

URGENT

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Northern Cape
Department of Education
IK NKOANE EDUCATION HOUSE

156 Barkly Road
Homestead
Kimberley 8301

Private Bag X5029
Kimberley 8300
Republic of South Africa

Tel: 053 839 6500
Fax: 053 839 6580/81
Web: ncdoe.ncpg.gov.za

Enquiries: District Directors / Circuit Managers
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**TO: DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL
CHIEF DIRECTORS
DIRECTORS
DISTRICT DIRECTORS
CHIEF EDUCATION SPECIALISTS
DEPUTY DIRECTORS
CIRCUIT MANAGERS
PRINCIPALS OF PUBLIC ORDINARY SCHOOLS
PRINCIPALS OF PUBLIC SPECIAL SCHOOLS
PRINCIPALS OF INDEPENDENT AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS
SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES
EDUCATOR UNIONS**

CIRCULAR: 15/2020

DIRECTIVES TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) IN SCHOOLS IN THE NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE

Introduction

As you know, the President of the Republic of South Africa has declared the outbreak of Covid-19 (Coronavirus) a national state of disaster in terms of the Disaster Management Act. The President then announced a range of extraordinary interventions to curb the spread of the coronavirus outbreak.

Following the President's announcement, the Minister of Basic Education, urgently convened a meeting of the Council of Education Ministers (CEM). The purpose of the meeting was to brief provinces on the outcome of the Cabinet meeting and to discuss practical implications of the President's announcement. An assessment was done on the current state of affairs regarding COVID-19 and it was felt that drastic steps were needed. The number of cases have been rising rapidly and an urgent is needed to contain the spread.

Schools in particular have been identified as one of the biggest threats in terms of the transmission. As announced by the President, the closing of schools should take place but the



department also needed to give parents time to prepare for it. The drastic step of closing schools has become necessary but the department and schools also need to ensure that measures are put in place to mitigate the impact.

Closing of Schools

In accordance with the pronouncement by the President on 15 March 2020, **all schools will be closed from 18 March 2020 and should resume on 14 April 2020**; unless determined differently. The Northern Cape Department of Education will officially communicate with parents via a circular if that happens. **Educators must report for duty on 18 to 20 March 2020 to finalise the assessment and issue report cards.** Schools are going to lose 10 school days as a result of the school closures. To compensate for lost days the June school holidays will be cut short by a week. Schools should extend tuition hours when they reopen on 14 April 2020.

It must be noted that this directive affects all public ordinary, public special, independent and private schools. Schools should note that a National Disaster implies that we are operating under extra ordinary conditions.

Additional measures include the following:

- All mass events of more than 100 people scheduled for March and April will be postponed or cancelled with immediate effect. The activities include the South African School Choral Eisteddfod (SASCE), all school sports and cultural programmes, matric farewells and school assemblies. Where small gatherings are unavoidable, schools/organisers will need to put in place stringent measures of prevention and control.
- Schools should ensure that all bathrooms have soap dispensers and they are encouraged to avail hand sanitisers.
- Schools are encouraged to issue food parcels using the additional NSNP stock to the most vulnerable learners for Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.
- The department will proceed with the Autumn Camps for the identified Grade 12 learners but will ensure that each venue only accommodate a maximum of 100 learners. The District Curriculum Units will communicate the logistics to the affected schools and learners.

Recovery Plans

The Department of Basic Education agreed on a number of steps that must be taken to ensure that education is not compromised.

- Each province, district, circuit and school must have a practical and comprehensive catch-up plan to be implemented.
- The Department will intensify the **Read to Lead** campaign with our partners to ensure that it is used to assist learners and parents alike to get involved in literacy initiatives.
- Schools are encouraged to give learners work they can do at home with the supervision of parents.
- Schools are encouraged to give learners workbooks and worksheets to be used to keep learners active on curriculum based initiatives.
- Schools are encouraged to introduce/intensify the Family Maths and Family Literacy Programmes.

We appeal to all schools to familiarise themselves with the directives of the Department of Health and NICD.

- Be vigilant and look out for symptoms of fever (more than 38 degrees Celsius), coughing and shortness of breath.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Practise safe cough etiquette. Cough or sneeze into your flexed elbow or into a tissue and immediately dispose of the tissue in a safe place e.g. bin.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth as well as handshakes
- See a doctor if you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, spaces and areas of the school.
- Do not share food and utensils.
- Identify, isolate and report learners, teachers or support staff showing symptoms especially if they have had contact with, or have travelled to highly affected countries as reported by the WHO.

Conclusion

We are facing a grave emergency, but if we act together, if we act now, and if we act decisively, we will overcome it.

As a Department we will continue to consult with our stakeholders such as teacher unions and SGBs to deliberate on these matters.

We will encourage our staff to get tested where possible and make sure we help those that are in need.

The current circumstances require extraordinary measures to curb the spread of infections. We are therefore calling for a change of behaviour amongst all learners, educators, parents, staff and education stakeholders. Schools must follow the directives from the President and the Minister - read the circular and share the content with parents.

Yours sincerely



GT PHARASI
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: EDUCATION

DATE: 2020 MARCH 16th