



NATIONAL NEWS FLASH



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TERM THREE: CONTINUING UNDER COVID-19 CONDITIONS

The President on 27 July 2021 announced that schools would close a week earlier for the second term and because conditions had not improved the re-opening of schools for the third term was further extended from 19 to 26 July 2021.

Fortunately, conditions have improved to allow the third term to commence. We wish to welcome back all our members, hoping that conditions will further improve so that we are able to have uninterrupted schooling for the whole of the term. Learners desperately need this.

While NAPTOSA is pleased that schooling is not being further compromised, we are not blind to the challenges facing our education system. The loss of so many education staff members to the pandemic and the recent spate of violence and looting in Kwazulu-Natal and Gauteng leading to damage to nearly 150 schools at a financial loss of approximately R 300million, have seriously exacerbated the challenges.

The Minister on Saturday, 24 July 2021, gave a report on the readiness of schools to re-open, which on paper appears encouraging. There were, however, a number of areas that still needed work such as water supply, ablution facilities, temporary classrooms to accommodate adequate social distancing and learner transport. While it was indicated that these challenges were being addressed, there are no guarantees that this would have been done by the re-opening of schools to the full compliment of learners on 2 August 2021.

According to the report, all provinces have secured sufficient non-pharmaceutical equipment and material. Past experience has unfortunately taught us that some provincial claims and reassurances cannot be trusted. Surveys conducted by the education trade unions have often disproved some provincial reports. We therefore need our members to assess the situation in their schools and provinces and to report cases where provincial education departments are lacking.

School readiness success is not only dependent on adequate non-pharmaceutical equipment and material, but equally on the proper implementation of the COVID-19 protocols at school level. The impact of the reduced social distancing measures will especially require close monitoring as well as the impact of the Delta variant on learners and staff. In this regard, scrutiny by members will also be essential.

The education vaccination programme has been a success with on average more than 80% of teachers vaccinated. We should, however, not be lulled into a false sense of security. While the vaccines offer persons greater protection against the virus, adherence to all the pandemic protocols remain essential. We need members to be even more vigilant than ever. Remember we are still on adjusted alert level 3.

We are aware that some of the fears that have been prevalent throughout the pandemic period are still there. It is, however believed that the vaccinations, improved protocol adherence and experience in teaching under the pandemic conditions should be a comfort to members and should allay many of the fears.

NAPTOSA continues to engage with the DBE at national level and will immediately raise reports by members of lapses in the provisioning of the required COVID-19 equipment and material with the Department. Safe working conditions remain our priority.

We wish our members a fruitful and safe third term.

BASIL MANUEL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR