



Schools Evaluation Authority

Accountability • Quality • Respect



Best Practice:

Schools' Responses to Covid-19 Report

Teaching & Learning

Many teachers, especially in the primary schools, created a safe and positive learning environment by designing poster and wall displays on Covid-19 informing learners on how to keep safe. There were some exceptional displays with corridors and walls adorned with beautiful artwork, motivational messages and inspirational posters.

The five Golden Rules painted on the outside of a school reminded learners of the health and safety protocols. Teachers made posters with their photographs attached to personal messages to welcome learners when they returned to school. Learners loved these and specially mentioned that they were encouraging and gave them peace of mind.

A Foundation Phase teacher made a video for learners in each session to show them their classmates in a different session. There was great excitement when learners saw their friends on the video. Another school allowed learners to meet and talk to one another whilst adhering to social distancing for 30 minutes every Friday.

Apart from the painted dots and lines demarcating social distancing of 1.5 metres when lining up outside classrooms, a few schools had painted signs on the playground

and netball court so that learners could sit with their friends during break times. Most schools introduced staggered break times so that fewer learners were outdoors simultaneously.

Some schools made provision for physical activities. Learners in the Foundation Phase had body breaks so that they were able to spend a short time outside relaxing and enjoying the fresh air. Another primary school designed an obstacle course for its learners to complete a 10-minute run within the school premises. Learners were observed preparing for a recording of the Jerusalem dance. At all times, learners adhered to safety protocols.

An additional classroom was created when a spacious and well-ventilated storeroom was converted into a classroom to allow more learners to attend school each day.

A few high schools maximised instructional time to assist the Grade 12 learners to complete the curriculum by arranging assessments to be written after school, on Friday afternoons or Saturday mornings. Another school added two hours per day for supervised study sessions for Grade 12s with subject teachers available to assist them. Grade 12 teachers at one school organised and funded a Spring School.

The purpose of this report is to celebrate and share examples of best practice, imaginative and innovative solutions observed in responses to Covid-19 at a selection of schools visited across all education districts from August to November 2020.



Concerns about the gaps in the curriculum as learners progressed were addressed by including knowledge and skills that teachers considered essential to supplement the revised Annual Teaching Plans (ATPS). This also assisted Grade 9 learners with their subject choices in Grade 10 and prepared the Grade 11 learners to progress to Grade 12. Teachers met with teachers in lower grades to discuss areas requiring consolidation. A group of Grade 7 teachers met with the local high school to ascertain its expectations for Grade 8 learners.

Where resources were used effectively, it was observed that learners' curiosity was aroused and they asked stimulating and thought-provoking questions. Smaller classes enabled learners to speak more confidently in oral presentations and many learners showed signs of improvement.

Online teaching and learning were widely embraced by teachers. However, its success depended on whether learners, particularly vulnerable learners, had access to cell phones and data. Many principals and teachers contacted cell phone companies and individuals to ask for donations or reduced rates towards cell phones and data for learners who could not afford the costs. At one school, the alumni raised R40 000 for this purpose.

A high school in a rural area extended the range of its Wi-Fi network to make it possible for learners to download teaching and learning materials at any convenient time from the surrounding area. Some teachers used their own time and resources to upgrade their skills. A few primary schools, including those with minimal resources, invested in iCombo technology (a combination of a laptop and projector) to enhance teaching and learning.

At a recognised Google Classroom school, innovative lessons were both fun and

interactive. In another school, virtual lessons for Creative Arts were prepared on the Clever Touch interactive white board for all learners. Two Grade 7 classes were taught Mathematics simultaneously with the teacher present in one class and the lesson transmitted virtually to the other.

Teamwork was regarded as essential and teachers willingly assisted one another. A high school established an Information Technology Committee to continuously support teachers with online teaching and learning resources. Learners were taught how to use MS Teams and some teachers received internal training or attended workshops on how to use online platforms. Another school provided evidence that all teachers had certificates to prove that they had completed an online MS Teams course. One school selected a teacher to oversee and assist teachers in each grade.

Learners were supported well so that they could learn effectively. Many schools enjoyed the specialist services of Learning Support Teachers (LSTs), psychologists and social workers. At one school, the LST collaborated with the music teacher to incorporate music into the programme. One school which employed a full-time, registered clinical psychologist reported that learners, staff and parents benefited from consultations. At two schools in rural areas, a group of retired teachers tutored learners in Literacy and Numeracy and offered counselling to those in need of psycho-social support. A retired teacher assisted a school with its musical production.

At a few schools, beautifully maintained gardens extended positive teaching and learning environments. A gardener was very proud of his replica of Table Mountain and hedge formations which are the focal point of the school, otherwise surrounded by sand.

Behaviour & Safety

All learners and staff received two face masks. Some teachers bought and used face shields instead of face masks so that learners could hear them more clearly and precisely.

Screening processes at most schools were exemplary and the safety of learners and staff were given top priority. Learners' bags were sanitised at a school which identified these as a potential risk. At one school, an alarm prompted everyone to sanitise their hands every 30 minutes. At another school with a few taps, a water-saving device was built to allow 14 learners to wash their hands at the same time whilst adhering to social distancing.



Innovative systems were observed in ablution facilities, such as where learners clipped sanitised pegs outside the toilets that they had used so that non-teaching staff knew which toilets had to be cleaned and sanitised immediately.

