



INTERNET ARTICLE

Mpumalanga schools awarded for excellence in water and sanitation programmes

15 April 2024

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) handed over prizes to schools that participated in the Water and Sanitation Education Programme (WSEP) and excelled in showcasing artistry and innovation. The prizes were awarded to the learners and schools on 09 and 10 April 2024. The prize handover was done in collaboration with the Department of Education.

The Water and Sanitation Education Programme aims to educate learners about water use efficiency, protection of water resources, health and hygiene, invasive alien plants and encourage them to pursue careers in the water sector. It is one of the most important initiatives in ensuring that water and sanitation education is achieved within the public schooling system to encourage water literacy and change the attitudes and behaviour of learners towards wise water use and to value water. The WSEP is implemented through the following projects: Baswa Le Meetse, South African Youth Water Prize, Aqua Enduro, Public Speaking, Curriculum Support, Intervention Projects, Career Promotion and Celebration of Special Days.

The Water and Sanitation Education Programme responds to the National Water Resource Strategy II (Chapter 15), Strategic Action 15.5.4 and National and Sanitation Master Plan Chapter 11 (Key Action 2.3.8) in that it creates public awareness and teaches water literacy, with a particular focus on efficient water use and management, and it further lays a foundation for the development of critical skills and exposure to emerging innovations in the water sector.

Benjamin Primary School from Matsulu in the City of Mbombela Local Municipality was awarded R10 000, a trophy and certificate for attaining third position in the drama category of the Baswa Le Meetse competition during the National Adjudications in 2022. Baswa Le Meetse is a project under the Water and Sanitation Education Programme targeting Grade 6 learners in Primary School. The learners participate in art forms as a way of educating one another about water use efficiency, proper sanitation practices, taking care and protecting water resources. The art forms where the learners compete include drama, music, poetry, praise poetry and posters.

Khaliphani, Sitintile and Kurhula secondary schools were awarded prizes for their achievements in the South African Youth Water Prize (SAYWP) Provincial Adjudications held in 2023. Khaliphani Secondary School from Kanyamazane in the City of Mbombela received R6 000.00, a trophy and a certificate, and the learners received laptops and bursaries for

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attaining the first prize. Sitintile Secondary School also from Kanyamazane in the City of Mbombela received R5 000.00, a trophy and a certificate for coming second, and Kurhula Secondary School from Huntington in Bushbuckridge Local Municipality received R4 000.00, a trophy and a certificate for attaining third position. The educators / trainers or coaches also received certificates and trophies for their support activities.

The SAYWP is an educational competition of the Department of Water and Sanitation aimed at Grade 9 to 11 learners not older than 20 years. The participating learners must be individuals or groups of not more than two and they must be innovative and passionate about water and the environment. The participants must identify problems related to water in their school or community and take action that includes initiating a project, do research, recommend solutions, and develop a model or invention that will solve the identified problem.

The Provincial Head of DWS Mpumalanga, Ms Dudu Sifunda applauded the schools for partaking in the Department's programme and applauded the teachers, learners, and parents for their efforts. "So, looking at the efforts that has been put by the learners, as a department we are very much encouraged to say that we need to continue with this programme. We must try to ensure that the kids from the early age understand the importance of water conservation, that water is a scarce resource, and that we cannot live without water. Everyone has a role to play when it comes to water, it is not a departmental thing nor a municipality issue, it is for everyone from the young to the old. We want to congratulate the schools, the teachers and learners who did not sleep when they were working on the concepts and projects to assure that they achieve their goals. We also applaud the parents for their support. We are looking forward to more innovations that will come from the schools to deal with water and sanitation as a whole. There is a vast skills shortage in the sector, and we are looking at you, learners to fill the gap", she said.

She further committed that the Department will continue with the collaboration and partnership with the Department of Education to ensure that learners are exposed to opportunities and careers in the water and sanitation sector.

Mr Vukani Mtya, the WSEP National Coordinator gave a brief background of the Water and Sanitation Education Programme and outlined its objectives. He further committed to adopt Benjamin Primary School and to donate career booklets and water and sanitation related Teacher Learner Support Material (LTSM) to the secondary schools for library use.

Ms Kgomotso Malapane from the Department of Education reiterated support for DWS educational programme and encouraged the learners to be the best they can be. "We are able to support all the activities that are being done with the Department of Water and Sanitation because under the career guidance wing we take it that as teachers, when you are allowing the children to participate in these activities you are taking education out of the classroom which is the most fun activity of all. Our children want to learn by doing and by exposing them to these activities, you are exposing them to be able to go out there and do research on their

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own which is a skill that they will need for the rest of their lives. You teach them to stand publicly, so it starts here with them being able to stand and speak with confidence. It is also important that parents are part of this. We love this competitions because they bring out the confidence, that language and the innovations in you, learners”, she said.

The SAYWP winning learners from Khaliphani Secondary School were so overjoyed at receiving their prizes. “I’m so delighted for receiving my prize after winning the provincial competition. This is a wonderful prize and means a lot to me. I also feel delighted for winning with my best friend meaning that we were encouraging each other. This laptop will assist a lot in research and will also help me to explore the different careers in the water and sanitation sector to make an informed decision about my future”, said Katlego Mhlongo.

Themba Khoza

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