

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL TIMETABLES FOR THE RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS DURING COVID-19



basic education

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1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

On 31 December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) China Country Office was informed of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. On 7 January 2020, the causative pathogen was identified as a novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). Countries across the world including South Africa, have taken drastic measures to curb the spread of the virus and reduce the extent to which infections are increasing. Some of these measures included promotion of hygiene practices, physical/social distancing, prohibiting gatherings in every sphere of the life of people that are more than 50 in number, closing of boarders and prohibiting non-citizens to enter the country, screening and testing of international travelers coming back home from other parts of the world and promoting self-isolation and quarantining of those who present with symptoms.

In South Africa, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced drastic measures on 15 March 2020, to curb the spread of COVID-19. The President's announcement included the closure of schools from Wednesday, 18 March 2020. Following the subsequent National Lockdown from 26 March to 30 April 2020, President Ramaphosa announced, on 23 April 2020, the easing of lockdown restrictions from 01 May 2020. To balance the need for resuming economic activity with the imperative to contain the virus and save lives, the President announced a new approach where the measures being implemented are determined by the direction the pandemic is taking, as well as the readiness of the health system to manage infections. The closure of schools has led to a loss of teaching and assessment time, which has had a devastating impact on curriculum coverage.

In the wake of the re-opening of schools, recovery from the loss of teaching and assessment time, as well as the protection of life remain the primary focus in the Basic Education sector. To achieve these two priorities, proper school planning, including the reworking of the timetable, will be required. This timetable should give a clear vision and comprehensive picture of school activities, i.e. what work is being done during which period, where, by whom and when. Each timetable will have to embrace the notion of a phased-in approach to the return of learners, as determined by the Council of Education Ministers.

2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to explore the different models schools can follow when they re-open, while adhering to the physical/social distancing regulations and other necessary measures. This will help minimise the risks of learners and the personnel in schools contracting and spreading the coronavirus disease. Due to the diversity of the landscape of the country's schooling system, this guideline will look at three different models, including learners going to school on a rotational basis, learners alternating classes on different days of the week, as well as the use of a platooning system. The advantages and disadvantages of each of the three models will also be highlighted so that schools can select models that best suit their contexts. Of utmost importance is ensuring that lives are protected while the Basic Education sector also ensures that its primary role of providing education to learners is fulfilled.

3 POST COVID-19 LEVEL 5 LOCKDOWN SUGGESTED MODELS

Proposed post COVID-19 level 5 lockdown schooling models must continue to provide welcoming, respectful, inclusive and supportive environments to all while preventing the spread of COVID-19. Recovering the lost teaching and learning time may require differentiated timetabling approaches. Three models are proposed namely, *platooning*, *alternating days per week* and *bi-weekly rotational attendance*. Sometimes a combination of models may be necessary in overcrowded schools where, for instance, both *platooning* and *alternative days* are implemented to ensure that COVID-19 protocols are adhered to without compromising teaching and learning. It needs to be recognised that no single model will be perfect, and that each model will impact differently on learners, teachers and support staff.

The following must be considered in choosing a model suitable to the school:

- The school operating at a maximum of 50% capacity
- Availability of teachers and support staff for the approach selected by a school community
- Availability of classrooms to accommodate learners sitting at least 1.5 metres apart
- Availability of desks to allow for one learner in a desk
- Amount of time available in a day to determine the duration of the period by subject (e.g. 30, 45 or 60 minutes)
- Equitable allocation of periods/time for teachers to cover the scope of the curriculum to save the academic year
- Equitable allocation of time for all learners to save the academic year
- Keeping all curriculum enrichment programmes on hold until further notice
- Amount of curriculum to be covered
- Ability of the school to provide online support to learners at home
- Learner transport arrangements to school
- Availability of adequate staff to supervise learners accommodated in hostels

3.1

PLATOONING

The Dictionary of South African English (<https://dsae.co.za/entry/platoon/e05679>) defines “platooning” as: “Schools or a schooling system in which two separate sets of teachers and pupils use the same school building, one set in the morning and one in the afternoon”. Alternatively, the same dictionary also defines “platooning” as a “school or system in which classes use limited classroom space in turns on a rotational basis, being taught outdoors for the remainder of the school day”, weather permitting.

The utilisation of platooning in South African schools is not new especially in provinces where in-migration of learners, places strain on available educational resources. The current experience of platooning is that it places added burden on teachers, support staff and learners. It also results in a shorter school day that has consequences for the depth and scope of learning. It may lead to added pressures for teachers, such as less time for preparation and marking. For support staff, such as therapists, it may result in longer school days, as the same members of staff may have to provide support to different groups of learners.

An important consideration will be the safety of learners during winter, especially when lessons may end close to sunset for some learners and they are still expected to commute and/or walk home. A financial implication will be the additional cost of learner transport to carry learners to and from school for both the morning and afternoon shifts. For schools that have hostel facilities, there will be children both in classrooms and hostels almost all of the time. This will have implications for staffing. Special attention must be given to younger learners, as well as learners with certain disabilities and specific learning needs who may not be able to concentrate optimally in the second shift during the latter parts of the school day. To avoid fatigue, it is advisable for lower grades and children at low developmental levels to be accommodated in the first half of the day.

In the context of COVID-19 and the special arrangements for schooling in a risk-adjusted differentiated strategy, platooning will provide a consistent rhythm for learners, parents, guardians and caregivers. That is, learners will benefit from coming to school every day, and, in many parts of South Africa, this will mean daily access to the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP).

3.1.1

Advantages of platooning in the South African context

ADHERENCE TO COVID-19 PROTOCOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows sufficient space for physical/social distancing Reduces class size and allows for physical/social distancing The school has a smaller group to deal with and can observe the COVID-19 protocols for smaller groups Facilities like laboratories, libraries and workshops can comply and adhere to COVID-19 requirements
BENEFITS TO LEARNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows manageable/controllable group-sizes and enhances individual learner attention More contact time is better suited for young learners in the Foundation Phase Allows all learners to attend school throughout the week Encourages uninterrupted NSNP, i.e. NSNP may not be affected and learners will benefit
BENEFITS TO PARENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows all learners to attend school throughout the week so that parents can go to work
CURRICULUM COVERAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides sufficient contact time for all subjects in all grades Minimises the loss of contact time, i.e. only two hours of contact time is lost
LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps schools to better manage overcrowding of learners Protects teaching and learning time as learners are not delayed at the school gate/s for screening Allows learners to study at home during the day and attend school in the afternoon (and vice versa)

3.1.2

Disadvantages of platooning in the South African context

ADHERENCE TO COVID-19 PROTOCOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not allow for sufficient time for cleaning spaces in between the rotation of the two groups of learners• Managing outgoing and incoming learners will be a challenge in view of the need to screen and sanitise incoming learners while maintaining physical/social distancing
SHORTCOMINGS FOR LEARNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some subjects such as Mathematics are better taught in the morning only
SHORTCOMINGS FOR TEACHERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers would not have enough time to prepare lessons and mark learners' books• Teachers travelling with common transport need to re-arrange lift clubs
SHORTCOMINGS FOR PARENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents may not be able to transport learners in the morning and afternoon
SHORTCOMINGS FOR SUPPORT STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Added burden is placed on support staff, such as therapists, who will be required to provide support to both rotating groups of learners
CHALLENGES w.r.t. LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public transport in the morning and afternoon may be a challenge, and learners may be forced to leave home in the morning only to attend school later in the day

3.2**ALTERNATING DAYS PER WEEK**

Alternating days per week implies that grades/groups of learners alternate classes/lessons on different days of the week, e.g. alternate days. This approach will require careful planning by School Management Teams, teachers and support staff. Curriculum planning is important to ensure curriculum coverage in different subjects, and to provide therapeutic support to learners. Daily screening of learners will be possible in this model. Ensuring that communication with parents, guardians and caregivers is done carefully and will be imperative for this approach. Some provinces may consider using alternative teaching spaces such as school halls or church halls. Adherence to the standard operating procedure for the prevention, containment and management of COVID-19 must apply at all times.

3.2.1**Advantages of alternating days per week in the South African context**

ADHERENCE TO COVID-19 PROTOCOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Allows sufficient space for physical/social distancing during the NSNPReduces class size and allows for physical distancingThe school has a smaller group to deal with and can more easily observe the COVID-19 protocols
BENEFITS TO LEARNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monitoring of learning is easierAllows for regular follow-up and consolidation of new conceptsMore teachers would be available to support smaller classes
BENEFITS TO TEACHERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Manageable teacher workloadProvides more time and space for teachers to plan lessons, design assessments and mark learners' work

BENEFITS TO PARENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working parents will be able to go to work on days when learners are attending school
CURRICULUM COVERAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuition will be more frequent and assessment will be more regular Provides for an opportunity to offer new learning approaches Frequency in attending school will encourage learners to be more focussed on school work
LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More shorter breaks between contact time than in the platooning model Learners get used to the routine and requirements of the new normal Time is saved as fewer learners will line up for screening and hand washing

3.2.2 Disadvantages of alternating days per week in the South African context

ADHERENCE TO COVID-19 PROTOCOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical/Social distancing in a combined school will be problematic
SHORTCOMINGS FOR LEARNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foundation Phase learners will find self-directed learning difficult Poor learners will be without NSNP meals on non-attending school days Contact time will be limited
SHORTCOMINGS FOR LEARNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a learner misses a class, (s)he might be left behind for a long time and might become discouraged Exposure of children to social ills may increase at unsupervised homes Not all learners have equal access to e-learning Some families do not have a dedicated space conducive for study at home

SHORTCOMINGS FOR TEACHERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers need to prepare online lessons / extra homework for those that do not attend class on assigned days There is constant catch-up of the curriculum every other day
SHORTCOMINGS FOR PARENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children with working parents may be left at home unsupervised on non-attending school days Burden on parents when learners have to continue with school work at home Financial impact of paying full scholar transport when learners go to school every other day
SHORTCOMINGS FOR SUPPORT STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Splitting of learners into smaller groups will result in non-specialist teachers having to support all subjects
CHALLENGES w.r.t CURRICULUM COVERAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some subjects may not be taught on certain days affecting continuity negatively All grades will lose additional contact time Not possible to cover lost time in all grades. Consequently, it is not possible to finish the curriculum in one year considering the number of teaching days still available in a year This option may move the system from outcome closure to calendar closure
CHALLENGES w.r.t LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More complicated for schools to plan Lack of supervision in hostels When teachers are absent due to illness this option makes it a challenge to have a replacement teacher at short notice May be disruptive for existing arrangements where siblings travel and/or walk together to and from school

3.3**BI-WEEKLY ROTATIONAL ATTENDANCE**

Bi-weekly rotational attendance refers to groups/grades of learners attending school on alternate weeks. This model will require careful planning by teachers to balance teaching time in the classroom and develop appropriate homework activities while learners are not at school for a week. Teachers must track learner progress carefully to ensure curriculum coverage is achieved. This model probably lends itself more to the lower grades such as the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase. Communication with parents, guardians and caregivers on a bi-weekly basis in a rotational attendance model is important and must ensure follow-up/ follow-through on the completion of homework activities. The monitoring of learners that stay at home or in a hostel for a week at a time may be challenging for working parents.

3.3.1**Advantages of bi-weekly rotational attendance in the South African context**

ADHERENCE TO COVID-19 PROTOCOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Allows sufficient space for physical/social distancing during the NSNPBetter control over learners to manage physical/social distancing and learner discipline. More teachers can assist the gradesReduces class size and allows for physical/social distancingThe time-table will be easy to design to ensure physical/social distancingAmple time to prepare for unforeseen circumstances, e.g. absenteeism, COVID-19 cases, etc.
BENEFITS TO LEARNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provides for individual attention and improves quality of learningMore teachers present at school creates opportunities for learners to consult when they need assistance and seek clarification when needed

BENEFITS TO TEACHERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides time and opportunities for shared lesson planning Teacher workloads are manageable Prevents fatigue and burn-out of teachers and learners
BENEFITS TO PARENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working parents will be able to go to work on week-days when learners are attending school
LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school's timetable remains constant. Less administrative burden in relation to timetabling Specialised rooms such as libraries, laboratories and workshops will not be overused Allows for innovative curriculum re-design to suit this arrangement

3.3.2 Disadvantages of bi-weekly rotational attendance in the South African context

ADHERENCE TO COVID-19 PROTOCOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners lose an opportunity for consistent screening
SHORTCOMINGS FOR TEACHERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the return to school in the second week, more focus will be on revision and catch-up based on what learners have been able to remember and comprehend after a week Continuity and momentum is lost. Mostly, younger learners may forget what has been taught and learnt Constant catch-up of the previous week's work every other week

