



07 June 2020

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT BY EDUCATION TEACHER UNIONS AND NATIONAL GOVERNING BODY ASSOCIATIONS ON THE READINESS OF SCHOOLS TO RE-OPEN.

The five Teacher Unions (SADTU, NAPTOSA, SAOU, NATU, PEU) together with the School Governing Body Associations (FEDSAS, NASGB, GBF, SANASE) met with Minister Motshekga, the Deputy Minister, MECs of Provinces, the Director General in the Department of Basic Education, the Provincial HODs and various other officials, to receive reports from the Ministry about the COVID-19 Compliance of schools and readiness to re-open schools. We wish to emphasize that the meeting was open, frank and in a positive collaborative spirit that sought to join forces in combating a threat that affects not only everyone involved in education but also the future development of our country as a whole.

The Unions and SGB Associations heard of the progress made towards compliance. With the overall school readiness said to be 94%, the unions and SGB Associations consequently support the call to re-open schools on 08th June 2020 with the clear understanding that no school may open that is not Covid-19 compliant. It should be stated that three out of the nine provinces were still experiencing challenges with regard to the delivery of water tanks which will make the resumption of learning and teaching impossible unless alternative measures are taken to ensure that all learners receive education.

The Unions and SGB Associations cautiously welcome the progress.

We are particularly thankful for the extent of PPEs deliveries, the improvement in the number of completed water supply projects and the delivery and improvement of toilet facilities. This improvement came as a result of the constant emphasis by the Unions and SGB associations that water and sanitation are the non-negotiables in the fight against the spread of the virus.

We remain committed to the principle that all schools must be COVID-19 compliant and ready to open together.

We will closely monitor the promise to complete the outstanding water deliveries, toilets, and additional classes.

As Unions and SGB Associations we have put it to the Minister that we expect:

- A sense of urgency from the government in ensuring that as a bottom line, all learners must access quality education in a healthy and safe environment
- Alternative arrangements be made to accommodate all the learners from schools that are not COVID-19 compliant
- An integrated plan to get schools that are not COVID-19 compliant ready in the shortest time.
- The establishment of an inclusive Task Teams at the level of the districts to monitor and evaluate the plans to deal with all the outstanding work in order to have all schools COVID-19 compliant.
- A coherent employee and learner wellness plan that includes but not limited to Psycho-Social Support Plan services
- Direction on the revised curriculum that addresses the time remaining in the year as well as addressing the over-emphasis on assessment.
- A new school calendar needs to be consulted on immediately.
- A plan for the sustained supply of COVID-19 consumables to ensure sustained compliance.
- The urgent conclusion of an agreement to address the replacement of staff, on leave because of possible active cases
- The uniform application and implementation of the Collective Agreement on Concessions dealing with co-morbidities as signed at the ELRC.
- Urgent attention to address and deliver the critical PPEs for the special schools in order to comply with the inevitable physical and social contact
- Urgent negotiations between the DBE and Department of Communication to ensure the zero-rating of data for continuous learning in order to ensure continuity of learning in the event the school is closed due to active cases detected.
- Concrete additional TV and Radio lessons be continued throughout the period of COVID-19 and that the public broadcaster change the schedules to suite the learners

The Unions and SGB Associations consequently tentatively support the call to re-open schools on 8 June 2020 with the clear understanding that no school may open that is not COVID-19 compliant as per directive of the Minister and State President.

We as a collective of the major stakeholders in education remain committed to seeing that learning resumes in our schools but wish to caution against over- zealous “recovery” plans that further traumatize our teacher and education support workers. We remind schools that only our matric classes are faced with catching up on work missed.

We call on all our members to heed the call to return to school or alternative accommodation except where schools are not ready and thus unsafe.

*****End of Joint Statement *****

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