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THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION



## NEWSLETTER

# Inter-Ministerial media briefing on Covid-19 follows the announcement by President Cyril Ramaphosa



Following President Cyril Ramaphosa's declaration of the outbreak of Covid-19 as a national state of disaster in terms of the *Disaster Management Act*, schools have been identified as one of the biggest threats in terms of the transmission. Basic Education Minister, Mrs Angie Motshekga, therefore attended an Inter-Ministerial briefing on 15 March 2020 to mitigate the impact of the virus on the Education Sector.

In accordance with the announcement by the President on 15 March 2020, schools closed from 18 March 2020, and will resume on 14 April 2020. To compensate for the ten lost school days, the June holidays will be cut short by a week. Once opened, schools will be encouraged to extend tuition hours. This directive affects all schools, public ordinary schools and independent schools.



The following programmes are affected: The Spelling BEE; the ABC Motsepe South African Schools Choral Eisteddfod (SASCE); the Moot Court; School Athletics; Assemblies at school; and School Camps.

Provincial Education Departments (PEDs), districts and schools are encouraged to utilise the time effectively by ensuring that learners participate in established stimulating programmes such as the *Read to Lead* programme; maths buddies; and constructive holiday assignments through the supervision and guidance of parents and the broader community whilst at home. This will be supported through the provisioning of workbooks, worksheets and readers. Each province, district, circuit and school must have a practical and comprehensive catch-up plan to be implemented. As things stand right now and based on expert advice, we should be able to manage coronavirus such that the negative impact on schooling is minimised.

Minister Motshekga concluded by saying, "It is time that we get parents to play their part in the education of their children. We appeal to everyone to cooperate and ensure that we put the interest of our children on top of the priority list".



# STATEMENT BY MR HM MWELI, DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION DRASTIC MEASURES TAKEN IN RELATION TO COMBATING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

To all officials of the Department of Basic Education. I would have preferred to have a personal briefing with you, however, gatherings of more than 100 people are strictly prohibited under the current circumstances our country is facing with the Corona virus pandemic.

As you are aware, our country is going through an unprecedented health threat. As the President indicated in his statement on Sunday, 15 March 2020:

*The world is facing a medical emergency far graver than what we have experienced in over a century.*

*The World Health Organisation has declared the coronavirus outbreak a global pandemic. There are now more than 162,000 people who have tested positive for the coronavirus across the globe. Given the scale and the speed at which the virus is spreading, it is now clear that no country is immune from the disease or will be spared its severe impact.*

*Never before in the history of our democracy has our country been confronted with such a severe situation. From the start of the outbreak in China earlier this year, the South African government has put in place measures to screen visitors entering the country, to contain its spread and to treat those infected.*

*Now, SA has 61 confirmed cases of people infected with the virus, and this number is expected to rise in the coming days and weeks.*

The President then announced a range of extraordinary interventions to curb the spread of the Corona Virus (COVID-19) outbreak. These include:

- A national state of disaster was declared in terms of the Disaster Management Act.
- Travel ban on high risk countries from 18 March 2020.
- South African citizens to not travel to high risk countries.
- Gatherings of more than a 100 people are prohibited.
- **Large events and celebrations** are cancelled.
- **Schools closed** from 18 March 2020 and to reopen on 14 April 2020 (after Easter weekend).
- Working closely with universities, colleges, etc to **increase hygiene** and put other appropriate responses in place.
- Businesses are called upon to take measures to **intensify hygiene control**.
- **Surveillance and testing systems** are being strengthened at hospitals.
- Partnering with the private sector to develop a **tracing, tracking and monitoring system** for all those affected by coronavirus.
- Calling on everyone to take **various personal measures** as previously stated (hygiene, elbow greetings, etc.).
- Package to be put together as a **response to the economic impact** of the disease.
- Establishment of **National Command Council** chaired by the President to meet 3 times a week to coordinate responses to pandemic. The Minister of Basic Education is a member of the National Command Council.

