

## **NAISA RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSALS TO RE-OPEN SCHOOLS BY DBE.**

The National Alliance of Independent Schools Associations (NAISA) which is an alliance of nine (9) national independent schools associations and eight provincial Joint Liaison Committees (JLCs) in 8 provinces representing +-1400 independent schools in South Africa. The nine (9) national Associations are:

1. Accelerated Christian Education (ACE)
2. Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)
3. Association of Muslim Schools (AMS)
4. Federation of Waldorf Schools in Southern Africa (FWSSA)
5. Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa (ISASA)
6. South African Board of Jewish Education (SABJE)
7. South African Montessori Association (SAMA)
8. Catholic Schools Proprietors Association/Catholic Institute of Education (CASPA/CIE)
9. Anglican Board of Education of South Africa (ABESA)

As the collective voice of all these nine (9) national Associations and the eight (8) JLCs, NAISA is officially recognised by the Department of Basic Education (DBE); SACE; Umalusi; SETAs and other relevant statutory bodies as the national representative body of the independent school sector in South Africa.

The independent schools of the member Associations cater for learners from all communities in the country, including very disadvantaged black communities. The vast majority of the schools are not-for-profit and range from low-fee, poorly resourced schools, mid fee-paying, adequately resourced schools to high fee-paying, well-resourced schools. The member associations provide services to their schools, such as policy mediation, professional staff development, teacher conferences, governance, and management training, which support the delivery of quality education to their learners.

### **THE PROPOSALS TO RE-OPEN SCHOOLS BY DBE.**

NAISA has made a submission to the DBE to allow independent schools flexibility with regard to re-opening of schools. Given the many variables in the independent school sector, from size of the school campus to the enrolment figures and location of schools, a one-size fits all approach will not be feasible. **The sector places the highest priority on the health and safety of children and this will be the critical element to be considered before schools re-open.**

Currently there are 3 term independent schools whose calendars are not in line with the State's school calendar. What is important for independent schools is to comply with the recommended number of school days per annum. Based on this, NAISA thinks independent schools should be allowed to open on dates different from those proposed by the DBE, but it's important to ensure that whatever date we may want to suggest should align with all requirements that need to be in place before schools can reopen. NAISA has assured the DBE that Independent schools will keep to all SOPs and health requirements of DBE and will keep to phasing in grades unless granted flexibility.

We are also of the opinion that Independent Schools with a number of learners in all grades combined that allow for the whole school to open on the first day of re-opening should be allowed to open as such. It is our considered opinion that this should depend on the school being able to demonstrate that it **can satisfy all the SOPs and Guidelines for Social**

**Distance and Health and Safety protocols for COVID 19 Risk Management matrix.** For example a school with +- 120 learners all grades combined and can show that it can have a 1.5 metre social distancing space in their classrooms for all grade and meet other SoPs should be allowed to open as a whole school rather in phases.

We also take note of the need for the Department of Basic Education to make available to all schools (including Independent Schools) two face masks per child and staff, sanitizers and thermometers. COVID 19 is a problem for all of us and independent schools like everyone never budgeted for this. We note that the DBE has said Independent schools will not be provided with face masks, sanitizers and thermometer and yet they are expected to adhere to the health and safety protocols for COVID 19. Independent schools right now are facing a great challenge of parents who are unable to pay fees because of their reduced income or some other reason emanating from the lockdown and other COVID 19 measures taken by our Government. In the DG's presentation today he said DBE will provide masks to Quintiles 1 to 4 learners only. For Quintile 5 parents must provide. What happens in cases where parents cannot afford this.

Many low to medium fee Independent schools are facing financial challenges right now. Some are being forced to retrench staff because they cannot afford the same staff cohort they had before COVID 19. Financial assistance for independent schools is something which Government should seek to address with the urgency it deserves. Closure of independent school will present the DBE with an even bigger problem and challenge of finding space for learners who will have no school to go to because their current schools would have been forced closed.

Thank you

**Kind Regards**

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NAISA CHAIRPERSON**