



**To:** District Directors, Circuit Managers, Teachers, Parents

**Topic:** Building an education system that works for all.

**Message Objective(s):** How psychosocial support can assist in reducing the number of children who drop out of the schooling system.

**Message:** Building schools that have Psychosocial Support at the heart of teaching and learning.

Research says that 48% of children who start in Grade 1 in South Africa never get to finish school. Why is the dropout rate so high? Is the education system working towards reducing this high number of dropouts? While there are a variety of reasons for children to drop out of school, psychosocial issues are very prominent and addressing these at school and community level can see a reduction in the number of drop-out.

Schools and in particular educators, must focus on addressing the psychosocial barriers to learning experienced by many learners in the schooling system. Psychosocial support (PSS) is a crucial aspect of the learner well-being that really needs attention against the backdrop of the high incidence of drop outs in the South African education system.

The schools need to be places not only where teaching and learning take place, but also provide a secure and warm environment for children to deal with whatever social ills they might be facing. In this regard principals and teachers need to incorporate learner well-being in the instruction to children. Addressing children's psychosocial needs will make them want to stay in the school longer and will motivate them to want to excel in education rather than drop out.

Every school must have a school-based support team (SBST) that deal specifically with learner welfare and learner barriers. The SBST must follow up on all learners who drop out, find out the reasons, reach out to social welfare and other government departments for intervention to address challenges. Currently there are no records or follow up on dropouts in many schools and the SBST teams in most schools only focus on referrals at the end of the year.

Deliberately addressing children's psychosocial needs will ultimately reduce the huge dropout rate that the South African education system is currently battling with and build an education system that works for all.

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