

NATIONAL NEWS FLASH



SERVING EDUCATION SINCE 1904

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TIME TO RETURN IS HERE

The Minister of Education today addressed the nation starting with an apology for the postponements and eventual late release of a flawed circular. The Minister added no clarity or direction for the thousands of teachers and parents, but merely gave a historical account of everything the union collective has been cautioning the DBE about.

Amidst all the confusion created by the Minister and her Department around the re-opening of schools, there is now ample evidence that there are many schools where the non-negotiables have been complied with and where the reasons for teachers not to return to school have been removed. It is as a result of work done by NAPTOSA, in conjunction with other education trade unions, that we have reached this point.

It is important that our members who teach and work in these schools, return to school so that they can undergo the required orientation to receive the Gr 7 and 12's when schools do re-open for learners, the date of which is still to be confirmed when the system as a whole is ready, despite the Minister's premature announcement of 8 June 2020. We have no doubt that our members will head this call, being responsible workers who believe in the inalienable right of every child to quality education.

The flipside of the coin is that educators and education workers at schools that are not COVID-19 compliant are NOT to attend school under any circumstances. This is in line with the Regulations of the Department of Labour (Government Gazette 43257), the State President's letter of 1 May 2020 and the Minister's Directions published in Government Gazette 43372 of 29 May 2020 which, *inter alia*, read as follows:

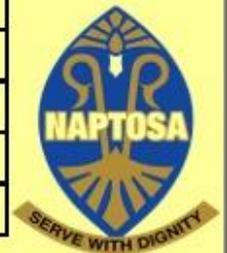
“(2) Only those schools and offices that have complied with the minimum health, safety and social distancing measures on COVID -19, as contemplated in these Directions and the Regulations, will be allowed to open as contemplated in subdirection 1;

(3) A school or office that has failed to comply with the minimum health, safety and social distancing measures on COVID -19, as contemplated in these Directions and the Regulations, will remain closed until all the health, safety and social distancing measures are in place.

Th minimum measures referred in the Minister's Direction comprise the following:

THE FOLLOWING ARE REQUIREMENTS FOR A SAFE RETURN TO SCHOOL

	Priority Areas
1	COVID-19 Temperature Screening available.
2	Hand sanitizers available.
3	Face masks available.
4	Permits for all staff.
5	School has been cleaned.
6	Grass has been cut.
7	Running water.
8	Adequate ablution facilities.
9	Liquid/bar soaps available.
10	Temperatures taken and recorded on a daily basis.



The Minister's Direction intimates that the Department is contemplating allowing a staggered re-opening of schools. As teacher unions, we remain firm in our position on this matter, namely that we reject any such notion. We believe that "no school must be left behind, especially not because of incompetence and tardiness. Given the historical injustices of the past it is obvious which schools will be left behind should a staggered approach to schools reopening be followed. This we cannot allow, no matter the justification" (Joint statement 30.05.2020).

It cannot be privilege or class, or even political one-upmanship, that makes us forget that we are one nation, rich and poor, and that the greatest privilege is to help and sympathize with those who have been left behind and forgotten by the "mistake" of being born underprivileged.

For now, it is a simple act of standing together.

BASIL MANUEL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR