

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 2086.**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 26/05/2023**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 19/2023**

**2086. Mr S L Ngcobo (IFP) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:**

What action measures has her department put in place to date to counteract the catastrophe shown by recent statistics that 8 out of every 10 children in the Republic are unable to read for meaning by the age of 10, which the Government has come out in its defence to blame COVID-19 and the loss of teaching and learning time during the pandemic as the reason without providing tangible solutions to the specified problem?

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#### **Response**

The Department of Basic Education (DBE), in collaboration with a team of reading experts from civil society and academia, is reviewing the Integrated Sector Reading Plan. A revised National Reading Literacy Strategy is therefore being developed, and central to it is the need to improve the teaching and learning of African home languages reading literacy on a large scale, in the emergent and early grade phases (Early Childhood Development and Foundation Phase)

The recent transfer of ECD functions to DBE creates an opportunity to improve school-readiness, by helping Early Learning Programmes to become incubators of emergent and early literacy. To this end, we have sourced dedicated funding to empower over 20 000 under-resourced ECD programmes with early learning resources which will include those that foster emergent and early literacy skills.

The revised Strategy will comprise refining policy to explicitly guide the development of reading literacy, with a primary focus on Home Language literacy; Teacher training focused on Home Language reading literacy; provision of culturally relevant and age-appropriate reading resources for both ECD and Early Grades; as well as strengthening collaboration with parents, communities and partners. We will be tracking implementation through strengthening the monitoring, quality assurance, evaluation and feedback loop.

The Department is also intensifying its support of teachers in implementing the Revised Annual Teaching Plans (RATPs), which take into account fundamental skills that should be taught in the light of learning gaps learners have.

In relation to the utilisation of the data from Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), we will be:

- Initiating an extensive capacity building programme for officials and teachers, which will be facilitated by an expert Technical Advisory Group (TAG). This programme will include item analysis using some of the excerpts from PIRLS which have been released.
- The TAG has been assembled to intensively examine the data on reading literacy from PIRLS, Early Learning National Assessments (ELNA), and Systemic Evaluation (SE).
- The TAG will also assist the DBE in implementing a national capacity development programme.

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- The purpose of this program is to enhance the knowledge and skills of senior decision-makers at national, provincial, and district levels