Following the President's announcement, the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP, convened an urgent meeting of the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) as well as a media briefing, in order to inform the country of the drastic actions to be taken by the Department of Basic Education to combat the spread of the Corona virus. In brief, some of these steps are the following:

## • Closure of Schools

This decision was informed by the warning provided by the National Institution of Communicable Diseases and the World Health Organisation. Schools have been identified as high risk areas that could spread the infections easily:

- **Closure** of schools on **18 March 2020**, and to **reopen on 14 April 2020**.
- Learners to be **provided** with **workbooks, worksheets and reading materials** to take home.
- **Parents** to be encouraged to **supervise** workbook and other activities.

## • Recovery Plan for Lost 10 Days of Teaching and Learning

- Each province, district and school to have a catch-up programme which includes ICT learner support and print materials.
- Catch-up programme to be developed for the 10 days – seven days from the June holidays and three days from the September holidays.

## • Mass Public Events

- All school based and non-school based activities that require a gathering of more than 100 learners should be scaled down, suspended or postponed.
- Examples of these are Spelling BEE, ABC Motsepe South African Schools Choral Eisteddfod (SASCE), Moot Court, School athletics and School camps, among others.

## • Communication

- Two circulars were sent to all education stakeholders to inform them about the virus, guidelines for stepping-up hygiene, etc.
- Each province to have a communication centre to communicate regularly on matters relating to the virus.

As a Department we have received further guidance from the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) through Circular No 7 of 2020: State of Disaster: Guidelines for the containment/management of the Corona virus (COVID 19) in the Public Service.

Both the President's as well as the Minister's statement and the above circular will be disseminated to officials via a *Newsflash*. I urge you to go through this circular, as it provides essential information for all of us in the public service on how to deal with this process, what our rights are and the correct processes and procedures to follow in a state of disaster such as this.

Colleagues, this is a time in which we have to stand strong together, in order to defeat this very real and present danger we are all facing. Let us work together to ensure that we observe all hygiene protocols as stipulated. Please make use of the hand sanitisers that are available throughout the building. Wash your hands regularly and implement all the health and hygiene guidelines that are on display through the building.

Management will keep all officials informed of the most recent developments as and when they become available. Officials are urged to familiarise themselves with the multitude of documents available on the Corona virus, from the Department of Health as well as the National Institution of Communicable Diseases (NICD) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).



basic education

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



# Basic Education Minister meets with ECD education stakeholders in the Gauteng Province



Following the Presidential proclamation, Basic Education Minister, Mrs Angie Motshekga met with Early Childhood Development (ECD) practitioners, officials, parents and role-players on 14 March 2020, at Dr Yusuf Dadoo Primary School in Azaadville and Meyerton Primary School in Meyerton.

The primary objective of the visits was to create a platform for discussions and information sharing about the ECD function shift to the DBE. Minister Motshekga assured all stakeholders present that the Department has no desire to wrest the control of ECDs from community and civil society groups. The Minister said: “Our role as a lead department in the function shift is to conceptualise a fit-for purpose curriculum for a much improved, integrated and re-imagined ECD sector. The function shift presents a unique opportunity to build a comprehensive management system for the ECD sector that will streamline processes and allow for data driven decision making”.

The Minister added that, “the needs of infants and young children span across a wide variety of areas, from health and nutrition, to early learning, responsive caregiving and birth registration. We already have the *National Integrated ECD Policy Framework* that sets out a clear framework for leadership and coordination of the ECD system, including details of the structures required with clear mandates”.

Minister Motshekga reiterated her statement during the address at the 2020 Basic Education Lekgotla on the role of the DBE on ECDs saying that, “Research concludes that access to ECD for learners improves their learning outcomes and the overall quality of education in general”.



# Public Examination head views provincial engagements as a critical mechanism to strengthen accountability in schools

The majority of provinces are expected to make significant improvements after having attended recent Provincial Engagements from Basic Education’s Director-General, Mr Hubert Mathanzima Mweli.

