



LIMPOPO

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF **EDUCATION**

STATEMENT BY THE LIMPOPO MEC FOR EDUCATION, MS POLLY BOSHILO ON READINESS FOR THE REOPENING OF SCHOOLS, 02 JUNE 2020

Greetings

Premier

MEC Ramathuba

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Premier,

Allow me to start by indicating that indeed these are difficult times, a difficult and a challenging period for the education sector, society at large as we are all called upon to learn to live with COVID-19.

As the Minister of Basic Education announced on the 19th May 2020, the phased-in reopening of schools starting with Grade 7 and Grade 12 warranted that we embark on a consultation process with a number of stakeholders in a manner that will ensure ownership and cooperation in terms of the new normal that confronts us. We have done so and have engaged all our strategic stakeholders.

The work we do requires greater responsibility and discipline from all of us, especially parents, caregivers and guardians. The measures that we have put in place require complete

cooperation from all of us in ensuring that the safety of our learners and everyone in a schooling committee is assured.

As a Department, we cannot adopt a know it all approach on these. Readiness to us means everyone must be on board in protecting our learners and ensuring compliance, as we cannot afford risk the lives in our facilities. So we understand the criticism, anxiety and the confusion with regards to our readiness. Led by the Premier, we wish to take you through where we are as we build towards the reopening of schools next week as per the phase-in approach.

Overview of the Province

The Limpopo Department of Education has **51 670** educators, responsible for **1 687 690** learners in the province.

Number of schools and learners per District

We have a total of **3 744** schools spread across 10 Education Districts:

No	District	No. of schools
1.	Capricorn North	439
2.	Capricorn South	435
3.	Mogalakwena	246
4.	Mopani East	353
5.	Mopani West	319
6.	Sekhukhune East	434
7.	Sekhukhune South	445
8.	Vhembe East	518
9.	Vhembe West	392
10.	Waterberg	163
TOTAL		3 744

Readiness of Provincial and Districts Offices

We have developed a plan in line with the Department of Public Service and Administration's return to work guidelines after easing of the national lockdown. To that effect:

- Critical and essential staff at head office, district and circuit offices have been reporting under lockdown level 5 and 4.
- All SMS members have returned to work.
- Currently consulting and finalising on a schedule for return to work for other employees under level 3 using the principle of staggering-in and rotations.
- Screening is being done at all premises and all office based staff have been issued with PPE
- The Department of Health has provided training to officials from district and circuit offices on screening.

- Health and safety committees have been established at all levels of operation to deal with COVID-19 matters.
- The process of re-organising offices to allow for 1.5 meters social distancing is underway.

Outline of phased-in approach of re-opening

This will be undertaken as guided by directions issued by the Minister of Basic Education in terms of Regulations made under the Disaster Management Act, regarding the Re-opening of Schools and Measures to address, prevent and combat the spread of COVID-19 issued on 29/5/2020.

- School management teams and educators were directed to report for work on 25th and 26th May 2020 respectively to start with preparations for reopening of schools.
- We are at this point expecting Grade 7 and 12 learners on 08 June 2020.

Hygiene Packs for schools

- The Department is responsible for provision of the following COVID-19 essentials for all departmental offices and all public schools within the province:
 - Hand sanitisers
 - Infrared non-contact thermometers
 - Surgical and cloth masks
 - Face shields/ visors
- A total 153 855 1litre units of sanitisers were procured and already distributed to all public schools opening for grades 7 and 12.
- We have procured 3 767 infrared non-contact thermometers and delivered 1 per public school.
- The Department has also received a donation of 800 thermometers and 19 370 cloth masks from Anglo American on 30 May 2020, meant for the following circuits: Ngwaabe, Moroke, Mapela, Mogodumo, Mahwelereng and Thabazimbi
- The Department is to provide two cloth masks to each learner, educator and support staff. We have delivered to all our educators and those have not received as yet, must check with their circuit offices. Due to the recent vandalism that we experienced, masks for learners will be at circuit offices by Friday.
- Every educator and all Grade 7 and 12 learners will also get one face shield/ visor for use during lessons presentation. These have been procured and some were already delivered at the provincial warehouse.
- Last month we appointed six (6) companies to provide PPE for learners. The companies were drawn from the supplier database of the Provincial Treasury and LEDET in our

deliberate effort to empower local companies. They were expected to deliver by Friday, 29 May but only one of them had delivered on Sunday, 31 May 2020 only delivered. This has forced us to abandon our contract with five that have failed to deliver and restart the process of getting other service providers. The frustration caused to our planning by their thoughtless actions is immeasurable; however I remain confident that we will deliver everything to our schools in time.

