

WC Education Department rolling out a 'record-breaking' 2 million textbooks to schools

The Western Cape government has issued a statement to the effect that it believes in the primacy of the textbook, and building textbook-rich schools is one of its top priorities.

The statement says that by placing books in the hands of all the province's learners and building text-rich environments, the provincial government believes it is contributing significantly to building stronger foundations in literacy and numeracy and improving learner outcomes.

"At the beginning of this year I made an unprecedented commitment to ensure that over the next three years, every child from Grades 1-12 will have a textbook in every subject that he or she is taking," says Minister of Education, Donald Grant, Western Cape, adding "This will be a first in South African history."

He says that in order to fulfil this commitment, the Western Cape Education Department has allocated a significant amount of its budget for textbook provision. The department plans to invest about R466 million over four years in the textbook programme.

"This huge investment does not include additional funds allocated to schools for textbook purchases in terms of national norms and standards.

"We have now just entered the second phase of a massive rollout of textbooks and reading books to schools across the province.

"This roll-out is the largest of its kind in the history of the department," says Grant.

Flooding schools

The department is flooding schools in the Western Cape with more than two million books by the end of the year for use in 2012 as part of the programme.

The first phase of the textbook programme involved delivering reading schemes to every classroom in Grades 1 to 6 to support reading development in 2011.

The reading schemes, for home languages, included large books for shared reading, a graded series of smaller reading books, a teacher's guide and related items to support language development.

These items also include sentence strips and word cards to support shared, group and independent reading development.

The department is now rolling out the second phase, to support the introduction of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in the Foundation Phase and Grade 10 in 2012.

The books for the Foundation Phase include reading schemes for first additional languages in every classroom in Grades 1 to 3.

The department is also providing Mathematics textbooks for all learners in Grade 1 and will top up supplies of Mathematics textbooks provided to learners in Grades 2 and 3 in 2011.

The department will provide 11 439 reading schemes for use in 2012, each containing about 120 books. The schemes will therefore place nearly 1.4 million reading books directly into Foundation Phase classrooms in 2012.

The department will provide a total of 140 463 Mathematics textbooks to learners in Grades 1 to 3 in 2012.

Teachers to benefit as well

"We are also providing teachers' guides and discussion books to teachers in Grades 1 to 3 to support the implementation of CAPS in the Foundation Phase next year," says Grant.

The department is providing more than 550 000 textbooks to Grade 10 learners, to cover almost every subject. Every Grade 10 learner will receive seven textbooks.

The WCED has provided additional funds to schools to augment prescribed literature books for Grade 10 home language studies.

Grants says that thanks to a new online textbook ordering system, schools will receive textbooks for Grade 10 learners in good time for 2012; the WCED introduced the system to make it easier for schools to order textbooks.

"The system offers schools a good choice of textbooks from the national catalogue of CAPS-approved textbooks while also making it as easy as possible to place orders online. Moreover, the department has negotiated excellent prices with publishers, resulting in savings of between R5 million and R6 million - and will plough the funds back into further book purchases," says Grant.

Use them

Schools generally met the deadline of 26 September 2011 to place orders for Grade 10 textbooks. The department is on track to deliver the textbooks by the end of the year.

Schools may buy additional books from the national CAPS catalogue using norms and standards funding.

The Department of basic Education is also providing workbooks nationally to support CAPS implementation.

"I am extremely excited about this programme and am proud of the department for achieving these massive targets in the roll-out of textbooks.

"We are immersing our schools in texts and we now appeal to our learners to use them, to look after them and to return textbooks at the end of the year, so that we can pass them on to others.

"We also appeal to parents to help us in looking after these books so that everyone can benefit from this investment," says Grant, adding that the more books that can be saved, the more books the department can buy.

"By working together, we can ensure access to as many texts as possible and continuously improve the quality of education in the province," Grant concluded.

Source: GCIS

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