SHORTCOMINGS FOR LEARNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners on the NSNP will be without school meals in the non-attending school weeks. Learners will only benefit every second week from the NSNP Learners lose learning momentum during non-attending weeks For the lower grades, the amount of work that must be done at home for a week might be too much to comprehend. Younger learners need continuous face-to-face classroom interaction. Learners in lower grades are likely to struggle with self-directed learning Not all learners have access to online resources or e-learning during the week of non-attendance Some families do not have a dedicated space conducive for studying at home. Situations at home may not be suitable for distance learning Learners will receive inadequate or no school-based psychosocial care in non-attending weeks
SHORTCOMINGS FOR PARENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children with working parents will be left at home unsupervised on non-attending weeks. Some families may not have caregiving means to support children when parents are at work. Safety of learners will be compromised when they are left unattended at home Financial impact of paying full scholar transport when learners go to school every other week
CHALLENGES w.r.t CURRICULUM COVERAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All grades will lose additional contact time Curriculum coverage will be compromised
CHALLENGES w.r.t LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers may be underutilised in the week that learners are not at school When teachers are absent due to illness, this option makes it a challenge to catch-up missed school time and to find a replacement teacher at short notice May be disruptive for existing arrangements where siblings travel and/or walk together to and from school and siblings are not in the same week of the rotating bi-weekly schedule

4.1**SCHOOL TYPE, SIZE AND SUBJECT OFFERINGS**

The Sector has primary, secondary, combined, special, schools of skill, small and multi-grade schools, and the nature of each of these schools will impact on timetabling depending on the circumstances of each type of school. It should be noted that some schools may not need to use any of the three models described above. For example, schools with large establishments that have few learners may not necessarily be affected, as they have ample space. Such schools can operate normally while observing physical/social distancing. High enrolment schools should consider one of the three options that will be most suitable to comply with the requirements of physical/social distancing. Where necessary, additional teachers and support staff should be provided to schools by the provincial departments. Therefore, the application of any of the options or models presented must be considered against the school *type, size and subject offerings*. The timetable should suit the option chosen by a particular school.

4.2**DEPARTMENTAL REGULATIONS/POLICIES**

According to the PAM document, all educators should be at school during the formal school day, which should not be less than seven hours per day, except for special reasons and with the prior permission of the Principal. The Principal will exercise his/her discretion in this regard based upon provincial policy. The seven-hour day includes the breaks and the period(s) in which the learners are not at school. Interim regulations must be drafted to enable the risk-adjusted differentiated strategy for the re-opening of schools.

4.3

PRIORITISATION TO MAXIMISE THE AMOUNT OF TIME AVAILABLE

In the proposed plan, learners in the exit grades namely, Grade 12, Grade 7 and in Year 4 in schools of skill and highest grade in SID (Severe Intellectual Development) schools will be at school every day, and all subjects in these grades will be taught. Secondary schools could consider having Grade 11 learners at school as well, depending on the risk-adjusted level. In primary schools, lower grades should be prioritised for both economic and educational reasons and that more focus should be on numeracy and literacy. In secondary schools, on the other hand, the focus should be on the *key subjects*. The curriculum section in the provinces will provide guidance on which subjects should be prioritised. Schools should maximise the use of all time available.

4.4

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE AND DIFFICULTY VALUE OF SUBJECTS

For secondary schools, particularly Grades 11 and 12, it is important that **all** subjects are taught even if it means shortening the duration of the periods. For the Foundation Phase, the emphasis must be on numeracy and literacy. In the case of small and multi-grade schools, all subjects could be taught while still observing physical/social distancing. Provinces should consider giving more attention to the subjects that learners usually underperform in, as trends from the diagnostic reports and benchmark studies show.

The reworked timetable must be designed in such a way that:

- (a) All subjects are catered for to afford each subject time to complete the re-organised and trimmed curriculum
- (b) Notional time per individual subject as per policy is adhered to, as far as possible
- (c) Teaching time is protected and maximised. This must be balanced with the fact that complexities of providing scholar transport may result in a longer school day for some learners
- (d) Revised assessment and examination times are accommodated to ensure that what is taught is sufficiently assessed
- (e) Free periods and breaks must be created to avoid both teacher and learner fatigue and burnout
- (f) Free periods must be provided for teachers and support staff so as to increase their efficiency and also provide time for their correction of learner work and other administrative tasks
- (g) Where classes will be split to accommodate physical/social distancing, a timetable must take this into consideration and ensure both classes are allocated equal amounts of teaching time
- (h) For lower primary and special schools, the principle of play and recreation must be factored in
- (i) Careful attention needs to be given to provide time to rest (to avoid fatigue) and recreation time (to avoid monotony)
- (j) Reduced classroom size, in relation to the number of learners per class to ensure physical/social distancing
- (k) Staggering the beginning and ending of the school day needs to be considered to avoid congestion
- (l) Assemblies, sports, games and other events, which create crowded conditions must be cancelled

6.1**CONDITIONS**

Adhering to normal time at all times

Grade 12 normal time should be adhered to at all times, while contact time should be equitably allocated based on the requirements of the grade e.g. exit level grades should be allocated more time.