Progress on appointment of screeners

- On average two screeners were appointed per school, taking into account the learner enrolment
- We are mopping up on training of identified screeners and also working on long term arrangements for this and other forms of administrative support for schools.

Comorbidities in educators

- The Collective Agreement on Comorbidities has been endorsed and adopted by the ELRC Council on Saturday, 30 May 2020; we are awaiting signing by all parties.
- The Collective Agreement has a form that qualifying educators will use to apply and attach a medical report by a doctor. The application will be adjudicated by the Health Risk Manager.
- The department has 720 excess educators, 100 Ad hoc and 115 substitute posts that will be redeployed and employed to fill gaps that will be created as a result of approved comorbidities.
- Districts have data bases of unemployed educators and applications will be invited from them and other qualifying educators to fill the gaps where necessary.

Comorbidities in learners

- We have already developed a Learner Health questionnaire on comorbidities that was sent to schools so that parents/guardians can complete, sign off and return them to schools whereby they either disclose any chronic illness or declare the health status of their children.
- The Department shall provide educational support in case there might be affected learners in this area.

Learner Transport and school nutrition

- The Department held a teleconference with service providers for learner transport on 14 May 2020 to guide them on social distancing and good hygiene practices as they ferry learners. We also held another meeting with the National School Nutrition Programme

(NSNP) service providers to inform them about health and safety measures during COVID 19.

- It was emphasized that they should continue to use closed vehicles which must be cleaned and sanitized daily before they deliver foodstuffs.
- The Department further shared with both NSNP and Learner Transport service providers the phasing in approach of the reopening of schools and all implications thereof.

Cleaning of offices and schools

- A directive was issued for schools to use norms and standards funds to appoint cleaners and procure cleaning materials.
- Progress reports sourced from all our districts indicate that all schools have been cleaned, except for a particular case :
 - Mopani East: Leseding Primary School- The school in a mine which is closed. The school is generally deemed not ready to open. The Department is still engaging with stakeholders for alternative arrangements that can be put in place for learners.

Water and sanitation

- 524 schools with critical water supply challenges were identified.
- DBE through the partnership with the Dept. of Water and Sanitation is providing 473 with tanks out the 524, as 51 were found to have water tanks.
- Lebalelo Water Association delivered 20 tanks on Sunday, completing an overall delivery of 47 over the weekend. 27 more water tanks were delivered yesterday, bringing the total number of deliveries to 74. This is still work in progress and we will continue to update these numbers as it unfolds.
- Currently 515 schools have pit latrines and these schools have been identified as schools at risk for COVID -19. DBE is responsible for the construction of ablution facilities for 300 schools and LDoE is responsible for 215 schools.
- LDoE has finalised that process of appointment of service providers for the 215 schools, and engaged with getting them to start with construction immediately.
- We have worked on arrangement with DBE to provide temporary toilets for all these schools while we finalise on commencement of construction, which was unfortunately delayed by the COVID-19 lockdown.

Examination and assessment

- The postponement of Grade 12 May/ June examinations by DBE will put a strain on the management, administration and conduct of the Grade 12 Nov/Dec examinations as these two exams are going to be merged.
- The implications are dire as the number of candidates for the SC, NSC for the 2020 cohort, the 2019 NSC MEO candidates and candidates of previous NSC examinations is 178 419.
- It should be noted that the May/June examinations are equivalent to the Nov/Dec examinations in all respects. The standard of these two examinations are the same.
- Both of them are conducted in terms of the relevant regulations which must be strictly adhered to in all processes and procedures.
- Social distancing has to be practiced for this group which means more classrooms will be needed

