

Parents shut down high schools, demanding places for their children

By [Vincent Lali](#)

22 Feb 2021

On Monday, parents shut down Bloekombos and Masibambane high schools in Kraaifontein, demanding that their children be accepted. Parents sat next to their unplaced learners outside the school gates.



On Monday, parents shut down Bloekombos and Masibambane high school in Kraaifontein, demanding that their children be accepted. Photo: Vincent Lali / GroundUp

- Two high schools in Kraaifontein were shut down by parents demanding that their children be given places.
- The high schools say that due to Covid-19 regulations they cannot take any more learners.
- Community leaders say the department has to find a solution for hundreds of children without schools in the area.
- The provincial education department says shutting schools down is unacceptable and parents must contact its district office for placement.

Community leader Bonga Bhonase said, “We won’t allow teachers, learners and even caretakers into the school until the department sends senior officials to address us about unplaced learners ... No learners will attend school while others don’t.”

Year after year, the two high schools battle to accommodate large numbers of learners from four nearby primary schools, he said. About 1,400 learners who passed Grade 7, could not find places, according to Bhonase.

Community leader Dibuseng Makaba said, “Each day I come here, I see new parents trying to enrol their kids. The department must tell us what will happen to the unplaced kids.”

Community leader Linda Phito said they had met with Metro East Education District officials before lockdown last year to discuss adding mobile classrooms to accommodate the surplus learners.

“We identified a large space at Masibambane High School where the department could install mobile classrooms to accommodate unplaced learners,” said Phito.

Ward 101 Councillor Siya Duka (ANC) said he and other community leaders met the education district officials twice last week. “The officials asked us to go back to the principals and ask them to admit the learners ... The principals refused to enrol the unplaced learners, saying that they were concerned about the spread of Covid-19 if they admitted more learners.”

“I propose that the schools enrol the surplus learners while we and the department hash out long-term solutions,” he said.

Masibambane High School principal Rajan Naidoo said, “There is no space. According to Covid-19 regulations, the school is full.”

As a result of the protest “learners are losing learning time,” said Naidoo. “The department must find a solution.”

Buhle Buso, secretary of Bloekombos’s governing body, said, “Due to overcrowding, we are already battling to adhere to Covid-19 regulations and maintain social distancing in the classrooms.”

Bronagh Hammond, Director of Communications at the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), said, “It is unfortunate that they prevented teaching and learning from taking place. One simply cannot shut down schools and demand new ones be built.”

“We again appeal to parents who have children that are not yet placed to contact our district office ... Shutting down schools is not the answer.”

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