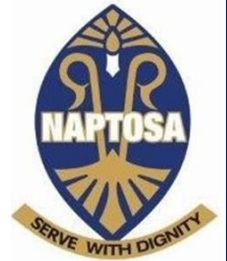


NATIONAL NEWS FLASH



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NNF 15 of 2023

12 April 2023

Autism Awareness Month

April is World Autism Awareness Month! This year 2023, the theme is "**Transforming the narrative: Contributions at home, at work, in the arts and in policymaking**" a call to bring up awareness about autism, thus accepting and supporting autistic people in society and the workplace.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurological condition affecting an individual's ability to comprehend and express language, relate to others, and learn. It is a group of complex neurodevelopmental disabilities. This means that each autistic person is different – however, they think, learn, socialise, play, and learn differently to the neurotypical person.

"On World Autism Awareness Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to promote the full participation of all people with autism, and ensure they have the necessary support to be able to exercise their rights and fundamental freedoms". Secretary-General António Guterres, United Nations

The prevalence of autism in South Africa is estimated at 460,000 (University of Pretoria).

Teachers play a crucial role in the education and development of children, and their importance is even more significant when it comes to children with autism. Autism is a developmental disorder that affects a child's social and communication skills, making it difficult for them to interact with their peers and adults. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to be aware of the challenges and needs of autistic children to provide them with appropriate support and help them reach their full potential.

Firstly, teachers can help create a safe and supportive learning environment for children with autism. This includes adapting teaching methods, providing sensory-friendly spaces, and establishing routines and expectations that can help reduce anxiety and stress. Teachers who are trained in autism awareness can recognize the signs and symptoms of autism, enabling them to provide early interventions and support that can significantly improve a child's outcomes. It is therefore NAPTOSA's view that more teachers should be trained in autism awareness.

Secondly, teachers play a vital role in promoting socialisation and communication skills in children with autism. They can use visual aids, structured activities, and positive reinforcement to help children develop these skills. They can also help them learn how to interact with their peers and navigate social situations, which can be challenging for them.

Teachers can also educate learners about autism and promote acceptance and understanding of neurodiversity. This can help reduce stigma and bullying and create a more inclusive and welcoming learning environment for all children.

NAPTOSA stands with families affected by autism who face constant judgement whenever they go out with their autistic children. NAPTOSA commends teachers and education support personnel in Special Schools, mainstream schools as well as many other institutions that continue relentlessly to help children with autism to learn how to become functional members of society.

NAPTOSA joins the many organisations and schools that celebrate and champion the diversity and creativity of persons with ASD. As a trade union that upholds the Constitution of South Africa, embraces, and promotes the values of human rights, NAPTOSA undertakes to continue promoting the rights, and to advance the interests of all those within the autism community.

Click on the links below for more information.

[Developmental Milestones](#)

[Go Out and Play!" Kit for early childhood educators](#)

Keep an eye out for our online learning webinar, covering a variety of topics on autism spectrum disorder, which will be hosted during the month of April. We look forward to hosting you!

Mr BL Manuel

Executive Director