Enrolments of Candidates for the May/June and Nov/Dec			
June Exams Senior Certificate (SC)	June Exams (NSC)	November Exams (FT & PT)	Merged Examination
18 134	34 355	125 930 (FT= 83 374)	178 419

E-Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to accelerate our efforts towards embracing the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Access to technology is no more a privilege but a right. Thus far, the Department has begun to lay a technological foundation that will enable us to achieve goals captured in our e-Education Strategy

- LDoE, PGITO and SITA have crafted and presented a provincial strategy for continuous learning during the lockdown and beyond to the Provincial Coronavirus Command Council.
- The strategy looks at internet connectivity across all levels of operation in the department, supply of working tools for educators and learners, procuring the necessary software and subscription to eLearning platforms, assistance for children with disabilities and on-line scholars' admission.
- Our audit of available ICT equipment in schools shows that we currently have 12 609 tablets, 14 966 laptops, 14 676 desktops and 1 014 interactive boards across the province.

- The department has made significant progress towards procurement of the required tools (desktop computers, laptops, tablets and interactive boards), and recently received delivery of 8 491 tablets for Maths, Science and Technology schools.
- I am happy to share with you that we have thus far managed to get 33 schools connected to the internet and another 18 still in line to be connected through the SA Connect project. We also have 2000 WIFI Routers with monthly 50GB bought for schools management system SA-SAMS
- Installation of Smart Classrooms: We have selected 106 secondary and primary schools at which smart classrooms would be installed. We are glad to announce that this project is nearing completion. Already the platform has been activated using Grade 12 learners and staff from the SJ van der Merwe Full Service School.
- Piloting and Robotics: the department has selected 110 primary schools and 2 teachers per school to pilot coding and robotics by the end of this financial year. The Office of the Premier and SITA have agreed to work with the Department in supporting its efforts to make the piloting of coding and robotics in selected schools a success. A pilot report will be provided at the end of this financial year.
- Installing smart classrooms and providing gadgets to managers, educators and learners does not necessarily lead to enhanced exploitation of the virtual space. It is people factor that matters. Hence the Department's investments in the following training and development activities:
 - Appointment of ICT champion per school – thus far 759 ICT champions have been appointed
 - Training of teachers on ICT integration – thus far the Department has capacitated 2,777 teachers inclusive of the 801 who enrolled with Wits University in February 2020
 - Training on online facilitation – the Department has commenced with the training of head office and district lead facilitators on online facilitator course to roll out the COVID-19 Orientation Programme to all managers, educators and learners. The Department also intends using the same capabilities to train educators to roll out the “re-organised and trimmed curricula”.

Limpopo Provincial Government-Mining Industry Task Team

- The Terms of Reference of this task team include skills development, collaboration on broadband and E-learning, and provision of learning devices for learners and teachers.
- Mines are currently presenting plans on how they can collaborate with the Department of Education on skills development (e.g. technical, artisanal, etc.), and rolling out broadband in communities.

Home Education

- Home Education is a programme alternative to attending public or independent schools where a parent of a learner of compulsory school going age may provide education for their child/ren at home.
- We have systems in place to assist parents who are opting for home education. More information can be found on our website and :
 - Baloyime@edu.limpopo.gov.za
 - MulaudziA@edu.limpopo.gov.za
 - 082 817 9113/ 079 511 8494

Conclusion

I am confident that after having engaged and consulted with our stakeholders in terms of what is required in schools, we are ready to welcome Grade 7 and 12 learners this month. The cooperation of parents, participation of parents every step of the way cannot be over emphasised. This new normal demands that we work together every single day.

We have set up a war room that will collate status reports from circuits on a regular basis to enable us to troubleshoot and intervene in special cases of non-compliance with safety protocols by any of our schools.

Our schooling community can contact us to report incidents that require urgent intervention:

- Tel: 082 451 4145 /082 550 6271/ 082 044 8222
- WhatsApp: 076 017 0010/076 308 2007
- Email: records@edu.limpopo.gov.za

What remains at the end of it all, is that we will not allow any school to open if it doesn't comply.

Thank you!