



# NATIONAL NEWS FLASH



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## CONSOLIDATED DBE DIRECTIONS: “FORGOTTEN” FACTS

The problem with amendments to policy documents is that by the second or third set of amendments the contents of the original documents tend to fade from memory.

It was therefore a stroke of good fortune that NAPTOSA and the other recognized education unions, in their recent discussions with the Department of Basic Education (DBE), decided to call for the original Directions on the re-opening of schools and measures to address, prevent and combat the spread of COVID-19 in the various education departments, district offices and schools, as well as the subsequent amendments, to be consolidated into a single set of Directions.

Not only will we now have a document that will provide for ease of reference, but the exercise also highlighted very important issues that tended to have become lost in the passage of time and which some education departments seem to have conveniently “forgotten” about or given new interpretations to.

NAPTOSA has had the opportunity to comment on the draft consolidated Directions, which are expected to be published soon, and is therefore in a position to underscore the main issues that members and schools should be cognisant of.

One of the Directions that some Provincial Education Departments appear to have “forgotten” is their responsibility for the procurement of personal protective equipment and other COVID-19 essentials for staff and learners and for the provision thereof to public schools and hostels. The same applies to the supply of cloth face masks or face shields (two per staff member and learner). Schools should refer Education Departments to this particular Direction when they attempt to shift this responsibility onto the shoulders of schools.

Linked to this is probably the most important element of the Directions, namely that only those schools and offices that have complied with the minimum health, safety and social distancing measures on COVID-19, as contemplated in the Directions and the Regulations, will be allowed to open and that those that fail to comply, will remain closed until all these measures are in place. This is why it is so important that members be the eyes and ears of the union at school level.

A Direction that also seems to have suffered neglect, especially towards the end of 2020 when everybody became used to schools being re-opened, is the responsibility of Heads of Education Departments to continuously monitor and evaluate the maintenance of hygiene and safety standards for the duration of the national state of disaster and to report, in writing, every two weeks, to the Department of Basic Education. NAPTOSA will demand that this Direction be adhered to, especially in view of the circumstances under which schools will be opening for 2021.

Lastly, Principals of public schools are reminded that for the supply of face masks, the Directions require them to request the relevant Provincial Education Department, in writing, through the district offices, to procure such, while members in general are reminded that those that are required to commute to and from work outside of curfew hours must ensure that they have a requisite permit.

**BASIL MANUEL**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**