

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 482.**

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**482. . Mrs P P Ncube (MK) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

(1) Given that evidence gathered from in-depth interviews with some learners and educators and the usage of internet resources, it became clear that although remote schooling was delivered well, disadvantaged learners from poor and working-class households allegedly lost two months of schooling over the COVID-19 pandemic period, what plans does her department have in place to help disadvantaged learners catch up academically in the next trying period;

(2) whether, considering that many learners found social isolation hard during remote schooling in the COVID-19 period and noting that some learners had to deal with family hardships due to loss of income, as well as the added stress of remote schooling, what extra money will her department allocate towards improving the mental health of learners;

(3) considering that the COVID-19 pandemic caught everyone off-guard, what steps has her department taken to provide better support to learners in the next trying period?

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#### Response

**(1) Given that evidence gathered from in-depth interviews with some learners and educators and the usage of internet resources, it became clear that although remote schooling was delivered well, disadvantaged learners from poor and working-class households allegedly lost two months of schooling over the COVID-19 pandemic period, what plans does her department have in place to help disadvantaged learners catch up academically in the next trying period;**

The Department of Basic Education has partnered with different stakeholders to provide support to learners from various social backgrounds. Learners were assisted with television and radio lessons, video lessons, hard copy material in the form of study guides, notes, worksheets and question papers.

**(2) Whether, considering that many learners found social isolation hard during remote schooling in the COVID-19 period and noting that some learners had to deal with family hardships due to loss of income, as well as the added stress of remote schooling, what extra money will her department allocate towards improving the mental health of learners;**

Working with partners, the department has invested in:

1. the development of a virtual platform that will provide mental health promotion information and support to learners. The platform is currently in development and will be launched in 2025.
2. an initiative that will have non-professionals capacitated to provide first line mental health support to learners presenting with psychosocial support intervention needs. The initiative is called the Common Elements Treatment Approach (CETA).

**(3) Considering that the COVID-19 pandemic caught everyone off-guard, what steps has her department taken to provide better support to learners in the next trying period?**

The pandemic brought about unprecedented teaching time losses which forced the hand of the sector to develop and implement various strategies to ensure continuation of teaching.

Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) were trimmed and implemented in the remainder of 2020 to deal with the time loss and the associated impacts. 2021 ATPs were reviewed to ensure the recovery of learning in the interim period ( 2021 – 2024); Implementation of the Recovery ATPs started in 2021; Grade 12 curriculum

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remained untouched during the trimming. Currently the country is on its way through the learning recovery period as schools are using the Recovery ATPs that emphasise the revision of core concepts and the fundamentals. Furthermore, Learners are supported through Remote and Digital Learning material.