



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SCHOOL RECOVERY PLAN IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

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Acronyms

ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DDD	Data-Driven Districts
DoH	Department of Health (Province/District)
EFMS	Education Facility Management System
FAL	First Additional Language
HL	Home Language
ISHP	Integrated School Health Policy
NCCC	National COVID-19 Command Council
NDoH	National Department of Health
NEIMS	National Education Infrastructure Management System
NICD	National Institute for Communicable Diseases
PED	Provincial Education Department
PAT	Practical Assessment Task
PET	Physical Education Task
PSS	Psychosocial Support Service
RAS	Risk Adjusted Strategy
SAL	Second Additional Language
SBA	School-Based Assessment
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
WHO	World Health Organization

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

COVID-19 has significantly threatened people's lives and livelihoods all over the world and requires economic and educational responses that are extremely innovative, in line with the President's call to balance people's safety and economic recovery.

The national lockdown, has resulted in schools having to physically close their doors. This has, in many instances, severely affected curriculum coverage, and measures are therefore needed to circumvent the loss of teaching and learning time and assessment requirements.

As we consider solutions for the Basic Education sector, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the enemy we are fighting is the coronavirus and that, the corona-virus will determine when schooling can be normalised. We will constantly have to make plans bearing this fact in mind. We will not be able to concretise plans that risk the lives and safety of our teachers and learners. Therefore, much as we develop plans going forward, the well-being and safety of learners, teachers and officials in the Basic Education sector will remain the country's highest priority.

The Basic Education Sector plans to do the following:

- a) Develop a robust Curriculum Recovery Plan;
- b) Manage examinations and related activities;
- c) Develop standard operating procedures to guide the Basic Education sector to manage and contain the spread of infection;
- d) Develop strategies for deconcentrating populations and promoting social/physical distancing behaviour in schools and offices;
- e) Promote access to water and sanitation infrastructure to support safe and hygienic practices in school and office environments;
- f) Create a pool of substitute posts for teaching and non-teaching staff in the event a need arises; and
- g) Provide psychosocial support services for learners and staff.

Some of the biggest challenges that the Basic Education sector has to deal with is compliance with the 1.5 metres distancing requirement in the 350 000 classrooms across all of our schools. This will require innovative

ways of managing the return of learners to school. Other challenges include the provision of face masks and hand-hygiene and sanitising resources to all schools. Provision of water to schools in remote and under-serviced areas is being prioritised. Schools need to screen all learners, teachers and non-teaching staff on a daily basis. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) will take direction from the Department of Health (DoH) regarding the re-opening of schools in line with the Risk Adjusted Strategy (RAS) for the containment of the coronavirus.

The re-opening of schools will be implemented using a differentiated approach in line with the provisions of the RAS of government. The implementation of the Risk Adjusted Strategy in the sector places responsibility on management, at all levels, to ensure that before schools and offices re-open, a differentiated timetable/schedule is in place. The mandatory preconditions for the prevention and containment of the spread of the coronavirus must also be in place and managed effectively and efficiently so as to protect the lives of our people and curb any outbreaks of new infections. The Basic Education sector shares COVID-19 responsibility with all other sectors that also re-open to activate people's livelihoods.

2. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document provides all stakeholders with information relating to the school recovery plan and outlines how the curriculum will be managed in the time available during the 2020 academic year and also outlines the enabling conditions that must be in place for the safe re-opening of schools. The question that is of critical importance in the framing of this recovery plan is: *How do we firstly ensure the safety of our learners, teachers and other school personnel and, secondly, ensure that all learners that have been part of the extended school closure are not disadvantaged in terms of the learning required for the current grade or for the future learning required for subsequent grade/s?*

The School Recovery Plan addresses four key issues:

- a) How much of the curriculum content could not be covered because of the time lost during levels of the lockdown?

- b) What are the implications of the lost time for teaching and learning, curriculum, assessment and the educational outcomes?
- c) How can the time lost be recovered or can the curriculum be reviewed to ensure that the essence of the curriculum is completed in the remaining time available?
- d) In recovering the curriculum, how do we ensure that learners and teachers are provided with a safe environment that will not lead to clustered outbreaks of infection; and how do we deal with wearing face masks, hygiene protocols and adhering to social/physical distancing within the school context?

The School Recovery Plan will be structured in such a way that it provides a broad framework for a nationally diverse system. Each provincial department, with its own specific provincial recovery plan for schools, will ensure compliance with the parameters of the DBE plan. The provincial recovery plans ensure that we remain responsive to the sector's needs across diverse contexts as well as flexible so as to respond effectively to the patterns of infection across provinces as monitored on a daily basis by the Department of Health.

The scope and size of the Basic Education sector is presented in Table 1 below.

3. THE SCOPE AND SIZE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLING SYSTEM

The South African schooling system is massive and includes 12 408 755 learners, 407 001 educators and 23 076 schools. This only covers the public sector and does not include the independent schools.

Table 1: Number of learners, educators and schools in the Public School sector, by province, in 2019

Province	Learners	Educators	Schools
Eastern Cape	1 770 289	60 462	5 205
Free State	697 334	22 978	1 085
Gauteng	2 151 095	70 344	2 071
KwaZulu-Natal	2 784 917	93 648	5 821
Limpopo	1 687 376	50 916	3 773
Mpumalanga	1 067 583	35 316	1 679
Northern Cape	293 315	10 185	546
North West	829 336	26 564	1 451
Western Cape	1 127 510	36 588	1 445
TOTAL	12 408 755	407 001	23 076

4. PRINCIPLES TO BE FOLLOWED TO ENSURE A PROACTIVE RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic occurs at a time when countries have already committed to the Sustainable Development Goals. Basic Education is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal 4 which aims to *‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all’*. The Education 2030 Framework for Action thus provides a clear reference point for humanitarian development and government actors committed to ameliorating the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education. It is imperative that all actors co-operate and adjust to the ‘new-normal’ as articulated in the Risk Adjusted Strategy to respond to and contain the coronavirus. Basic Education actors need to design responses that remain inclusive and equitable on the one hand and resilient and adaptable on the other, if we are to meet the needs of children to access quality education while living through this pandemic.

The School Recovery Plan is aligned with international conventions and is thus guided by following principles:

a) **Responsive to the National COVID-19 Command Council (NCCC)**

In planning a School Recovery Plan, the national regulations, protocols, guidelines and programmes will be strictly adhered to, to ensure there is full compliance by the Basic Education sector.

b) Inclusion and Equity

Ensuring that all learners, and particularly the most vulnerable, access the planned programmes.

c) Targeted Approach

Taking cognizance of the unique needs of schools, phases and grades/years.

d) Scope and Size

Ensuring that curriculum plans are determined in a flexible way guided by the scope and size of the school population in the context of the crisis locally, a short or long lockdown, and the implications that this will have on teaching, learning and assessment.

e) Partnerships

Ensuring full participation and ownership with all key stakeholders.

f) Safety and Security

Maintaining the safety, health, and well-being of teachers, learners and support staff.

g) Time Management

Time is of the essence in a school recovery plan and hence time must be strictly managed at school level so that the focus is on maximising teaching time and limiting the time utilised for tests and examinations.

h) Quality

Despite the pressure to ensure that learners need to be exposed to the curriculum designed for the grade; in the time available, the priority will be on quality teaching and learning and a focus on skills, knowledge and values, rather than just content coverage.

i) Nationally co-ordinated approach

Noting the diversity of the country and the varying contextual factors across the nine provinces, the DBE provides clear directives of what is expected of each provincial education department and compliance with these directives is monitored.

5. THE APPROACH TO BE ADOPTED IN THE SCHOOL RECOVERY PLAN

The approach to be followed in the design of a School Recovery Plan is to prioritise learner wellness and safety. In this regard, schooling will only resume after the Department of Health has signalled that it is safe to resume schooling. With the relaxation of the risk level/s, according to the Risk Adjusted Strategy, there will still be certain restrictions in place at each level, particularly with regard to social/physical distancing, face masks, hygiene and sanitising. The Basic Education sector must ensure that these restrictions are complied with at all times.

In planning for the re-opening of schools, the Department will adopt two models. These models will be integrated and may vary depending on the school context, and the spread of the coronavirus in the area where the school is located. The two models are the **Phased-in Approach**, which may be integrated with the **Rotational Models**.

5.1 Phased-in Approach

Given the high risk associated with large gatherings, the DBE will adopt a phased-in approach to the re-opening of schools. The most critical grades/years in primary and secondary schools will be brought in first, while learners in other grades/years remain at home. The latter will be brought in on an incremental basis, after the initial groups are fully acclimatised to the COVID-19 environment.

The purpose of a phased-in approach is to allow the school management time to trial protocols for the management of learners and teachers with reduced numbers attending at any one time. The phased-in approach will take the following into consideration:

- a) Additional learners must only be added after the current grade has fully adapted to the COVID-19 prevention behaviours and environmental control measures.
- b) In accommodating the admission of learners, the school must ensure the following measures are fully and consistently attended to:
 - Space with reference to social/physical distancing;
 - Hygiene and sanitising requirements;

- No bodily contact and the protocols for physical protection e.g. wearing of face masks, screening of visitors, etc. must be adhered to.
- c) Re-organisation of the timetable may be necessary to accommodate the new class sizes.
- d) The School Management Teams (SMTs) including the Principal, teachers and officials of the Department should assume duty prior to the opening of schools to ensure proper planning and preparation.
- e) The other organisational issues that must be given due attention are:
- School nutrition programme;
 - Scholar transport;
 - Communication with parents.
- f) Teachers must be fully orientated to the COVID-19 environment, i.e. the “dos” and “don’ts” as specified in the DBE standard operating procedures on COVID-19 and other guiding prescripts.

The phased-in approach will allow selected grades/years being admitted to school at a time. The situation must be closely managed and monitored. The subsequent grades/years must be brought in later, based on how the school is coping with the management of the number of learners, the social/physical distancing-space restrictions and the hygiene requirements relating to: hand washing, sanitising and overall safety of learners, teachers and other school personnel.

The period stipulated for the intake of subsequent grades/years is subject to the readiness of the school. This will be approved subject to compliance with the standards as determined by the Department of Health. It also needs to be noted that the School Governing Body (SGB) will take responsibility for the implementation of the phased-in plan. Uppermost in their planning and oversight responsibility, will be the safety of learners, teachers and other school personnel.

5.2 Rotational Model

The rotational model will work in conjunction with the phased-in approach to ensure that learners who are not part of the phased-in grades/years remain at home until notified. The latter cohort of learners will be allowed to attend school on a rotational basis, which will be governed by the availability of space at the school to ensure that social/physical distancing is not compromised. The rotational model allows learners that would be at home some access to learning at school so that their learning is not entirely interrupted for an extended period of time.

The rotational model may take three possible forms as follows:

a) **Rotate bi-weekly**

The school population is divided into two groups. The first group attends school for the first two weeks in the month and thereafter the first group remains at home for the remaining two weeks in the month, while the second group now attends school. This arrangement allows for a maximum of 50% of the remaining school population to attend school at a time, thus allowing for social/physical distancing to be accommodated.

b) **Rotate according to specific days in a week**

In the second option, the school population is divided into two groups, with the first group attending school on three days of the week, followed by the second group attending school on two days of the week. This is then alternated with the first group attending school on two days of the week and the second group attending school on three days of the week.

c) **Platoon system**

In the third option, the school population is divided into two with the first half of the school population attending school in the morning and the second half attending school in the afternoon. This is commonly referred to as the platooning system. It is aptly used in schools where space is limited.

Note: The advantages and disadvantages of each of these rotational options are discussed in detail in the document titled: *GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL TIMETABLES FOR THE RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS DURING COVID-19* (available on the DBE website www.education.gov.za).

5.3 Phased-in Approach and the Rotational models: Implications for Special Schools

In the application of the phased-in approach coupled with the rotational models, dedicated support and guidance will be provided to special schools to ensure that these arrangements accommodate learners with disabilities and are customised to respond to the contextual realities of special schools. The principle governing these modalities is that no learner should be left behind. When using these models, provision must also be made for the care-givers, therapeutic staff and other support staff that are integral to the efficient functioning of special schools.

6. THE CURRICULUM RECOVERY PLAN

To ensure that the school is able to complete the core components of the curriculum in the remaining part of the academic year, this section outlines the curriculum recovery plan.

6.1 The Strategies for Curriculum Recovery

There are various strategies that could be adopted in the curriculum recovery process. In the context of COVID-19, the DBE focuses on the following:

- a) Recovery of teaching and learning time, which will deal with the length of the teaching day, length of the school term and the reduction of time allocated for examinations and assessment.
- b) Curriculum interventions may include the review of the curriculum, so that the core content, skills and values that need to be covered in the time available is not severely compromised. Curriculum interventions will also include teaching and learning support that need to be provided to the teacher and the learners.

- c) Accelerated education programmes which expose learners to intensive learning programmes that focus on core skills, values and knowledge.
- d) Review of the assessment and examinations requirements in the light of the reviewed/re-organised curriculum.
- e) Self-directed learning programmes that are geared towards learners taking responsibility for their own learning. In the case of Self-directed learning, the learning material is prepared in such a manner that learners are able to progress from the known to the unknown on their own (or with minimal supervision), given the clear exposition and illustrated presentation of content; such content must be well scaffolded and mediated through templates and vivid examples. Regular and consistent opportunities for learners to receive feedback are important to sustain meaningful self-directed learning and motivation.

6.2 The Recovery Plan and its Implications for Schools

The Recovery Plan provides guidance to PEDs, districts and schools regarding the following four key aspects:

- a) Recovery of lost time
- b) Management of the Curriculum
- c) Teaching and Learning
- d) School Based Assessment and Examinations

a) Recovery of Lost Time

In the case of each grade, the time lost based on the date on which learners return to school must be determined. The school calendar will be adjusted to minimise the school holidays and to extend the number of school days. The plan is to recover the lost time through an extension of the second quarter by two weeks, hence shortening the June/July vacation to five days, shortening the September holiday to one day and cancelling the June examinations. To gain the additional days, other options would be to extend the closure of schools in the fourth quarter.

The adjustments to the school calendar and the examinations will recoup the following number of days.

Table 2: Tentative Number of Days Recovered

Measure implemented	Time Recovered
Shorten the June/July vacation to one week	10 days
Shorten September holiday to one day	4 days
Shorten December holiday	5 – 9 days
Cancel the June/July examination	10 days

Based on the above plan, between 29 and 33 teaching days could be recovered for all grades and years. The number of days recovered will be less than the number of days lost and hence there will be a need for a trimming and re-organisation of the curriculum in all grades/years, except Grade 12.

In the case of Grade 12, the number of days lost will be recovered through two additional mechanisms and this includes a shortening of the period utilised for the Preparatory examinations and extending the school day. Preparatory examinations will be conducted by the school and the use of provincially set question papers will be reduced to critical subjects so that a provincial time-table is only necessary for the key subjects and this will allow for the examination to be conducted in a shorter period. The Preparatory examinations will be allocated three weeks instead of the traditional five weeks. This will result in an additional ten days of teaching time. If more time is still required to complete the curriculum, schools will be requested to extend the school day for the Grade 12 learners.

In the recovery of the time lost, provision must be made for additional time to deal with the consequences of COVID-19. The additional time will assist in stabilising the school by orientating learners to the new normal. This additional time will also allow teachers to administer a diagnostic test to learners in the first few days of school re-opening.

b) Curriculum Content

Curriculum trimming and curriculum re-organising will only apply in the case of Grade R to Grade 11 and Year 4. This will ensure that the curriculum is reduced such that the core concepts and content areas could be covered in the period remaining. This will assist teachers in ensuring the quality of teaching and learning and not just curriculum coverage, under conditions that are tantamount to a “new normal”.

There will be no curriculum trimming in the case of Grade 12. The DBE will ensure that the lost time is recovered so as to allow teachers to complete the curriculum.

c) Teaching and Learning

The Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) will be amended in accordance with the trimmed/re-organised curriculum for Grades R-11 and Year 4, and in the case of Grade 12, the ATP may be re-organised to ensure a focus on the key aspects of the curriculum. The diagnostic test administered when learners return to school will be a class-based test, set and marked by the teacher. The diagnostic test will be used to establish the following:

- The areas of the curriculum for Term 1 that need to be revised;
- The extent to which additional curriculum content was covered during the national COVID-19 lockdown; and
- How the teaching programme is to be structured for the remaining school terms.

Teachers will be supported in terms of the revised ATPs to ensure that quality learning is not compromised.

d) School Based Assessment/Examinations

There will be minor changes to the School Based Assessment (SBA) requirements for all grades for the 2nd, 3rd and 4th terms. The June examination will be omitted to ensure that more time can be utilised for teaching and learning.

The following principles are proposed with regard to the review of the SBA for Grades 10 – 12:

- All term one SBA requirements must be completed;
- June examinations should be excluded across all grades;
- As much as possible, exclude tests/ exams except for the final exams. Where it is not possible to exclude tests in specific subjects, the number of tests should be reduced (each subject team will make a determination);
- All Home Languages (HLs), First Additional Languages (FALs) and Second Additional Languages (SALs) must follow the same format;
- For all languages, assessment requirements relating to Paper 1 (Language) and Paper 3 (Writing) should not be amended. These require skills that have been built upon over the years. The main amendments to languages, therefore, will be related to Paper 2, where set works are involved;
- The same prescriptions for the official languages will be adopted for the non-official languages at the different language levels; and
- All Practical Assessment Tasks (PATs) will be reviewed and amended (Grades 10 to 12) taking into consideration the social/physical distancing issues. In the case of Grade 12 PAT, this will be done in conjunction with Umalusi since it is an externally set and moderated paper.

The following principles are proposed for the review of the SBA for Grades R to 9 and Year 4 in Schools of Skill:

- Ensure that only one formal summative assessment task features per term. In the case of Languages, due consideration should be given to the assessment of reading comprehension, essay writing and transactional texts. In the case of Social Sciences, the one formal task applies separately to History and Geography.
- Include informal formative assessment tasks that help the teacher to remediate concepts and diagnose misconceptions. The number of informal short item assessments should not exceed two tasks and should be integrated into teaching and learning lessons. The focus here is on the depth of content and not on the breadth of skills.

- One oral assessment per term should be retained for Home Languages and First Additional Languages. The focus should be on listening comprehension exercises rather than reading aloud exercises, since learners will be using masks.
- PATs and Physical Education Tasks (PETs) (e.g. Life Skills in the Foundation Phase) should be shifted to Term 3 and Term 4, taking into account limitations of social/physical distancing. In all other subjects, there should not be more than one PAT assigned per term.
- In the case of the Technical Occupational subjects (Year 4: PAT), the skills to be developed in the trades offered to these learners must be prioritised. This will make a difference to the outcome of their readiness for the work place environment for next year. Mini Practical Assessment Tasks (Mini-PATs) for years 3, 2 and 1 should be shifted to Term 4, taking into account limitations of social/physical distancing. This will set a good foundation for the next year.
- Ensure that there is no June or Mid-Year Examination. Consider including an end-of-year examination only for Mathematics and Languages (fundamentals). A formal standardised test should be administered in the other subjects.

In addition to the above, the DBE will review all pilot projects and ensure that projects that would further impinge on teaching time are re-scheduled, without impacting on the key objectives of the project. The DBE will also review the extra-curricular programmes of schools to ensure that none of these programmes are in conflict with the protocols relating to COVID-19. The review will also include subjects with practical or workshop requirements that may be impacted upon by the social/physical distancing requirement.

The recovery mechanism for the grades/years that will be phased-in and those that resume schooling on a rotational model will follow the same approach as that adopted for the other grades/years. The first step will be to ensure that lost time is recovered by extending the remaining

school terms or extending the school day. This will then be followed by a trimming and a re-organisation of the school curriculum.

With the differentiated phased-in approach and the rotational timetabling arrangements, three categories of learners will need to be supported:

- Learners who will be at school on a daily basis;
- Learners who are attending school on a rotational basis; and
- Learners who are at home due to comorbidities, lockdown conditions or those that have opted to follow the Home-Education approach.

In the case of learners at school, the trimmed and re-organised curriculum will be followed with support and monitoring from the district officials. The support will be ramped up for the grades that have returned to school on a rotational basis and for those learners that will still be at home due to lockdown conditions and comorbidities.

In the case of rotating learners, they will be exposed to an accelerated education programme and self-directed learning. This will include take-home packages, broadcast of lessons through television, national/regional, and community radio stations as well as online live streaming of lessons.

For learners with comorbidities and those in lockdown areas, print material packages will be developed and distributed through strategic points of collection, like community libraries, food banks, super markets, petrol stations, local shops and spaza shops. In communities where such facilities do not exist, schools will be used as points of collection and distribution on identified days and times. Collaboration with businesses, civil society organisations as well as the print and distribution industry such as publishers, will be facilitated. Mass gatherings of learners at these points of distributions will be avoided through the monitoring of such points by members of the community. The distribution of print material is absolutely necessary to ensure that learners that do not have access to on-line-support, will be able to access the printed support material.

For parents that have adopted to follow the Home Education option, the DBE will ensure that these learners are registered with the provincial education department and they will be orientated to the policy relating to Home Education so that the standard of education to which these learners are exposed is not compromised. It would be necessary to ensure that these learners are subjected to some form of standardised assessment administered by an accredited assessment body to ensure that these learners comply with the standards of the national curriculum at the end of the phase.

7. THE CREATION OF ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR SCHOOL RE-OPENING

7.1 Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Prevention, Containment and Management of COVID-19 in Schools and School Communities

The Prevention, Health and Hygiene measures necessary for COVID-19 are detailed in the DBE SOP available on the DBE website, www.education.gov.za

7.2 Guidelines on Deconcentrating and Social/Physical Distancing in Schools and Offices

The Guidelines on Decongesting and Social/Physical Distancing in schools and offices are issued in the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. The DBE has the responsibility to ensure that all offices and public schools in the Republic of South Africa follow the advice of the DoH, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) and the World Health Organisation (WHO). Their advice has been incorporated into the guidelines on how to practice good hygiene and keep safe distances from one another as a means to protect ourselves in the education sector. This will include ensuring that we wash our hands regularly with soap and water. Where water is not available, an alcohol-based hand sanitiser with a minimum of 70% alcohol content must be used. Physical/social distances of at least one and half meters apart must be maintained, whilst hugging, hand shaking and direct contact must be avoided.

In order to maintain physical/social distancing - classrooms and meeting venues must be re-arranged so that the seating arrangements are at least 1.5 metres apart **in groups not exceeding 50 at any one time**. No sharing of desks will be allowed. These may be the most challenging conditions for PEDs to implement, as classrooms and schools are not always able to accommodate these social/physical distancing requirements. For this reason, PEDs should apply their minds to what would be the best arrangements.

The Regulations, as issued by the Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs on 29 April 2020, prohibit gathering of groups of more than 50 people. Therefore, all extra classes that will be arranged as a means of catching-up will have to consider this. It is advised that all schools and districts take into consideration the measures stipulated in the guidelines before they proceed with extra classes.

All mass public events are also prohibited until further notice so as to avoid illegal gatherings or situations that may expose large numbers of the education sector to infections.

It is expected that all PEDs will implement these guidelines on decongesting and social/physical distancing wherever practicable.

7.3 Impact of Social/Physical Distancing on School Infrastructure

The “Regulation relating to minimum uniform norms and standards for public school infrastructure” published in 2013, defines the acceptable norm for class size to be 40 learners (except Grade R that should be 30 learners). The Regulation further defines a minimum size of a classroom to be 48m² (except Grade R where the minimum size is 60 m²).

The generally accepted norm for social/physical distancing, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, is 1.5 metres. The problem is how can DBE implement social/physical distancing in classrooms?

Given the 1.5 metre social/physical distancing requirement, additional classrooms/space will be required. This may be addressed through:

- Using under-utilised spaces in the school;

- Using under-utilised spaces in other schools;
- Using under-utilised spaces in the community;
- Operating schools in shifts; and
- Procuring mobile classrooms.

The DBE will, in the next few days, prepare lists of over-crowded schools based on the following:

- Data extracted from the National Education Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS) database;
- Data extracted from the Education Facility Management System (EFMS) database; and
- Data provided by PEDs.

Based on this data the sector will identify real over-crowded schools per district, identify under-utilised schools per district and then develop a strategy to optimise use of available infrastructure.

7.4 Psychosocial Support Service for Learners and Staff

Psychosocial Support Service (PSS) is a continuum of kindness, love, care and protection that enhances the cognitive, emotional and spiritual well-being of a person and strengthens their social and cultural connectedness. The world and South Africa, to be specific, are experiencing a serious challenge of increasing COVID-19 infections. This is likely to have an adverse impact on learners and schools as well as on education as a whole, and may lead to an increase in the already high prevalence rates of anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and conduct disorder amongst children and adolescents.

Mental health is a fundamental component of health. The mental health needs of children and adolescents can be addressed on numerous levels and at a variety of intervention sites; and schools can play an important role in promoting the overall well-being of learners as articulated in the Integrated School Health Policy (ISHP). In this regard, schools are used as vehicles for promoting access to a range of public services for learners in

areas such as health, poverty alleviation, psychosocial support, sport and culture.

The DBE has guided PEDs to develop context-specific Psychosocial Support plans to provide psychosocial support to learners and educators, with the intention of rebuilding resilience, minimising mental health problems and providing care and support for learners and educators in schools.

7.5 Addressing the Possible Human Resource Shortages

The Basic Education sector has to prepare for the eventuality that some of its employees may, during the COVID-19 pandemic, contract the disease and will not be in a position to return to work for a period of time. Measures must be put in place in case of this eventuality to ensure that office work and children are taken care of until such time as affected employees can return to work.

The first category of staff to be looked at is teaching staff. It is a challenge to try and predict the number of staff that may be infected by the coronavirus, so for the purpose of this exercise we will be using three scenarios:

Scenario 1:

In the first scenario, we assume that we will need 5% of the teaching complement. This would amount to 19 518 additional posts, taking into account both self-isolation and quarantine for recovery across the country.

Scenario 2:

In the second scenario we assume that we will need 10% of the teaching complement at any given time which would amount to 39 037 posts.

Scenario 3:

The third scenario assumes that we will need 15% of the teaching complement at any given time which would amount to 58 555 posts.

In all three scenarios, all posts allocated will be taken up for a period of a month at a time.

There are various sources of existing funding that can be considered for this purpose.

There are 907 educators that will retire at the age of 65 years this year between March and September 2020 which will make funding available. It should be noted that not all will go on retirement as some have requested extension. The extension has been approved until the end of December 2020. This is in accordance with the Ordinance Act.

On average, when looking at 2019, there were 13 389 post level 1 vacant posts in the system. This could be an indicator of funding in 2020 that could be made available if the trends were to be the same.

When doing the post provisioning for schools, each year there are a number of posts that are reserved for substitutes or ad hoc posts for cases where there is substantive growth in schools, which warrants additional posts.

During monitoring in the first quarter of the academic year in 2020, it was reported that 17 760 posts had been set aside for ad hoc or substitute purposes. These posts are not all used simultaneously and could be used for the purpose of replacing educators who are recovering from COVID-19.

The last issue that needs to be addressed is the supply of qualified educators to take up the call in this possible crisis. Over the last eight years, the DBE has been providing qualified educators through our Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme. We currently have in the range of 3 893 graduates still seeking employment.

In addition to this, we have our National Recruitment Database of qualified educators who are seeking employment. We recorded 2 621 unemployed educators on our database as at the end of January 2020.

The second category of staff are non-teaching staff that will be required at schools, especially in cases of the most vulnerable learners that require additional assistance at school.

The *Public Service Regulations 2016* makes two provisions for the temporary replacement of staff. Regulation 57(2) (a) makes provision for temporary appointment of an official additional to the staff establishment in

the event that the incumbent of a post is expected to be absent for such a period that his duties cannot be performed by employees.

Regulation 63 of the *Regulations* provides for an acting appointment. The availability of possible employees with specialised skills such as psychologists, counsellors and therapists is already strained and DBE will work with sister departments and professional councils for possible rotational services.

Services of other non-teaching staff at schools should not be a challenge given the skill set required such as cleaning staff and administrative staff since unemployed youth will be utilised.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE RECOVERY PLAN

8.1 National level

The DBE is responsible for:

- a) Setting guidelines and providing strategic direction for the planning, preparation and implementation of the recovery programme;
- b) Providing support at provincial, district and school level;
- c) Establishing a valid and reliable method of continuously monitoring and evaluating the programme; and
- d) Gauging the accountability of all those responsible for the implementation of the programme.

8.2 Provincial level

Each province is expected to:

- a) Develop Provincial Recovery Programmes;
- b) Secure required financial, material and human resources to implement the programmes;
- c) Prepare plans for implementation at District and School Cluster level; and
- d) Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the programmes.

8.3 District level

- a) Districts will oversee and monitor the implementation process; and

- b) District and Circuit offices will provide the necessary support systems to schools.

8.4 School level

- a) The success of the programmes will depend on effective school leadership and management and the extent to which teachers are adequately capacitated and supported to deal with the high demanding roles they will be confronted with;
- b) The role of the principal is to oversee the implementation of the recovery plans at school level and to provide the necessary support to the teachers and learners; and
- c) The principal has to keep parents informed of the plans and the changes to be implemented. The School Governing Body can mobilise the community to enhance the participation of the broader school community and various stakeholders to contribute to programme initiatives.

9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

9.1 Monitoring and Evaluation by DBE

In terms of curriculum recovery, the DBE instituted a facility to monitor the frequency of logins (hits) from the one-stop (centralised) website to monitor the utilisation of the support measures that have been put in place using online systems. The website was enabled with the analytic capability of providing statistics on user logins.

To the extent practicable, the DBE will download statistics of user logins preferably on a weekly basis and disaggregate the statistics by province, by phases (Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase, Senior Phase and Further Education and Training Band) and by subjects. The DBE will then disseminate the statistics of user logins to provincial education departments for them to work out the rates of user logins in relation to learner enrolment figures per phase as recorded in their provincial SA-SAMS data-banks.

Another monitoring and evaluation mechanism that DBE is considering is the utilisation of the LURITS data, together with the Data-Driven Districts

(DDD) data management system, with innovations and enhancements to allow for the systems to provide monitoring data to further inform the COVID-19 education environment.

For broadcast solutions, the DBE can request viewership and listenership statistics. This data could provide statistics in terms of regional and local community levels of consumption and package for appropriate dissemination per province.

It is important to note that there are limitations with these monitoring systems as they will exclude learners from homes that do not have the facilities and required gadgets.

The monitoring that has been instituted for curriculum recovery will also be applied for monitoring of the extent to which the enabling conditions are being created and the SOPs are being adhered to. Given the importance of these enabling conditions, officials and educators that are found to be flouting the rules and protocols will be subjected to disciplinary action.

9.2 Monitoring and Evaluation by PEDs

As PEDs receive their weekly statistics of logins, it will be expected of them to conduct the analysis of logins in relation to learner enrolments per phase, per subject. Each PED will then communicate its findings with District Officials for further dissemination of the findings which could be communicated to learners accessing the services to encourage them to consistently utilise the support measures that are in place.

Furthermore, PEDs will be expected to report back to the DBE on measures that they are instituting to ensure that support measures provided by the DBE are utilised maximally.

As soon as the DBE has mastered the utilisation of the LURITS together with DDD, PEDs will be advised and assisted towards strengthening their monitoring and evaluation responsibilities for enhanced teaching and learning outcomes.

In terms of viewership and listenership statistics, PEDs could carry out analyses based on estimated figures.

10. CONCLUSION

The School Recovery Plan is work in progress and remains responsive to the contextual realities and needs of school communities. The sector will provide further direction on the following ways in which lost time should be recovered:

- a) Ways in which the curriculum content needs to be re-organised or trimmed, where necessary;
- b) Reviewed Annual Teaching Plan where needed;
- c) Reviewed Assessment/Examination Plan that will be based on the reviewed curriculum;
- d) Ways in which the social/physical distancing requirements are to be maintained;
- e) Ways in which the hygiene and sanitising practices and conditions are to be maintained;
- f) Ways in which psychosocial support is to be maintained; and
- g) Ways to address human resource implications.

The above planning and contingency arrangements support our collective response to recover the academic programme and sustain the transformation gains made in the sector year-on-year. However, the re-opening of schools will be dictated by the rates of coronavirus infection in each province in the days, months and even years to come. Thus the priorities of the Department of Basic Education are threefold: to protect the health and safety of our learners, teachers and support personnel; contain the spread of the coronavirus through collective behaviour change; while responding innovatively to sustaining inclusive and equitable quality education. Resiliently we are called to stand together to manage our schools through this COVID-19 pandemic.