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BASIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT RELEASES SCRIPTED LESSON PLANS TO THE PUBLIC TO ALLAY FEARS REGARDING COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION CONTENT

The Department of Basic Education has today released, on the website, the Scripted Lessons Plans which are being used in the pilot phase of the Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in selected schools. The pilot is being conducted in areas that have recorded high HIV infection rates and prevalence of sexual abuse.

CSE has been part of the curriculum since the year 2000. The only change is that in 2015 the DBE developed Scripted Lesson Plans (SLPs) which are currently being tested in five (5) provinces in order to strengthen the teaching of CSE in schools. SLPs are learner and teacher support materials (LTSMs) that are designed to aid teachers and learners to address these important topics in a systematic manner.

Research findings indicate high birth rates among adolescents and teenagers; in addition, more than a third of girls and boys (35.4%) experience sexual violence before the age of 17. This has necessitated the great need for the department to provide age appropriate child abuse prevention education that builds resilience, confidence and assertion amongst young people, who often do not know when they are being violated by sexual predators.

Last week the Minister of Basic Education Mrs. Angie Motshekga launched the *“Let’s Talk!” Early and Unintended Pregnancy Campaign*. The campaign is driven by multiple factors that include poverty, lack of information and access to reproductive health services, cultural norms, peer pressure and sexual coercion and abuse. *“Let’s Talk”* is a social and behavioral change Campaign which seeks to reduce early and unplanned pregnancies across 21 countries in the Eastern and Southern Africa region, which has one of the highest adolescent fertility rates in the world.

What is DBE doing to strengthen the CSE curriculum?

There is no new content that has been added to the Life Orientation subject in schools. The Comprehensive Sexuality Education has been part of the curriculum since the year 2000. The only change is that in 2015 the DBE developed Scripted Lesson Plans (SLPs) which are currently being tested in five (5) provinces in order to strengthen the teaching of CSE in schools. SLPs are learner and teacher support materials (LTSMs) that are designed to aid teachers and learners to address these important topics in a systematic manner.

During teaching and learning time, educators are guided by scripted lessons plans (SLPs) that empower them to discuss topics that could otherwise be found to be uncomfortable. The SLP describes each activity, the materials needed for the activity as well as how to complete the activity, the duration of the activity, the information to be presented, and the points that should be emphasized.

The core aim of the CSE and its SLPs is to ensure that we help learners build an understanding of concepts, content, values and attitudes related to sexuality, sexual behavior change as well as leading safe and healthy lives.

The department is extremely concerned that there seems to be lower sexual debut and increasing risky sexual behaviour amongst adolescents and HIV prevention knowledge has declined amongst learners. Early sexual debut leads to mental health issues such as depression, vulnerability to violence and poor educational outcomes.

It is important to read all the documents for context and to understand that the content topics used by teachers have been provided for in the CAPS documents. CAPS was finalised after an exhaustive consultation process which lasted several years.

There are no changes that have been made to the curriculum.

The Department remains open to further consultation and engagement on this matter.

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