Identifying content for self-study requiring minimal teacher mediation

Subject teachers should identify content for self-study that requires minimal teacher mediation and focus on content that requires intensive teacher mediation.

Ensuring that learners have sufficient work whilst at home, with little or no parental intervention

Subject teachers should ensure that learners have sufficient content / exercises to complete whilst at home. The activities should include both activities to revise the work done in class as well as prepare learners for the next teachers-mediated lesson. Activities should allow learners to assess their own work at home, self-reflect on progress in order to determine learning.

Using online learning and other modalities for learning

Online learning and other modalities for learning (radio, television, social media platforms, Facebook, WhatsApp) must form part of the teaching and support plans.

6.2**HOW TO APPROACH TIME TABLING FOR PLATOONING**

How to manage morning and afternoon sessions effectively?

- (a) The size and *type* of school will determine the approach to follow. For example, in a small school, normal time tabling can be followed.
- (b) The principal can be in charge of the morning session, and the deputy principal (or a departmental head, in the absence of the deputy principal) the afternoon session or vice versa.
- (c) Principals, supported by districts, must ensure there are enough teachers and support staff to cater for both morning and afternoon groups in order to avoid using the same teachers for both sessions.
- (d) For support staff who provide therapeutic support, schools must find ways to provide them with periods of rest. This could be achieved through the use of flexi-time, with staff only required to come to schools when their services are needed. Where this is not practical, other options must be explored depending on the specific context.

How to allocate learners to different sessions?

- (e) In primary schools, principals must consider bringing learners in the Foundation Phase and learners at lower developmental levels to the morning session, and learners in the Intermediate and Senior Phases, to the afternoon session.
- (f) In secondary schools, principals must consider bringing learners in the Senior Phase (Grades 8 and 9) to the morning session, and learners in the FET Phase (Grades 10, 11 and 12), to the afternoon session.

Which grades cannot platoon?	(g) All years in the Schools of Skill /and all grades in ordinary schools can platoon.
How to decide on the number and the length of periods?	(h) Schools may consider having 30 to 45 minute-periods for five or six subjects in each session. Each session must have a 30-minute break. (i) The regulation on contact time will have to be amended to cater for these possible situations.
Which subjects must feature in the timetable daily?	(j) Schools must keep the core subjects such as Mathematics, Home Language, English First Additional Language (EFAL), in the timetable daily , and subjects such as Life Skills or Life Orientation can alternate.
What are teachers expected to do?	(k) Teachers must change classes instead of learners to avoid learner movement. (l) Teachers who are not on duty in the morning are allowed to come an hour before the end of classes of the first group to assist with group transition from a morning to an afternoon session. (m) Teachers teaching across phases in secondary schools are also allowed to use flexi-time instead of reporting early, especially teachers who are teaching Grades 8 and 12 in a school. (n) In the case of primary schools where teachers work across phases, flexi-time should also be implemented.

How to ensure smooth and safe transition from morning to afternoon session?	(o) Teachers who are not on duty in the morning are allowed to come an hour before the end of classes of the first group to assist with group transition from a morning to an afternoon session. (p) Learners attending the afternoon session must not enter the school premises until all morning learners have left the school premises. (q) Schools must allow an hour for disinfecting the classes, staff room and ablution facilities before the start of the morning session and the start of the second, afternoon session. (r) Where there are two gates to exit, one gate must be used as an entry gate and the other gate as an exit gate.
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6.3

HOW TO APPROACH TIME TABLING FOR ALTERNATING DAYS PER WEEK

Which grades cannot rotate?	(a) Learners in Grade 12, Grade 7, Foundation Phase, Year 4 in Schools of Skill, as well as the highest grade in SID (Severe Intellectual Development) schools must be kept in school every day but must occupy demarcated classes that are separate from the rest of the other classes.
How to allocate grades in different time slots?	(b) All schools to follow the normal time table, which is a five-day cycle whereby Monday is day one and Friday is day five. (c) The weeks should be organised per grade, for example:

- i. In primary schools, a school is advised to follow a three-day cycle for Grades 4, 5 and 6.
- ii. In secondary schools, a school may decide that in week 1, days one, three and five are for Grades 8 and 9, and days two and four are for Grades 10 and 11, and then swap in week two. Grade 12 learners are expected to attend school every day.

