

**Media Release:
Minister of Education Donald Grant
Western Cape**

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MEDIA RELEASE: R40 million paid out to help schools struggling with the cost of fee exemptions.

I am pleased to announce that the Western Cape Education Department will be paying out, to fee-paying schools, R42 million in compensation for fee exemptions granted in the 2012 school year.

This fund will benefit schools that are struggling with the cost of fee exemptions due to parents being unable to financially meet their school fee commitments.

The non-payment of school fees ultimately affects some schools' income and places a burden on the school management to find the funds necessary to pay for services, equipment and materials.

While there have always been parents in our schools who qualify for fee exemption, the reality is that we are living in tough economic times and in this kind of climate, many more parents simply cannot afford to pay their school fees.

This is evident in the number of learners applying for fee exemption.

The number of learners qualifying for exemption has increased from 48 974 learners in 2010, to 70 153 in 2011, and 90 506 in 2012.

Parents can apply for exemption or partial exemption from paying school fees on the basis of their combined annual income.

Parents qualify for exemption if the school fees are more than 10% of the parents' combined annual salary.

They can apply for partial exemption if the fees represent between 2% and 10% of their annual salary depending on the number of children they have at a fee-paying, public school.

In order to assist schools with learners applying for fee exemption, the WCED made provision for fee compensation in 2011. Fee-paying schools could apply for fee compensation to cover some of the costs of poorer learners who were exempt from paying school fees.

As a result, the WCED paid out more than R20million in compensation for fee exemptions granted in 2010. In 2012, R30 million was paid out to schools for fee exemptions granted in 2011.

These amounts were the highest in the country.

In 2013, this figure has again increased. In the next couple of days an amount of R42 million will be deposited into the accounts of those schools which have now qualified for fee compensation.

In 2012, parents representing 90 506 learners qualified for fee exemption at 783 fee-paying schools in the Western Cape.

In 2013, 707 of these schools applied for fee compensation for the 2012 school year, with 700 school being granted fee compensation.

We are delighted that we can assist these schools with this kind of compensation. This money will act as an extra cash boost for these schools that are struggling to collect their full fees due to parents applying for fee exemption.

The increase in numbers of learners qualifying for fee exemption also supports our decision in October to offer to more than 200 schools in Quintiles 4 and 5 the opportunity of applying to become no-fee schools from 1 January 2014.

This opportunity was given to schools that currently charge annual school fees of R400 or less.

An announcement on the number of schools that have agreed to the application for no-fee status will be made soon.