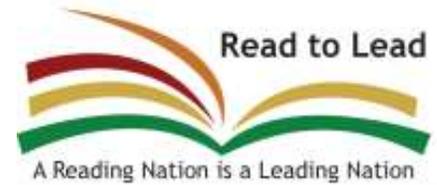




basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



30 JUNE 2020

BASIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT BRIEFS JOINT SITTING OF PORTFOLIO AND SELECT COMMITTEES ON STATE OF READINESS FOR THE RETURN OF SELECTED GRADES

The Department of Basic Education has today briefed a Joint sitting of the Portfolio and Select Committees on Basic Education on the state of readiness for the return of learners in selected grades on 6 July 2020. The meeting focused on the impact of COVID-19 has had on schooling and the plans for the return of more learners to schools next week.

The Deputy Minister of Basic Education, Dr Reginah Mhaule led the DBE delegation today. She told the Members of Parliament that efforts had been made to prepare the system to receive more learners as from 6 July 2020. She said the experiences of the months of May and June had given the sector invaluable safety lessons to be applied in the next phase of the staggered approach to the reopening of schools.

The Department's Director-General Mr Mathanzima Mweli delivered a presentation in which he outlined the steps taken by the sector in the context of COVID-19. He said learners in Grade R, 1, 2, 3, 6, 10 and 11 are expected to return but "we are not fixed to push all of them back to school".

"The plans are flexible in the context of the increase in the infection rate in communities. We also need to be mindful of the capacity of the health system to handle the spike in cases in the country," he said.

There are various options for parents who wish not to take their children back to school; they can register for Home Education but they will need to register. Parents can also enrol their children for online learning or even partner with the school to keep the child registered while the parent or caregiver takes the responsibility of fetching and dropping off the child's school work to and from home. Mr Mweli said the schools and parents needed to work together to ensure that no child is left behind.

"School nutrition was one of the reasons we wanted to reopen schools was to give access to learners who were deprived of the meals due to the lockdown. There was no access to the feeding when schools were closed. Now we have even expanded the feeding to learners who are not yet back in schools. We have now arranged for them to collect food parcels from schools," Mweli told members of the committees.

COVID-19 essentials such as masks, gloves, disposable aprons and cleaning and sanitation material were provided for food handlers, kitchens and storage facilities. The feeding programme for Grades 7 and 12 resumed successfully in most provinces. Plans are in place to provide feeding of learners not yet in school using different options: staggered feeding at school; cooked food collected at school; food parcels collected at

school; parcels collected at collection point other than school); and Feeding of learners not yet in school was planned to resume on 22 June.

The Director-General also clarified the allegation around the cost of the tanks saying that the Department did not know where the R170, 000. Members of the committees welcomed the clarity provided in this regard following social media posts in which incorrect information was circulated showing images that were not related to the work done by the Department of Basic Education.

The DG said the Department had transferred only R200m to the implementing agent, Rand Water, as part of agreement with the Department of Water and Sanitation. Mr Mveli explained that the tanks being used on social media are not the same kind of tanks being delivered by the Department through Rand Water.

He reported to the MPs that in some communities the tankers delivering water to schools as part of the emergency supply arrangements had been hijacked by members of the community in areas where there was no water supply for residents.

“We are sympathetic to the need for water in our communities however we plead that the tankers be allowed to deliver water to schools in order for us to continue with the fight against the coronavirus in schools. Minister Motshekga has raised the matter with the President so that government can find an integrated solution to the water supply challenges in those areas where there are serious challenges,” Mr Mveli said.

Media Enquiries:

Elijah Mhlanga: Head of Communications – 083 580 8275

Hope Mokgatlhe: Ministerial Spokesperson – 079 817 0427

Terence Khala: Media Liaison – 081 758 1546

ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION