



MAPSSS

Maltese Association of Parents
of State School Students

MAPSSS SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO COVID-19 OUTBREAK

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MAPSSS suggestions and recommendations related to COVID-19 outbreak

MAPSSS feels that whereas there are general common concerns related to the education sector at this time of crises, one has to consider also the particular issues raised in the different cycles of education and address these independently.

Even if MAPSSS statute states that the remit of the association is specific to primary and secondary schools, it has been agreed unanimously by the executive committee that, considering the extraordinary situation, the association will voice even the concerns of the parents and students in post-secondary institutions.

MAPSSS as an association wants to voice the concerns of students and parents coming from different social, economic and cultural backgrounds and of the less vociferous, especially the parents and children who are in a disadvantaged position and ended up in an even dire situation considering the current crises. The following suggestions are based on this principle.

- MAPSSS appreciates that these are demanding times for everyone, including teachers and their families. We feel that most of the teachers are living up to the challenge of online teaching and we observed that during the past 3 weeks teachers have adopted various measures and improved on their ways of communication with the students. Unfortunately, however, we cannot dismiss the fact that some teachers have yet not communicated with their students. In view of this, we suggest that teachers are guided on different ways to communicate with their students. We suggest that teachers are provided different platforms and resources so they have the flexibility to employ the means that suits best their students and their personal needs and that of their families.
- MAPSSS believes that for the sake of equity, teachers are to be provided clear guidance on a minimum level of communication with the students. Through 'communication' we are not referring only to the situation where teachers just send worksheets and PowerPoint presentations to the students but we understand two-way communication where students can provide personal feedback to the teachers and actually ask questions. This would allow teachers personal communication with the students and assess their learning. Such initiatives have already been taken by a good number of teachers; we encourage others to adopt such strategies.
- MAPSSS does not agree that students are kept at the screen the duration of the school time as this will create pressure on them, their families and the teachers and their own families. However, communications and online lessons could take place during the same timeframe as school hours (Monday-Friday).



MAPSSS

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- If this is not possible, we suggest that students are not introduced to new subject content, the reason being that this would create inequity between those who have help at home and those who are less privileged, putting them in an even worse situation when they are back to class next year. Arrangements have to be taken regarding the programmes of work and schemes of work for the next scholastic year so as to make up for the subject content missed during this year.
- MAPSSS suggests that teachers pool the video resources they are creating to explain specific lessons so as to avoid repetition of work and to be able to dedicate more time to direct communication with the students.
- MAPSSS suggests that at this stage the schools SMT/Principal's Office or MEDE ensures that all students have been contacted, especially those who are identified as having issues related to means of communication.
- MAPSSS suggests that MEDE sets up a feedback system that is easily accessible and user friendly for parents. The dedicated helpline should be advertised more, even on the radio and TV so as to reach out even to those who may not have access to emails.
- MAPSSS suggests that Students Support Services are available to students to contact easily during these difficult times as we cannot ignore the anxiety and mental health issues students and their families may be facing.
- Concerning the teaching of Maltese as Foreign Language, MAPSSS is aware of the limited teaching staff which doesn't allow all the students who are entitled to be enrolled in the programme to benefit from it. We think that online teaching could be an opportunity to enrol all the children concerned by this programme. It has been also brought to the committee's attention that a live online course would be more appropriated for this specific subject considering that the students are facing some difficulties in understanding the instructions and parents, who are non-Maltese-speakers, are not in a position to help their children.
- MAPSSS strongly recommends that new uniforms are **not** introduced in the coming scholastic year so as to avoid additional financial burdens on the families. MAPSSS suggests the following:
 - If the new uniforms are available, parents who wish to purchase them can do it.
 - If families can't afford to buy new uniforms, students can keep the current one.
 - If the new uniforms are not available, families can either purchase old uniforms if available or clothes matching the old uniform colours/cut.
 - Colleges should organise an old uniform-bank
- MAPSSS suggests parents are informed of any arrangements made with MATSEC related to practical sessions and coursework for SEC.
- MAPSSS notes that parents might not distinguish between educational entities and their responsibilities as MEDE and MATSEC. In view of this MAPSSS suggests that all the information to parents is organized through links in a dedicated webpage
- MAPSSS suggests that parents are informed of any arrangements/updates made related



MAPSSS

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of State School Students

to the means of assessment.

- The collection of books and other material from school should follow a risk assessment for that particular school according to the guidelines provided by the Superintendence of Public Health.
- MAPSSS suggests that MEDE should collaborate with the Local Councils using the already established set-ups to distribute school material for children of families who cannot see to the printing of material or do not have means to access web resources. This cohort of students would be included with the list of vulnerable people in society.
- In the eventuality that schools are not re-opened in September, MAPSSS would like to know if any contingency plan is being discussed.
- Finally, MAPSSS, as an important stake-holder of the educational sector, would like to contribute to any discussions related to the current state of affairs.

MAPSSS Committee

April 2020

MAPSSS Committee Members:

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