

“Celebrating Heroes”

Speech by Debbie Schäfer, Western Cape Education Minister

Western Cape Teacher of the Year Awards

Friday, 12 November 2019

Premier Alan Winde and Tracy Winde – wonderful to have you with us for the first time as Premier

Members of the Provincial Cabinet

Chair and Members of the Standing Committee

Our Acting DG, Harry Malila

Special guests representing every sector of the education community

Brian Schreuder, Head of Education in the province

WCED Top Management, Senior Management and officials

Gerrit Coetzee, Acting Chief Director, Educator Development, at the DBE

Capitec, our sponsors tonight

Representing my family, husband Mark and daughter Caitlin

And of course, our provincial finalists, and your supporters

Thank you so much for gathering here tonight in your numbers to celebrate our teachers, who do so much to ensure quality education for every child, in every classroom, in every school in this province.

While celebrating our teachers, we are also celebrating excellence in teaching.

We received no less than 247 nominations for teaching awards this year. Our districts, through cluster adjudication, nominated 47 cluster winners for adjudication for the provincial awards. And we will announce the Top 10 provincial winners tonight.

While celebrating all of the teachers considered for these awards, we know that you represent the tip of the iceberg. We know that the vast majority of around 33 000 teachers out there are giving their best to serve the interests of every child in every classroom.

This celebration tonight gives us the opportunity to applaud and acknowledge all of our teachers.

We are also using this opportunity to celebrate excellence in our province's after schools programme, which has set the standard for the mass provision of such programmes in the country.

This is a great time to be celebrating winners, as we bask in the afterglow of South Africa's success in the Rugby World Cup last weekend.

It's inevitable that we reflect on this success at this time as we look at other success stories, that point to our potential as a Winning Nation.

Siya Kolisi and the Springbok team are now touring the country to show off the trophy they so richly deserve. The tour will end in Cape Town on Monday, which will include a team photograph on the steps of Parliament, near the statue of Nelson Mandela.

South Africa is welcoming the Boks home as conquering heroes. While we savour the moment, it is also worth reflecting on what exactly makes a hero and why are they so inspiring.

Psychologists have applied their minds to this intriguing question and have come up with various explanations.

Heroism takes various forms, for example, someone who rushes into a fire or jumps into the sea to rescue a drowning person.

Others, for example, spend a lifetime serving others, applying their knowledge and skills with endless care, to comfort the sick and the dying, and yes, to nurture and educate children. They are our life-long heroes.

The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology has identified a long list of traits of a hero, including moral integrity, courage, self-sacrifice, determination, inspiration and honesty.

A web site called Very Well Mind has summarised some of the characteristics that researchers have ascribed to heroes.

1. Firstly, heroes are concerned with the well-being of others. Empathy and compassion for others contribute significantly to heroic behaviour.
2. Secondly, heroes see things from the perspective of others. They easily understand the concerns of others and are willing to walk the extra mile.
3. Thirdly, heroes have useful skills and strengths. It's no good trying to rescue someone or win the World Cup if you don't have the right skills and abilities. You may cause more heartache if you don't know what you are doing.
4. Fourthly, heroes have a strong moral compass. Heroes live by their values and are willing to expose themselves to considerable risk in doing so.
5. Fifthly, heroes are confident and competent. Heroes have the skill and self-confidence to rush in where others fear to tread. Think of Faf de Klerk or Herschel Jantjies bringing down massive centres twice their size.
6. And lastly, heroes face fear. Heroes are positive thinkers. While normally aware of the dangers, they know how to overcome fear and get on with the job.

It is for all these reasons that we find heroes so inspirational. They bring people together. We come together to celebrate what they mean to us and the values they represent.

I'm sure you will agree that all of these characteristics apply to Siya Kolisi and his team. They have won against all odds and have done so representing all 57 million people of this country.

Of course, these characteristics all apply to the teachers sitting here tonight - and to thousands of your colleagues in schools across the province: strong values, determination, selflessness, competence and courage.

We thank you for this and for everything you are doing for the youth of this country, for everything you are doing to realise our potential as a Winning Nation.

Premier Winde introduction

It is now my great pleasure to introduce our keynote speaker, Premier Alan Winde.

Thank you Premier, for joining us tonight. We are deeply honoured by your presence, which reflects your commitment to education, and your deep regard for our teachers, who we celebrate this evening.

Premier Winde has a background in business, and entered politics as a councillor in the southern Cape in 1996.

He became a Member of the Provincial Legislature in 1999, and joined the Cabinet when the Democratic Alliance came to power in the Western Cape in 2009.

He has served with distinction in various capacities over the years, including as provincial Minister of Finance, Minister of Economic Opportunities, and as Minister of Community Safety.

He therefore has deep insights into what makes this province tick, how to realise the potential of the Western Cape - and the country, for that matter, as a Winning Nation.

He is also a people person. He was therefore a natural choice for Premier earlier this year.

His commitments include getting the basics right, for example, in education and health, improving household and economic prosperity, improving safety and public transport, and improving government services, through innovation and new technology.

And yes, Premier Winde enjoys family life and life outside politics (although not as much now as I think he would like), including cycling and a good cup of coffee. He has an inside track on education, having served until very recently on the governing body of his daughter's school.

So, as the leader of our province and as a father, he has every interest in celebrating our teachers tonight.

Ladies and gentlemen, please give Premier Alan Winde a very warm welcome.