



Quality learning @ home

LET'S STOP THE SPREAD

Part 4: “Keeping up with the Curriculum”

Minister Debbie Schäfer | 17 April 2020

Today, I am very excited to announce the launch of a new lesson planning platform intended to assist teachers, parents and learners in this new era of @ home learning.

In Part 1, 2 and 3 of our series on Quality Learning @ home, we looked at a variety of digital resources that are available for learning, what our Grade 12s can do to continue studying and how parents can encourage reading as a daily activity in their homes.

Today, I would like to talk about the curriculum itself, and how we, as a Department are trying to ensure that we “keep up with the curriculum” as far as possible, despite the challenges we may face.

Our curriculum is based on the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) which is a comprehensive, and concise policy document covering all subjects in each grade. Every teacher should be familiar with the contents of this document within their required field of learning, however, it can still be quite daunting, particularly on how to plan and pace each subject so that the full curriculum can be covered within the school year.

In order to assist our teachers, the WCED earlier this year launched a resource called the Teaching and Assessment Plans (TAPs) which outlines the concepts/skills/values to be taught per term, per week, per grade from ECD right through to Grade 12. The resource includes lesson plans, learning activities, suggested assessment tasks and links to digital resources, both on and off-line. It also provides an indication of the examination requirements after Terms 2, 3 and 4.

These documents were warmly received by our teachers at the time, and can be downloaded to assist them throughout the school year. We were extremely excited to monitor how TAPS would improve curriculum delivery in schools and assist our educators, especially our new educators, with their classroom planning.

Now, throw a deadly worldwide virus and the closure of schools into the mix. For a teacher this can be very stressful. With extended school closures, there is the obvious concern of how to complete the curriculum. While we currently have no certainty about when schools

will reopen or if future school holidays will be cut, we do, as a Department, know the CAPS and what can and should be delivered.

The TAPS is now proving to be as useful as ever. Teachers can download the TAPS to develop lesson plans for the learners, parents can see what their children should be learning this term, and learners in the senior grades can start research or reading on topics that may lie ahead.

It is a great platform, but how do we make it EVEN MORE accessible for our teachers, parents and learners?

Over the past few weeks, the WCED Curriculum Directorate has been working on a wonderful lesson planning platform that will allow for teachers, parents and learners to access weekly lesson plans and resources that are in line with the curriculum and includes a focus on the key concepts/skills/values to be developed when covering subject topics over the school year. Doing this will help the WCED to do a level of curriculum trimming which is important in the current schooling climate. Other features are:

- the lessons are in English and Afrikaans for all grades, as well as isiXhosa in the Foundation Phase grades. IsiXhosa Language is covered as a subject in Grades 4-12
- the lessons aim to take a learner step-by-step (in lower grades with the help of a more knowledgeable person) through the important teachings
- lessons are designed in such a way that it can be printed and as such be distributed to learners
- the lessons are also available in digital format which allow learners to access and work with it on digital devices
- for all these lessons, the learner's subject textbooks are regarded as the primary resource needed. In the primary school, learners also have the Workbooks in certain subjects as a key resource. Many other resources are available for learners on the different platforms created by the WCED such as the WCED ePortal, Telematics website, Tips for Success booklet, past question papers and memoranda, etc.

Yes, it provides an opportunity to “keep up with curriculum” from one's own home!

The interactive platform includes all subjects covered each week in the curriculum and includes resources, activities, images, stories, lesson plans and video lessons, when available.

In a further initiative to expand access of our learners to these lessons, a new WhatsApp interactive platform was developed. This platform includes all the subjects covered each week in a phase. By just touching on the Resources or Lesson Plan buttons per each subject, anyone using the lessons will have access to related resources, activities, images, stories, lesson plans and video lessons, as is available.

The platform has currently been developed for the Foundation Phase and will be updated weekly. The other grades will be included as well and are being finalised.

The choice to use WhatsApp was made because many learners, teachers and parents are using the platform already. The lesson via this platform will be sent to teachers via our district directors and subject advisors. These can then be distributed to learners and parents via their teachers. It is also available on our ePortal:

<https://wcedportal.co.za/eresource/92236>

We are very aware of the fact that some parents may not have access to WhatsApp or the internet.

We are therefore encouraging schools where learners do not have access to digital resources to print the weekly lessons for distribution at feeding schemes, where possible, and are investigating other means of delivery.

This week, the WCED will be sending a survey to all principals to determine which schools and grades can or are utilising digital platforms for distance learning, and which schools and grades need to utilise non-digital methods of gaining access to learning materials, so that we have a more focused and systematic approach to the distribution of materials.

We need to have a non-digital, as well as a digital approach to curriculum delivery during this time, and even beyond.

The world has already shifted into a digital landscape, and we need to encourage our schools and teachers to embrace it. A blended approach to learning has already begun. We just need to ensure that ALL our learners benefit.

Before lockdown, the WCED asked schools to ensure that learners can take home textbooks and workbooks so that they had these resources on hand to do revision and activities. These books cover the whole curriculum and should continue to guide learners (and in some instances, their parents) on what is required next. Together with the TAPS, these should be utilised as far as possible.

At the end of the day, a parent cannot replace a teacher, however, they do have a role to play to keep their children positively stimulated and engaged in educational activities. Our role is to try, as far as possible, and through as many means as possible, to get our learners and parents the support they need during this very challenging time.

This new platform is just one of these exciting support measures!

(Please note, Minister Schafer will be addressing the issue of free broadcasted lessons to learners, as well as teacher training in distance learning using a variety of channels in upcoming parts to her series: Quality Learning @ home).