



**basic education**

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **Statement by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP, on the basic education sector plans to support learners during the lockdown due to COVID-19**

**26 March 2020**

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for attending the media briefing during these difficult times.

This morning we met as the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) to further consider and evaluate the plans that we have been working on.

Since the schools were closed on Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup>, we have had a series of consultations with the provincial departments of education to identify ways in which we can ensure that our children are better informed about Covid-19, they are engaged, and continue their education in their homes. Following the announcement of the lockdown by the President, CEM has agreed to focus on catch up programme our efforts to the Promotion of Learning and Teaching in homes, and to the preparation for catch up when the children come back to schools.

We are grateful that our partners such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) have come on board to support the Department.

We are also acutely aware of the importance of keeping our children safe from all sorts of dangers including abuse and anxiety caused by Covid-19. In this regard, we encourage families and community services to be extra vigilant in the care and support of learners. Do not leave them unattended, watch for signs of depression and provide ongoing support to address any anxiety at this time. It is important that we continue to speak to the learners about the promotion of health and safety in the home by adhering to basic hygiene practises.

### **On Learner Support Programmes**

Together with provinces DBE has prepared online and broadcast support resources comprising subject content and a focus on Grade 12 learners and the promotion of reading for all the grades. Some of the programmes will be available from April 1.

The Department is working closely with key Partners to coordinate and make available content tailored to support our learners' educational and health needs during this time. We will make the following resources available:

- Broadcast lessons working with the SABC TV and Radio,
- DSTV channel 180
- E.tv has allocated a dedicated channel for 3 months on the Openview platform.

- Broadcast of lessons on COMMUNITY RADIO stations around the country.
- Electronic readers available via all platforms in partnership with Vodacom, MTN, Telkom and Cell-C
- **2Enable App** as a freely downloadable educational platform with more than 2000 electronic readers in the indigenous languages
- Promote the African Storybook series through the 2Enable App
- The National Reading Coalition has identified extensive lists of additional resources and organizations that are willing to make their materials available.
- Free access to Siyavula Maths and Science support in partnership with MTN and
- Free access to the Vodacom Virtual Classroom.

The content has been carefully curated to be available online and for broadcast, and will be made available on various platforms. The DBE website has been updated with current and relevant content inclusive of reading resources and websites. Other content which is available on websites of our partners has also been made available through links on the DBE website on [www.education.gov.za](http://www.education.gov.za). Parents, teachers and learners are encouraged to visit the DBE website. We urge those who raise learners with special education needs to get in touch with the department should the need arise.

## **Content on Reading**

The Read to Lead campaign and the National Reading Coalition will continue to drive their messages aimed at heightening awareness about the importance of reading for enjoyment. We urge households to support reading improvement initiatives by ensuring that children are given time to read, and that parents and care-givers participate by reading with their children and sharing stories. In terms of availability of books, a number of resources for reading for enjoyment have been uploaded on our online platforms. These include Readers in various languages.

## **On the school nutrition programme**

CEM discussed the provision of school nutrition programme during the lockdown. This is a complex matter to resolve especially when learners are not in school. We will therefore work with the Department of Social Development. Nutrition support will be provided to families in the poverty nodes which are operated by Social Development. The thinking is that one member of the family will be allowed to collect food parcel once a week during the three weeks for the use of the entire family. This is to ensure social distancing. Several partners are willing to support this initiative and they include Tiger Brands, Nestle, Pioneer, Old Mutual, First Rand and Add Hope Foundation.

## **On the reopening of Schools**

We are aware that people continue to spread incorrect information. Fake news causes a lot of damage to the work we are doing especially under the current circumstances. We urge members of the public to desist from spreading false information about when schools will reopen and on any other matter. There is no truth to what has been circulated on social media about schools reopening in September. Please ignore it.

The truth is that the Council of Education Ministers at a teleconference meeting this morning extensively deliberated on preparations for the opening of schools after the lock down is lifted. The exact dates for the opening of schools for the start of the second term will be communicated at a later date. We will in due course confirmed the date guided by the NCC.

The Department of Basic Education is also finalizing a Standard Operating Procedure for the basic education sector to provide guidance to schools and education offices on how to prepare for the opening of schools. The Department is in discussion with the National Treasury and all our provinces on the provision of a minimum health package to schools.

I am very grateful to our Partners who are extending a hand during this challenging time by making available their physical and financial resources.

We welcome commitments of support from partners such as Old Mutual who has pledged R50 million to support the education programming, UNICEF and others that have made inquiries in preparation for making decisions. All education-specific contributions processed by our department, such as materials and platforms will be registered with the Solidarity Fund established by the President. The schedule for the broadcast of the lessons is available on the DBE website as well as social media platforms. You can tune in to any of the listed radio stations and TV stations to benefit from the programmes that have been prepared for the children and their parents or guardians.

The speedy recovery of schools will be determined by how we conduct ourselves as people because as a sector we are more likely to have long lasting implications. The next three weeks are crucial to the reopening of schools. It depends on all us to flatten the curve of COVID-19 which is rising at a rapid pace daily. Please cooperate during the lockdown, stay in your house and be safe.

Some of our officials will remain available to provide support, contact us via our social media platforms for a speedy response to your questions. Let's work together to beat Coronavirus.

Thank you