

SCHOOL SAFETY SUMMIT DECLARATION

BIRCHWOOD HOTEL, BENONI, GAUTENG, 9 DECEMBER 2015
CONVENED BY THE NATIONAL EDUCATION COLLABORATION TRUST (NECT)

We, the delegates to this National School Safety Summit, representing learners, teachers, school principals, school governing bodies, business, development partners, labour, faith-based organisations, universities and education departments, acknowledge that levels of school violence in South Africa remains unacceptably high.

We are aware that:

1. Violence in all forms, including school and gender-based violence, has its roots in our legacy of colonialism and apartheid as well as our current socio-economic challenges, including extreme inequality and often discriminatory cultural practices and gender norms;
2. Communities with high rates of neighbourhood crime and violence experience higher levels of school violence;
3. Safety, security and non-violence are critical requirements to the achievement of improved educational outcomes and integral to our vision of quality basic education and the creation of a non-violent society; and
4. Disruption of learning and teaching by communities has significant negative impacts on learner progression and achievement and far reaching long term effects on development in the affected communities and on the future of our country.

We therefore commit ourselves to work together in all our schools and school communities to build peace, security and respect for our foundational constitutional values of human dignity, equality and freedom.

We further declare that:

1. We shall work towards building a values-driven culture that promotes non-violence and respect for fundamental human rights in all our schools, thereby strengthening relationships between learners, teachers, parents and communities;
2. We shall build transparency and trust within schools, with safety seen as a shared and common good;
3. We shall work to strengthen the available mechanisms that enable teachers, learners and parents to participate more effectively in identifying safety concerns and developing measures to enhance safety;
4. We shall work together to build parental and community support and partnerships to eradicate violence and abuse in and around all our schools. Communities must commit to protecting schools as learning spaces and to refrain from disrupting learning and teaching for any reason, including service delivery dissatisfaction and local politics;
5. As school governing bodies, principals, teachers, parents and government authorities, we shall ensure that learners learn without fear and that all schools are free from physical punishment, bullying and all forms of abuse, including sexual abuse;
6. As teachers and teacher unions, we shall work to eradicate corporal punishment from all our schools and build a culture of positive discipline which reinforces the fact that corporal punishment is outlawed and that the practice, in whatever form, will not be tolerated;
7. As teachers and learners, we shall ensure that all teachers and learners understand that verbal, physical and sexual abuse of teachers and learners will not be tolerated;
8. As learners, we shall respect our teachers and refrain from retaliating violently;
9. As education authorities, we shall support teachers and schools to improve classroom management as well as behaviour management practices in school communities; and
10. As education authorities we shall support and train school management and provide governance to build accountable management practices to ensure that teachers are in class, managing classes, overseeing learners and are held accountable where this does not happen.

This Declaration binds all stakeholders present here today to work together to establish peace, stability and security in and around our educational institutions. It lays the basis for the development of a roadmap outlining future actions to be taken by the various stakeholders to build a culture of peace and non-violence in all our schools to enable effective learning and teaching.

Committed to ensuring that **90%** of learners pass mathematics, science and languages with at least **50% by 2030**

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