



MEETING WITH DBE ON THE REDUCTION OF 1M PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Dear MaPEU Amahle

The Leadership wishes to thank and appreciate overwhelming responses from majority of our structures, regarding the two contentious issues of the intention by DBE to reduce the physical distancing from 1m to a further 0,5m and abolishment of the 2021 October school holidays. The responses have indeed given us an ace on our sleeves, as we discussed from an informed point of view, as mandated by you, our membership.

Whilst there has been absolute unanimity from our structures on the refusal to reduce the physical distancing from 1m to 0,5m, the same could not be said on the proposed for the move to reduce October school holidays but the majoritarian view is that majority of teachers are sacrificing a lot, in using their spare time to go an extra-mile with learners, to do catch-up on lost time and shall at some point need a break for a deserved, to avoid possible burn-out.

In our recent meeting of Principals of the five teacher unions held this afternoon, Saturday, 14 August 2021, DBE has responded that *whilst they are alive to challenges that majority of Primary Schools are not able to return all grades as envisaged, it was never their intention to reduce the physical distance from 1m to 0,5m and further that they are equally surprised to see that being touted in the media space.* DBE further made a commitment and assurance that teacher unions and other Stakeholders in education shall always be genuinely consulted each time there shall be such a move and or intention to further reduce the physical distancing.

The five teacher unions were in unison and emphatic in urging DBE to factor in the pressures and mental health of teachers, as they grapple with and endeavour to catch-up on the lost time and further that DBE should

considerate and hurry slowly in their intention to scrap the October school holidays. DBE had promised to have noted the concern sharply raised by the teacher unions and promised to table that before their next HEDCOM meeting.

For now, there is no formal decision taken on the issue of scraping the October school holidays.

Whist PEU values the need for schooling to return to normal, for purposes of clawing-back the lost teaching time, that cannot, even for a moment, be done at the expense of the health and lives of our teachers and learners.

As we indicated before, the over-arching challenge is that majority of our schools are defined by over-crowding, concomitant to severe shortage of infrastructure, which pre-dates the advent of COVID-19.

PEU further holds a firm view that the solution to this current conundrum bedevilling majority of our schools lies in the provision of adequate classrooms and additional teachers.

We thus urge all schools to desist from drowning in this reining pool of confusion on the social distancing and stick to rotational timetabling as per provisions in the gazette, in an event they find it is impossible to comply with the mandatory 1m.

May we urge you MaPEU Amahle! to ways join efforts in ensuring that our schools do not become super spreaders of this virulent and deadly virus but rather serve as busters for its transmission to our teachers, learners, and communities at large.

For and on behalf of the Professional Educators' Union!

Yours truly

Ben Machipi

General Secretary