Dr Rufus Poliah, Chief Director for National Assessments and Public Examinations, explained that, “there is an extensive and concerted effort on the part of PEDs to address the shortcomings identified based on the examination results. Interventions are now data driven and focussed. I am acutely aware of the powerful role played by the National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examinations to re-direct and re-focus the efforts of the PEDs. The DBE must ensure that the question papers and the examinations more accurately reflect the curriculum and the broad learning outcomes that are envisaged for the learner exiting Grade 12. It is often said that the Examinations cannot be the tail that wags the dog, but if the tail is wagging the dog in the right direction, then so be it. The DBE and PEDs will have to identify factors surrounding under-performance in various education districts and schools. There is no silver bullet to eradicating under-performance. We need to start by identifying the problem which may relate to poor management of the school or district; lack of appropriate subject expertise; absence of learner and teacher discipline; and the lack of resources. All these require our collective intervention”.

Dr Poliah added that, “there is still a lack of accountability in the system. All of us need to be held accountable for poor performance. This includes learners, parents, school principals, district and circuit officials, provincial and DBE officials. There must accountability at each of the levels of the system so that all of us are held to account for the continued under-performance of the school, district or the province. Provinces need to objectively assimilate the key pointers emerging from the DG engagements into their current provincial plans and there must be a move to ensure that we are maintaining a *system on the rise*. Our overarching responsibility is to ensure that these engagements translate into effective and meaningful classroom practice”.



# DBE divides Business Studies and Accounting into two examination papers to ease the workload for learners



A decision to divide Business Studies and Accounting into two examination papers will assist the sector in channelling a high volume of learners into the commercial stream.

As reported in the NSC Examination results, learners who took Business Studies and Accounting during 2019, registered a significant improvement. However, the overall pass rate of the two subjects, this year, needs to be raised to a target of 85% and above. According to the 2019 NSC Examinations, Business Studies recorded an improvement of 71.0% from 64.9% achieved in 2018, followed by Accounting with an overall pass rate of 78.4% from 72.5% in 2018. Still, the decline in the participation rate in the two subjects across all nine provinces continues to raise concern.

Chief Education Specialist for Accounting and Business Studies, Mr Mzikaise Masango, said that commercial subjects are critical components in promoting entrepreneurship amongst the youth. “I commend the DBE for having reached a resolution to effect changes in the two subjects. The two papers were introduced to Grade 10 in 2018 and to Grade 11 in 2019, and will be implemented in Grade 12 this year. The most common challenges around these subjects were issues related to workload and limited time allocated for the examination period. The inability to complete the paper within the prescribed time had a negative impact on the overall pass rates and the quality of results. Business Studies, for example, required learners to study all four main topics, which consist of 15 topics for one examination paper. I am now glad that the subject will have two topics for each examination paper rather than exposing learners to all four topics at once, which will make it easier for them to study,” said Mr Masango.

# SCMP embraces people with disability



The DBE hosted the Disability Roadshow on 5 March 2020 at the South African National Council for the Blind in Pretoria. Officials present at the event included Dr Lesiba Malapile, Prof Orbert Maguvhe, Mr Nad Ramsarup, Ms Refiloe Ndziba, Ms Nozipho Mpontshane, officials from Tshwane District office and 40 deaf and 70 blind learners from various municipalities from the Gauteng Province.

The Roadshow, directed by Mr Ramsarup, provided a platform for participants to ask questions, express concerns and share their feelings on the Second Chance Matric Programme (SCMP). Ms Ndziba, the Coordinator of the Disability Sector SCMP, welcomed delegates and encouraged learners with disabilities to grab hold of the new opportunity offered by the SCMP.

Dr Malapile, Director of the SCMP, provided an overview of the programme; explained the nature of support to be provided by the DBE; and informed the cohort of learners about their eligibility to participate in the programme. Prof Maguvhe encouraged learners to take the programme seriously as it will open many doors for people with disabilities. He stressed that the teaching and learning of the SCMP for the disability sector will not be compromised, but that it will be of a high quality and standard. Officials from the Tshwane District office discussed the learner registration processes; identification of examination centres; and the format of question papers for learners with special needs.

Learners who were thrilled at accessing the SCMP for the first time, were registered by a team of officials from the Examinations Section of the Tshwane District Office and officials from the DBE Communication Chief Directorate. Registered learners will be provided with tuition in various special schools across the country. They will write their very first matric examination through the SCMP in October 2020.