What are teachers
expected to do?

(d) Teachers must change classes instead of learners to avoid learner movement.

6.4

HOW TO APPROACH TIME TABLING FOR BI-WEEKLY ROTATIONAL ATTENDANCE

Which grades cannot rotate?

- (a) Learners in Grade 12, Grade 7, Foundation Phase, Year 4 in schools of skill, as well as the highest grade in SID (Severe Intellectual Development) schools must be kept in school every week but must occupy demarcated classes, separate from the rest of the other classes.

How to allocate grades in different time slots?

- (b) All schools to follow the normal time table which is a five-day cycle, whereby day one to day five are equally distributed to two weeks / ten days.
- (c) All subjects must be taught within the five days of the two weeks.
- (d) The weeks should be organised per grade, for example:
- In primary schools, a school may decide how to rotate the Grades 4, 5 and 6 to ensure 50% capacity principle is observed for both weeks one and two.
 - In secondary schools, weeks can also be organised according to Senior Phase (Grades 8 and 9) and FET band (Grades 10 and 11). Grade 12 learners are expected to attend school every day.

Which subjects must feature in the timetable daily?

- (e) Schools must keep the core subjects such as Mathematics, Home Language, English First Additional Language (EFAL), in the timetable **daily**, and subjects such as Life Skills or Life Orientation alternating.

What are teachers expected to do?

- (f) Teachers must change classes instead of learners to avoid learner movement.
- (g) Teachers teaching across phases in secondary schools are allowed to use flexi-times instead of reporting early, especially teachers who are teaching Grades 8 and 12 in a school.
- (h) In the case of primary schools where teachers work across phases, flexi-time should be implemented as well.

6.5

PREScribed NOTIONAL/CONTACT TIME AS PRESCRIBED IN CAPS

The NEPA 27 of 1998 3(4)(j) stipulates the minimum number of hours per day and days per year during which education shall be provided for different phases of education in an education institution. The table below shows the notional time per phase that schools should adhere to, when they draw up a timetable.

PHASES	NOTIONAL TIME
Foundation (Grade 1-2)	23.0 hours per week
Foundation (Grade 3)	25.0 hours per week
Intermediate (Grades 4-6)	27.5 hours per week
Senior Phase (Grades 7-9)	27.5 hours per week
FET Band (Grades 10-12)	27.5 hours per week

When schools revise their timetables, they should be guided by the following basic principles:

- (a) **Workloads** – the number of subjects or sessions that each teacher or therapeutic staff member has been allocated should be considered, in order not to over-burden PL1 teachers and support staff.
- (b) **Duties and responsibilities** – Different teachers play different roles within a school community, in addition to their primary responsibility of teaching. The cancellation of extra-mural activities could free up time for some teachers who also coach certain sporting codes or lead learners in other extra-murals such as debates, etc. The timetable should take into account how such teachers could be re-allocated other responsibilities in the school, such as supervising learners during feeding time, etc.
- (c) **Annual Teaching Plans** – all subjects are important, as they form part of the learning programme in a given phase. The schools should adhere to the revised Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) for all the subjects and ensure that no subjects are done away with, or their time gets allocated to subjects that are deemed important by the school. Schools have the liberty to conduct extra lessons outside of the notional time. This should, however, be done in consultation with all stakeholders involved, including the School Governing Bodies.
- (d) **School-Based Assessment (SBA)** – some subjects may require dedicated time to conduct formal assessment. The time for writing formal assessments such as tests could exceed the allocated time (period) of some subjects.
- (e) **Free periods** – these should be allocated to all teachers and support staff to avoid fatigue
- (f) **Motivation and pep-talks** – The timetable could make provision for motivational talks to be held for teachers, support staff and learners at regular intervals. This could be done once every month, or when there is a need.
- (g) **Dishonouring first periods in the morning and after lunch** – schools should ensure that they minimise time lost between first periods and after break (especially after school feeding time). This should be done in a manner that does not lead to the extension of the school day.