science, English and Accounting posts (Invoke Section 6a of the EEA)	All Schools	HRM Directorate and SMGDs	March - August 2011
Establishment of panels to appoint educators at HOD, Deputy Principal and Principal level on behalf schools that do not have the capacity to do so.	Disadvantaged Schools	HRM ,Subject Advisors, and SMGDS	Quarterly throughout 2012
Utilization of the skills levy will be strongly biased towards training and development of educators.	All the 5 ERCs for access to all schools	OHRD and provincial Subject Coordinators	Quarterly throughout 2012

### Teacher Capacity and Practices (Cont 3)

Intervention	Target / Focus	Responsibility	Timeline
Instructional Leadership Programme for SMTs	Underperforming schools, declining schools, schools at risk, big schools	HRM and Curriculum Directorates	March 2012
Recruitment of teachers and graduates in key subjects	All schools	HRM and Teach SA	March 2012
Induction programme for newly appointed teachers	All Schools	HRM and Teach SA	March 2012

### Access to High Quality Learning Materials and Resources

Intervention	Target / Focus	Responsibility	Timeline
Intensify the use of mobile science laboratories to enhance the teaching and learning in Physical Science and Life Sciences	200 schools	Subject Advisors and Provincial Subject Coordinators	Quarterly starting in March 2012
Consolidation of the HeyMath! Programme to enhance the teaching and learning of Mathematics	100 Secondary Schools	Subject Advisors and provincial Subject Coordinators	Quarterly starting in March 2012
Provide study guides/top-up in big enrolment subjects to all Grade 12 learners (Economics, geography, accounting, History etc.)	Disadvantaged schools	Provincial Curriculum CESS	May 2012

### Access to High Quality Learning Materials and Resources (Cont. 1)

Intervention	Target / Focus	Responsibility	Timeline
Provide training and monitor use of sets of Geography maps	All disadvantaged schools	Provincial Subject Coordinator and Subject Advisors	January – March 2012
Monitor the use of Mindset Learning Channel including resources (workbooks, revision materials)	200 secondary schools	Provincial Subject Coordinators and Subject Advisors	Quarterly and throughout 2012
Broadcast Interactive lessons to learning centers to enhance teaching and learning in key subjects	60 ICITISE & 205 Mindset Centers	PED, UFS & Mindset	February – November 2012
Updated CDs with previous Grade 12 question papers and memos & per item analysis of 2011 NSC examinations	All Schools	Examinations and Assessment Directorate	February – March 2012

### Direct Learner Support

Intervention	Target / Focus	Responsibility	Timeline
Provide package of pace setters in big enrolment subjects to Grade 12 learners	Disadvantaged Schools	PSCs , Curriculum CESs and SAs	March 2012
Provide study guides in big subjects to all Grade 12 learners	Disadvantaged Schools	Provincial Curriculum CESs	May 2012

### Direct Learner Support (Cont. 1)

Intervention	Target / Focus	Responsibility	Timeline
Provide sets of Mindset content products (workbooks & revision materials) in accounting, Mathematics, Physical Science, Life Sciences, Mathematical Literacy, Geography, English FAL to each learner in 200 schools )	200 secondary Schools	Mindset and Curriculum FET Schools	February – April 2012
Provide Interactive lesson broadcasts to learning centers to enhance teaching and learning in big subjects	All underperforming, focus performing and big schools	PED, UFS & Mindset	February – November 2012
Provide remedial support programme to learners experiencing learning barriers	All disadvantaged schools	CESs: ELSESEN and EDS	Quarterly and throughout 2012
Provide supplementary booklet with 2011 Grade 12 question papers and memos	250 schools	Examinations and Assessment Directorate	March 2012
Adopt a learner programme by teachers	All underperforming, potential 100% and declining schools	SMGDs	February 2012
Structured teaching programme by subject specialists on problem areas in each subject	All underperforming and declining schools	PSCs , Curriculum CESs and SAs	Quarterly and throughout 2012

## Direct Learner Support (Cont. 2)

Intervention	Target / Focus	Responsibility	Timeline
Incubation programme	All Underperforming and declining schools with more or less 20 enrolments	Curriculum CESs and SMGDs	May 2012
Provide extra weekdays and weekend classes to supplement teaching & learning	All Underperforming, declining, fluctuating and big schools	Districts and Partnerships	February – October 2012
Provide compulsory Hholiday classes and/or camps	All Underperforming, focus performing and big township schools	DMTs, Curriculum CESs, PSCs and SMGDs	April 2012, June 2012, September 2012
Present 1hr radio slots on community radio stations on focus subjects for at least 1 day per week per subject	Motheo Fezile Dabi Thabo Mofutsanyana	Communications, PSCs and SAs	March 2012 onwards
Motivational talks for grade 12s biannually by public representatives, senior government officials etc.	All Underperforming, focus performing and big township schools	Communications Directorate	March 2012 October 2012
Strong Advocacy programme on pass requirements, career guidance and study tips	250 disadvantaged schools	E & A and Inclusive education	February – May 2012

### Direct Learner Support (Cont. 3)

Intervention	Target / Focus	Responsibility	Timeline
Strengthen the establishment of study buddies to enhance sustainability of learning centers	All Underperforming, focus performing and big township schools	Inclusive & Life Skills and VIE Sub Directorates	April 2011
Parenting with assurance programme	All Underperforming and big schools	Inclusive & Life Skills and VIE Sub Directorates	Quarterly and throughout 2012

### Tracking Progress

Intervention	Target / Focus	Responsibility	Timeline
Quarterly Monitoring of Academic Performance Improvement Plans, pace setters & SAGs	Underperforming, fluctuating & declining schools	DMTs , SMGDs and SAs	March May August
Adopt a school programme on school support visits targeting performance in big subjects	35 schools (Trapped, schools at risk & declining)	DDGs, CDs AND District Directors	March – September 2012
Holiday classes assessment tasks (pretests and post tests) informed by the analysis	All Underperforming, declining . fluctuating and big schools	Subject experts (teachers and Subject Advisors	Quarterly throughout 2011

### Tracking Progress (Cont. 1)

Intervention	Target / Focus	Responsibility	Timeline
Common quarterly tests in big subjects in March & June (compulsory for underperforming and declining schools)	Underperforming schools, trapped, schools at risk, declining and big schools	Curriculum FET Schools	Quarterly throughout 2012
Common trial /preparatory exams in Grade 12	All Schools	Examinations and Assessment Directorate	August – September 2012
Mobilization of QLTC structures and other social partners for monitoring & support	250 schools	QLTC coordinators	Ongoing

### APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION: KEY FEATURES

The implementation of the PSLA will take the shape of three phases as follows:

1. **First Push Programme (January - March 2012)**
  - Start-up PSLA lekgotla at Provincial and District Levels
  - Differentiated Round table discussions - focus schools
  - Item and error Analysis of results by SAs and profiling of teachers
  - Well Informed Extra classes (morning, afternoon, weekends)
  - Deployment of SAs and PSCs – structured programme
  - Parenting with assurance programme
  - Advocacy – pass requirements, study tips etc in booklets and posters
  - Conversation with Chief Markers and Moderators at District level



2. **Mid Push Programme (April – June 2012)**
    - Item and error Analysis of March results by SAs
    - Extra classes (morning, afternoon, weekends) & Holiday classes
    - Deployment of SAs and PSCs
  
  3. **Last Push Programme (July – October 2012)**
    - Round table discussions
    - Item and error Analysis of June and September results by SAs
    - Deployment of SAs and PSCs
    - Incubation programmes
    - Extra classes (morning, afternoon, weekends) & Holiday classes
-