

NAPTOSA HOUSE
270 Prince's Park Avenue
Pretoria

PO Box 572, Pretoria, 0001



Tel: (012) 324-1365
Fax: (012) 324-1366

E-mail: info@naptosa.org.za
www.naptosa.org.za

NAPTOSA

National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa

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COVID - !9 - HEALTH FIRST, ACADEMIC YEAR SECOND!

Dear NAPTOSA MEMBER,

During this time of heightened uncertainty, growing fear, and general panic, I thought it prudent to let you know what is going on behind this mirage of chaos. NAPTOSA is committed to the health and safety of ALL educators and learners, more so we are committed to keeping our communities and country safe during this unprecedented time. This must be uppermost in your mind before reading further.

NAPTOSA and the other teacher unions are in regular consultations with the Director General of the DBE and the Minister of Basic Education. In addition, we are also in consultation with other stakeholders, since we recognize that we cannot operate in isolation. This includes institutions of higher learning, Education International, parent organizations, provincial departments and student formations. During these consultations, the voice of NAPTOSA is heard loud and clear: "Health first, academic year second" and "The lives of teachers and learners before matric pass rates".

It is unfortunate that discussion documents on the re-opening of schools have "leaked" into the public domain and have created panic and anxiety. There is no FINAL PLAN OR RETURN DATE. Ultimately the date of return will be determined by the Minister of Basic Education taking her cue from the Minister of Health and the National Command Council led by the President of the Republic. Please note that these are working documents and subject to continuous review. NAPTOSA will not circulate any documents without being specific regarding its status, be it discussion document, report, proposal or final document.

NAPTOSA will not agree or support any return to school if the basics regarding social distancing, gloves, masks (PPE) and other necessary measures are not already in place on the return date. NAPTOSA is guarded when it comes to the capacity of the DBE, as history bears testament to this. It is for this reason that we welcome National Treasury's entry into the fold.

Your fears and anxieties are not unfounded, as we have not encountered this scenario before.

All Unions and the DBE agree that the academic year is not lost. Our educators are trained professionals who are committed to quality education and we trust that they will effectively manage the revised curriculum within the “new” school year. NAPTOSA is firm, teachers must focus on their core function, teaching, and not be burdened by any unnecessary administrative tasks. A reconfiguration of the curriculum is necessary and NAPTOSA is represented on the various subject committees that are engaged with this task. Equally important is a reconfiguration of assessments.

NAPTOSA endorses the phasing in approach as it will allow for teachers and learners to adjust to the “new schooling system” .We are uncertain at this point what criteria will be used for phasing in or what the timeframes will be. This requires further work. It is important to indicate that the DBE is conducting themselves in a sober, rational, and more importantly, sensitive manner. It is only TEACHER UNIONS and parent organisations that are being consulted. The Unions are the sector specialists that focus only on schooling. It is for this reason you belong to NAPTOSA and you can trust that NAPTOSA’s input, based on our experience in education since 1904, is clearly conveyed, and received with appreciation, in all these consultations.

NAPTOSA is aware of considerations being given to Grade 12 learners being accommodated at boarding schools and taught. This is definitely not supported by NAPTOSA, because there are no guarantees that Covid -19 protocols will be observed. Also, there was no consultation with us and the thousands of concerned parents in this regard.

We do support the scrapping of the June examinations and a reorganisation of the school year, provided a school holiday is built in. NAPTOSA does not support Saturday classes as there are good reasons why learners and teachers need to rest, as well as religious considerations that must be respected. We do recommend that the remainder of the school year be divided into 2 terms with a holiday in between.

My plea to you is not to succumb to social media documents, but to await official statements by the Minister or the DBE, and correspondence by NAPTOSA, on all these matters.

NAPTOSA will be meeting with all Provincial Departments of Education in this and the following week.

Please be assured that NAPTOSA will Serve you with Dignity during this uncertain time. Your health and safety, and that of our learners, is our priority.

N. NTANTALA
PRESIDENT: NAPTOSA