



To: District Directors, Circuit Managers, Teachers, Parents

Topic: We can build back better our education system on the back of a strengthened Psychosocial approach.

Message Objective(s): Strengthening the psychosocial approach in schools by addressing common barriers to learning.

Message: Building learner psychosocial support model at schools

We can build back better the education system by strengthening the psychosocial approaches. One way of doing this is by mitigating impact of barriers to learning in South Africa.

Barriers to learning: These can be clustered into three types

- **Intrinsic barriers-** the child experiences these and they include physical and mental health related issues. The schools must identify these barriers at an early age to mitigate the impact of these. Enough psychologists must be in the employ of the department to significantly reduce the number of learners at risk. Schools must strive to get clinics and hospitals staff to assess and address health issues at the level of the school. All schools must have health assessments at schools at least twice a quarter.
- **Systemic barriers-** These are inherent in the education system: poor teaching can be addressed through QLTC structures and school management teams. Lack of assistive devices for learners with disabilities in the ordinary classrooms. This can be addressed through the LTSM committee deliberately reserving a certain percentage of the budget to cater for these. Inappropriate pedagogy and assessment practices must be addressed to reduce the impact these have on learners. The district should also increase support to teachers to deal with psychosocial issues by building capacity.
- **Societal barriers-** child labour severe poverty, disease outbreaks, violence, urban/rural disparities. Schools can work with communities to protect children from violence and provide basic food requirements at schools. Schools must become watchdogs and reporting issues of abuse of children to communities. Having dialogues with learners and communities will reduce the severity of societal barriers to learning.

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References: Basic Psychosocial Skills: A COVID-19 Responder's Guide, Psychosocial Support: A model for South African Schools. (Download resources on our website (www.nect.org.za)