Additional Roadshows will also be taking place across all provinces later this year.

# Siyavula textbooks to occupy learners during the school holidays



Schools may be closed from 18 March to 14 April 2020, but Siyavula is open to all learners to access over this period. All South African high school learners can freely access and practise Mathematics and Physical Science on [www.siyavula.com](http://www.siyavula.com). Learners who have registered accounts will have access to Siyavula Practice and Examinations Prep, and those who haven't yet created an account can follow a few easy steps to gain access.

Joining Siyavula will provide learners with the following benefits: access to an unlimited number of questions from the Grade 8 to 12 Mathematics and Grade 10 to 12 Physical Sciences curriculum; immediate feedback on questions; fully-worked solutions; access to Grade 11 to 12 Exam Prep products (exam papers based on past papers); and access to curriculum-aligned textbooks.



The website is zero-rated with Vodacom or MTN, so learners can access the textbooks at no cost. This means no data costs if you have a Vodacom or MTN sim card. The registration process can be completed using the following easy steps: Go to [www.siyavula.com](http://www.siyavula.com) and sign up with your name, surname and email address or cell phone number. Learners can also join using Facebook [#SiyavulaRiseUpSquad](https://www.facebook.com/SiyavulaRiseUpSquad) to share questions and to access the latest Siyavula news.

Please visit <http://www.siyavula.com> to learn more.

# Provincial Round-up

## Eastern Cape Province



Eastern Cape Education MEC, Mr Fundile Gade, in partnership with the Multichoice Group, recently visited Jityaza Combined Primary School in Tyutyu Village outside King Williams Town, to hand over four mobile classrooms, a computer laboratory, a sports field, school shoes and bags. Multichoice rewarded Jityaza Combined Primary School as the winner of a competition where participating schools had to rehearse dances and performances depicting Former President Nelson Mandela's struggle during his imprisonment. The facilities awarded to the school will enable learners to enhance academic output and performance. MEC Gade said that public and private partnerships are essential to overcome the backlog of infrastructure in the province.

## Gauteng Province



Gauteng Education MEC, Mr Panyaza Lesufi, said the closure of schools should motivate communities to develop a stronger home schooling culture to assist parents to step in as interim teachers during the school holidays. All schools will be closed from 18 March until after the Easter weekend and will reopen on 14 April 2020. Lesufi added that the school closures were an opportunity to study and to practice, and is not a holiday for learners: "The closure must not be seen as a holiday for our kids, but turning our kitchens into new classrooms. For that, we need a new approach".

## Western Cape Province



Global donors recently joined hands to fund Kwikspace classrooms for Grade R and Grade 7 learners at the Nederburg Primary School in Lantana, Paarl. The Val de Vie Foundation, in collaboration with MySchool, My Village, My Planet, the Hopewell United Methodist Church, Downingtown Pennsylvania (HUMC), The Foschini Group (TFG) and the Rhodes Food Group joined forces to provide quality education. The new classrooms, ISO 9001 quality certified for 20 years, replaced the old classrooms which were in a state of major disrepair. Through a collaboration with the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), the donors' funds were matched to 40%, for the more than R1.8 million upgrade to take place to provide these much-needed facilities through the power of collaboration. The unveiling ceremony was attended by Executive Mayor, Mr Conrad Poole, Director of the Cape Winelands Education District, Mr Juan Benjamin, the Val de Vie Foundation and Tony and Cammy Brantzeg from HUMC in the United States of America. The new classrooms will instil a renewed sense of pride in the 851 learners, whilst the upgraded space will create a sense of motivation and inspiration which will ultimately reflect in improved academic results.

# Stay Safe, Stay Covid-19 Free

## COVID-19

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

COVID-19 Hotline: 0800 029 999



## COVID-19

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

COVID-19 Hotline: 0800 029 999



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# Upcoming Events

- 21 March 2020: South Africans will be commemorating Human Rights Day
- 24 March 2020: World Tuberculosis (TB) Day will be commemorated around the globe
- Due to President Cyril Ramaphosa's announcement on the Covid-19 virus, all Departmental meetings and events have been postponed until further notice.

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