



To: Principals

Topic: **How to identify a psychological need among learners**

Message Objective(s): To build capacity for principals to constitute and operationalise School Based Support Teams (SBST) at their schools.

Message: As matter of policy, schools are mandated to constitute School Based Teams (SBST) to deal with psychosocial issues of learners and referrals. Research has shown that these teams are not adequately constituted at best but largely not functional. The guidance this week therefore focuses on how to constitute and operationalise this crucial structure.

The establishment, functioning and support of the SBST at any school is the ultimate responsibility of the principal. The structure must include.

- an SMT representative
- SBST coordinator
- phase representatives
- learning support teacher or Grade teacher where applicable
- teachers with special skills or LO/ Life skills teacher/counselling
- additional members from sister departments, NGOs, or specialists from Full-Service Schools or DBST members
- Parents/guardians of learners being supported
- Learner Support Agent

The following is the summary of the functions of the SBST at a school:

- Study reports-coordinate all learner, teacher, curriculum and support related issues in the school
- Access support-identifying school needs with a focus on barriers to learning at learner, teacher, curriculum, and school levels.
- Provides support and training
- Monitor and evaluate the work of the structure to strengthen and improve
- Identify and mobilise school -based assets and external additional resources
- Encourage peer/collegial support

The SBST need to identify learners needing support and must meet regularly to provide such and record their activities. It is critical that the principal is a member of this structure to give it direction and support for it to be effective.

From: George Taodzera (Georget@nect.org.za) 079 368 0612

References: Basic Psychosocial Skills: A COVID-19 Responder's Guide, Psychosocial Support: A model for South African Schools.