

Response from Minister Maynier to Die Burger Newspaper, Willemien Brümmer Journalist.

English Translation

Learners with special needs should be supported to complete school careers.

David Maynier, Western Cape Minister of Education

Nicolette Ripepi's story about her struggle to gain school access for her son Tyler makes it clear that there is a great need for greater support for students with special needs.

The Western Cape Education Department is aware of this concern and we have taken steps to ensure that learners with special needs have access to mainstream education. We also protected special schools in reducing in the basket of teaching posts.

Over the next three years, we have allocated an additional R71.4 million (2024/25), R74.9 million (2025/26) and R78.3 million (2026/27) to improve support for learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder. We have also allocated additional funding for learners with Severe Mental Disabilities of R70.4 million (2024/25), R73.8 million (2025/26) and R77.1 million (2026/27) to support these vulnerable learners over the next three years.

We built two new special needs schools this year and we are adding many more additional classrooms in special schools to accommodate more learners.

We will also be building 30 additional classrooms for learners with special needs at special and existing schools, as part of the Rapid School Build programme.

Unfortunately, the national government does not provide funding to provincial governments for learners with special needs.

The formula that determines the provincial fair share includes the number of learners in public ordinary schools, but unfortunately it does not include learners in special schools.

This is very problematic as learners with special educational needs generally require greater support in terms of staff and resources. So it is a great loss that they were not included in the allocation of funding to provinces.

It is important that we recognise the work that is being done by organisations such as Autism Connect. They saw a need in their community for support for learners with special needs and they stepped in.

We must do everything we can to ensure that we can provide sufficient support to our most vulnerable learners in the Western Cape. We will continue to ask the national government for funding for our learners with special needs.

It is extremely important that we ensure that all learners in our province are supported to receive quality education.