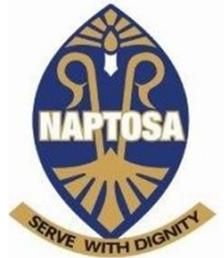




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WORLD TEACHERS' DAY 2021

Together with teachers all over the world, NAPTOSA celebrates World Teachers' Day on 5 October 2021.

Education International's (EI) theme this year is "Always present: Paying tribute, taking action", while the UNESCO theme is "Teachers at the heart of education recovery". The themes fit nicely together because they both highlight the importance of teachers in society.

In spirit with the EI theme, NAPTOSA wishes to pay tribute to all our South African teachers, and especially our NAPTOSA members. You have, during the past nearly two years, carried our country's education system through one of the most challenging periods the world has experienced in a long time.

Despite legitimate fears for your own health and safety, you have shown commitment, resilience and dedication to your profession, way beyond what could have been expected. Many colleagues have in the process succumbed to the virus. Let us take a moment on this day of celebration to call them to mind and to think of their families, schools and learners who dearly miss them.

UNESCO too pays the following tribute to teachers worldwide:

"Never have teachers been more wanted and needed than today. The educational disruptions and school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have confirmed the crucial role of teachers in maintaining learning continuity, but also in sustaining the very dynamics of households, families and communities. During the current crisis, we have witnessed how teachers have been at the heart of educational responses: they have provided online teaching and learning; they have prepared take-home packages for students living in rural and remote areas that lack the connectivity and technologies needed to pursue online learning; they have adapted their practices and diversified the formats, means and contents of education to cater for the needs of learners, including their socioemotional well-being..."

There can be no doubt that also in South Africa, teachers have been, and will remain, at the heart of our education recovery as was so aptly demonstrated by the way in which the 2020 academic year was saved and the resultant positive matric results.

We welcome the call by EI to take action for teachers, because that is our union priority. We can be proud of the fact that we have been at the forefront of action in this pandemic period. When the need was there, we supported the closing of schools in line with the dictates of science, but we also

called for the reopening of schools when the pressure of infections eased. We were the first to request the Ministers of Health and Basic Education to prioritise the vaccination of teachers and played an instrumental role in encouraging teachers to opt for the vaccine.

Throughout, NAPTOSA acted in the best interest of members to ensure that the DBE and Provincial Education Departments instituted the required protocols to safeguard the health and safety of teachers.

We have also taken a stand with regard to the salaries and benefits of teachers by joining the other public service unions in the Constitutional Court action against the employer for failing to implement the 2020 negotiated salary increase for public servants. The case has been heard and we are currently awaiting the judgement. During this year's salary negotiations, NAPTOSA stayed the course to eventually achieve the best possible salary outcome for our members.

As far as professional development is concerned, we have not waited for the DBE, but have seized the initiative, through our Professional Development Institute in conjunction with our provincial offices, to bring members a choice of training opportunities via virtual platforms.

Our anti-SRGBV campaign remains a priority and we continue to be vocal about the workload of teachers, school security, lagging school infrastructure development and maintenance, school dropout rates, departmental fixation on performance and pass rate percentages, lack of psycho-social services in schools, school calendar changes and curriculum issues, to name but a few.

NAPTOSA will never relent to take action for teachers, because without teachers there is no future for our country.

The Leadership of NAPTOSA wishes all our members a happy and joyful World Teachers' Day 2021.

BASIL MANUEL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR