



**RIGHT2KNOW**

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31 March 2013

Minister Angie Motshekga  
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Dear Minister Motshekga,

**Right2Know Campaign: written submission**  
**in response to the Draft Regulations Relating to Minimum**  
**Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School**  
**Infrastructure.**

## 1. Introduction

1. The Right2Know Campaign is a coalition of organisations and activists across South Africa seeking a country and a world where we all have the right to know – that is, to be free to access and to share information.
2. This right is fundamental to any democracy that is open, accountable, participatory, responsive and able to deliver the social, economic and environmental justice we need.
3. Our campaign for the right to know will be inadequate if limited to access to information alone. It is central to our mission and struggle for access to information that we also strive for the right to communicate.
4. This includes securing access to telecommunications, and the internet as essential in the struggle for the right to know.

5. We welcome the opportunity to submit this written comment on the Department of Basic Education's 2013 draft [Norms & Standards for School Infrastructure](#).

## 2. Comments on Draft Norms & Standards

6. Internet connectivity can enable learners to have access to vast information and knowledge published online. The [South African History online](#) project or Siyavula's [open source online textbooks](#) are but two examples of the educational value of internet access.
7. Beyond the immediate educational value of internet access, the skills acquired to access the internet will equip South Africa's youth with the skills to access information, and publish their own content. This will in turn enable them to realise their Constitutional rights to access information and free expression (inclusion the right to freely share information and opinion).
8. In short, ensuring our youth have internet access and the necessary skills to use the internet are critical to promoting active citizens, deepening our democracy, and making the provisions of the Bill of Rights real for everyone living in South Africa.
9. Despite the obvious social and educational value of internet access, the National Education Infrastructure Management System Report (NEIMS) published by the national Department of Basic Education (DBE) in May 2011 notes that of the 24 793 public ordinary schools, 19 037 schools do not have a computer centre, while a further 3267 have a room designated as a computer centre but are not stocked with computers.
10. Section 5A(1)(a) of South African Schools Act (SASA) states that the Minister of Basic Education may prescribe minimum norms and standards for school infrastructure after consultation with the Minister of Finance and the Council of Education Ministers. Section 5A(2)(a) of the Act explicitly describes what should be included in the prescribed norms and standards. It states that the norms and standards, "...must provide for, but not be limited to...classrooms, electricity, water, sanitation, a library, laboratories for science, technology, mathematics and life sciences, sport and recreational facilities, [electronic connectivity at a school](#), and perimeter security."
11. The 2013 draft regulations nearly repeat these broad categories for infrastructure but fail to provide any additional content to the general provisions.
12. We note with great concern that Section 4 (6) of the draft Norms and Standards only stipulates: "Where reasonably applicable, a school should be provided with some form of connectivity for purposes of communication".
13. This statement is as good as meaningless. It is unclear and allows space for broad interpretation and inaction.

14. The Section 3.22 of the 2008 draft on national minimum norms and standards for school infrastructure was much more promising in terms of connectivity. It stated that “All schools will be provided with some form (wifi or wireless) of connectivity for communication purposes. The choice of technology will be made at the discretion of MEC. The following communications tools will be provided, telephone, fax, internet access, intercom reticulation/public address system”.
15. The 2013 Draft Norms and Standards represent a retreat from even this vague and limited commitment.

## **Right2Know Recommendations**

16. The final Norms & Standards for Infrastructure must include detailed commitments for ensuring that every school has adequate access to the internet.
17. Every school in South Africa must have an internet connection irrespectively of their location or their size. The Government is obliged to take measures to ensure this right. Connectivity must be a priority, especially in isolated communities and rural areas.
18. The vague notion of “some form of connectivity” should be removed and replaced with a commitment to ensure “broadband or equivalent” connectivity in every school.
19. Every school must have a functioning computer laboratory and at least one teacher qualified to train basic computer literacy and manage the computer laboratory.
20. The final Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure must include specific targets and timeframes for meeting these requirements.

## **In Conclusion**

21. Norms and standards for school infrastructure must make a critical contribution to breaking Apartheid patters of inequality.
22. Ensuring equal access to the internet offers a great opportunity to place all South Africans on a more equal footing and realise the basic right of everyone to freedom of expression and access to information.
23. We look forward to the opportunity to engage further with the Department on these issues.

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For the Right2Know Campaign.