Most schools included in the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) provided meals for learners and the community during lockdown, and when learners returned introduced changes in line with health and safety measures. Examples included teachers fetching lunch in sealed containers from the kitchen and serving the learners in their classrooms to avoid overcrowding and queues; learners receiving food parcels to take home for the days when they were not at school and some teachers buying food for vulnerable learners out of their



own pockets or supplementing the available meals with fruit. At three schools, vegetables from gardens were used to supplement meals for learners. It was pleasing and uplifting to observe governing body members, parents and the community assisting with the NSNP.



A principal and two departmental heads were present at all Learner Transport Scheme pickup points during the first few weeks of lockdown to check on safety and later to encourage parents to send their children to school. In another rural area, a community member volunteered to check the safety measures on the bus before it left every morning. Two staff members ensured that learners were screened before they boarded buses in the mornings and if they showed symptoms were sent home immediately. A principal also drove learners who were not feeling well home or to the local clinic as most parents did not have transport. Schools using the platooning and rotational timetables grouped learners on the same bus routes to strengthen health and safety protocols.

School premises were kept clean and safe by committed non-teaching staff. Everyone interviewed said that although they worked longer hours and had much more work, the safety of learners and staff was essential. At one school, Grade 7 learners baked cakes for the non-teaching staff as a gesture of appreciation.



Leadership & Management

Most principals and members of the school management team (SMT) gave clear direction to the staff and learners on the Temporary Revised Education Plan (TREP) based on the DBE Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and the WCED Guidelines. At one school, the principal and deputy principal monitored the quality and progress of teaching and learning because they were familiar with the ATPs of all the subjects. They also set the example by teaching grades and subjects that they did not usually teach. Effective orientation sessions were held and facilitated by SMTs. Principals in one circuit networked regularly to share best practices.

At a few schools, CCTV cameras enabled principals to monitor the classrooms and school premises to see how health and safety protocols were being implemented. This was regarded as a protective measure and means of safeguarding teachers should parents complain. One principal sent pictures to parents to reassure them of the measures taken to keep their children safe.

A principal used a loudhailer to communicate with parents about what was happening at school and encouraged parents to send their children back to school. Another principal visited each class daily to greet the learners and ensured the safety of all by not leaving the school premises until the last child had been fetched. Continued, good attendance was attributed to such a caring and nurturing environment.

At two schools, the staffroom was moved to a larger venue to establish a pleasant atmosphere and safer environment. A table tennis board was placed in one of the venues which encouraged teachers to relax and enjoy their breaks, whilst adhering to social distancing. At one school, the staff met daily to share experiences and for the principal to check on their wellbeing.

Three schools benefited from the services of university student teachers in a variety of ways from assisting with screening, performing duties during breaks, photocopying teaching and learning materials, providing counselling and relief teaching.



Governance, Parents & Community

Chairpersons and governing bodies provided positive support to the principals and SMTs. There was representation on the Covid-19 Health and Safety Committees and governing body members assisted in many ways to ensure that health and safety protocols were followed to the letter.



Some governing bodies were able to re-prioritise budgets and relevant policies, such as the Code of Conduct for Learners, Communication Policy to allow the use of cell phones, Finance Policy and Safety Policy to include all Health and Safety regulations were amended. Instances of re-prioritising the budget included a few governing bodies informing employees well in advance that it had sufficient funds to pay their salaries which gave teachers peace of mind. One governing body received sponsorships to pay its employees until the end of 2020.

At another school, the governing body approved the purchase of a Face Recognition Thermal Imaging Camera with temperature screening functions and registering staff and visitors on arrival and departure. A governing body provided funds for the celebration of World Teachers' Day. This generous and supportive token of appreciation was well received and boosted teachers' morale.

There were numerous instances of kindness and acts of selfless service to others. Many parents assisted by screening learners, cleaning and serving meals. Volunteers from the Walking Bus Project offered additional services to ensure that all learners adhered to health and safety protocols, especially wearing face masks correctly.

A farmer's wife downloaded and printed all the work packs for the children living on the farm so that they had access to teaching and learning materials. Learners and the school were grateful for her generosity. At a school not included in the NSNP, a Mother's Prayer Group prepared food packs for vulnerable learners and placed them discreetly under their desks.

Businesses and community members assisted many schools. The Imibala Trust donated weekly food parcels for 105 vulnerable families for the entire year. A local hotel gave financial

support to a rural primary school and paid for the taxi services to transport learners to and from school. The CLICK Foundation provided links for the free downloads of Languages and Mathematics resources, as well as buying a large smart television linked to a laptop and five interactive whiteboards for the school. Psycho-social support was offered by the Jet Foundation Wellness Programme whilst others assisted staff at two schools to allay anxieties.

At five schools, Life Choices, a non-governmental organisation (NGO), assisted with the orientation programme and offered psycho-social support to learners. The Safe Schools Programme and NGO, Just Grace, visited learners' homes to encourage them to

return to school. A local health clinic trained teachers to use the temperature scanners correctly and another clinic printed all the work packs required by learners. A group of home-based care nurses helped a school in a rural area with screening of its Foundation Phase learners every day so that teachers were available in their classrooms when the learners arrived. One school was assisted by the Department of Social Development to trace a learner who had not yet returned. The Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport helped with recreational activities for learners. Many schools acknowledged good relations and support from district offices and expressed gratitude for the allocations to cover the printing costs of work packs.

It is evident that the conscientious, multidisciplinary approach and exemplary teamwork observed at the schools and displayed by all stakeholders resulted in a positive impact on learners, teachers and non-teaching staff during a difficult time. The cited examples of best practice and, imaginative and innovative solutions demonstrate and highlight how schools went beyond the line of duty to ensure that health and safety protocols were followed whilst striving for quality teaching and learning for all learners in the Western Cape.