



INTERNET ARTICLE

DM Mahlobo gifted learners with various incentives at the Water and Sanitation Education Programme 2025

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The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) did it again this year! There were jubilations, ululations, tears, and some joyful noise at the National Adjudication for the Water and Sanitation Education Programme (WSEP) Award Ceremony 2025. The event took place from the 5th to the 10th of October 2025, at the ANEW Hotel in Benoni, Gauteng, within the Ekurhuleni Municipality. Deputy Minister David Mahlobo awarded laptops, tablets, prize money, certificates, and trophies to the winning schools and learners.

The first day was easy-going, with Ms Rachalet Grobbelaar, a Director in the Chief Directorate: Water Services Planning & Information, welcoming everyone present. Stakeholders included, Ekurhuleni Water Care Company (ERWAT), Water Research Commission (WRC), The Energy and Water Sector Education Training Authority (EWSETA), Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA), Rand Water, South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), Inkomati-Usuthu Catchment Management Agency (IUCMA), Magalies Water, Unmgeni-uThukela Water (UUW), and others. At the exhibition area, the stakeholders showcased their work and educational materials. Smiling faces of learners and teachers reflected their excitement.

Mr Xolani Hadebe, the Chief Director in Water Services Planning & Information, continued to give the purpose of the day. Also, indicating that 5 October 2025 is World Teacher's Day, an international day held annually to celebrate the work of teachers. "Today it's World Teacher's Day. Teachers, you are playing a critical role in shaping South Africa," Mr Hadebe said in appreciation.

Mr Hadebe was followed by Dr Awodwa Magingi, a Scientist Production in the department, who motivated the learners, and gave them hope. "We need smart brains that can shape the water sector, have a vision, fall in love with what you do, you are smart, and you are brilliant. Enjoy the programme, and if you do not understand, ask and teach others also outside the programme," elaborated Dr Magingi.

Deputy Director-General for Corporate Services, Ms Nthabiseng Fundakubi, welcomed everyone and also gave a keynote address on the day. She earnestly acknowledged and thanked the Department of Basic Education for their support with the programme. Ms Fundakubi also welcomed the learners and the educators, "thank you for bringing our learners here," she said to the educators. To the learners, she urged them to have a vision board and to follow through it so that they will eventually be able to achieve their set goals in life.

Three action projects were adjudicated, namely: Aqua Enduro, Public Speaking, and Baswa Le Meetse. The Aqua Enduro participants prepared activities demonstrating innovation and teamwork. The Public Speaking participants debated on G20 and its significance towards climate change. The Baswa Le Meetse participants competed for the best drama, music, poetry,

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praise poetry, and poster design categories. Learners participated from Monday 6 Oct, until Wednesday 8 Oct. On Thursday 9 Oct, learners were privileged to visit two sites, The Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden in Roodepoort, and the Cradle of Humankind in Mulderdrift.

Friday 10 Oct was the big day. Deputy Minister David Mahlobo graced the WSEP 2025 with his presence. This is the day that was evident that DWS indeed continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of South African learners through its WSEP – a platform that not only nurtures young talent but also inspires a new generation of water ambassadors.

Giving his keynote address at the awards ceremony, Deputy Minister David Mahlobo requested everyone to give the educators a round of applause. “Let us all value the work that they do in nurturing the talent and harnessing the potential of our young people,” said Mahlobo. The Deputy Minister continued to praise the young minds on how they gave the story of water through their eyes, as well as through their own experiences.

“Don’t teach young people not to think, allow them to think so that they become new innovators, they become new researchers, we want a country that is full of innovation,” Deputy Minister emphasised. Deputy Minister continued to highlight that the country should invest more money in research institutions. “If we don’t do research, the decision makers are going to make decisions on what we call common sense. What you think is common and it makes sense is not sense. We need data and evidence, that’s how we need to run the country,” Mahlobo wisely explained.

On a lighter note, Deputy Minister Mahlobo revealed that he asked his daughter to become a medical doctor, and she flatly refused, saying she will not fulfil someone’s dream. The Deputy Minister was emphasising that elders need to allow children to make their own career choices. “Let’s allow young people to make their own career choices, what is their dream? You can give guidance, but you can’t impose your dream on them, don’t kill the hope of these young people,” Mahlobo pleaded.

The moment came where the learners were called one by one to receive their prizes and suddenly the room was filled with jubilations and tears. The sound of ululations by educators echoed through the room, capturing the spirit of joy and triumph. Learners were emotional and it was clear that they were appreciating the prizes given to them. The winning learners received laptops, tablets, prize money, certificates, and trophies. To top it all, 54 high school learners received bursaries to study towards the water and sanitation related careers.

The national winners for 2025 were as follows:

First place, KwaZulu-Natal from Adams College.

Second place, Western Cape from Heatherlands High School.

Third place, Eastern Cape from Port Rex Technical School.

Nthabiseng Dhlamini

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