



Minister of Education, Culture, Youth & Sport

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**To: All Private School Boards
Philipsburg, Sint Maarten**

DIV Nr.: 10408

Philipsburg, AUG 1 1 2020

Subject: Commencement of the 2020-2021 Academic Year – COVID-19 – Private Schools

Dear Colleagues in Education,

As was previously communicated in the correspondence dated July 31, 2020, we are preparing for the start of the Academic Year 2020-2021. In connection with this I would like to remind you of the following:

The Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport is the competent authority in regards to matters related to health and safety in accordance with **Article 30 of the Landsverordening Voortgezet Onderwijs** and **Article 33 of the Landsverordening Funderend Onderwijs**. In addition, schools also fall under the Ministerial Regulation 2020/1014, established by the Ministers of VSA and TEZVT (see attached).

As you are aware, the country of Sint Maarten is currently experiencing a very rapid increase in COVID-19 infections indicating a second wave of COVID-19 cases. Over the past month, the island has seen a resurgence in cases which as per August 10th, 2020 stands at 95.

In light of the current developments and in line with the various approaches described in Sint Maarten's Education Continuity Plan – Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic, which was shared with your institution, a decision has been made for **all schools, public or private to remain closed for onsite education until further notice**. Students are to continue to receive education via distance learning. This decision is based on several factors including current evidence provided by Sint Maarten's Ministry of Public Health, clusters of cases and 'extensive community transmission'.

An exception can be made for those students that are most vulnerable and who currently do not have access to devices and/or internet by sending a written request to the Division of Inspection of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. In such cases, school boards can facilitate onsite instruction however must ensure that the approved Safety Plans for onsite instruction are implemented in accordance with the requirements detailed in Sint Maarten's Plan for Education Continuity Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic.



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Taking the aforementioned into account, I strongly urge your institution to comply with the decision communicated on July 31, 2020 to avoid the Ministry of Public Health, Social Development and Labour and my Ministry to issue an instruction to your organization to seize operations at your schools.

This Pandemic is very dynamic in nature. As a result, the local situation regarding the spread of COVID-19 will be reviewed within the next three weeks and an update will be provided to your organization. Once the situation has been found to have improved significantly and community transmission has been once again brought under control, a return to onsite education at school can be expected. This decision has not been taken lightly, but is taken with the safety and wellbeing of students, teachers and other educational staff in mind.


You are urged to maintain the highest level of vigilance and ensure that health and safety protocols for the workplace are strictly enforced and adhered to, in order to safeguard all persons making use of the campus to facilitate the delivery of education.

I thank you for your continued support in ensuring the continuity of education for the students of Sint Maarten.

Trusting to have informed you sufficiently.

Respectfully yours,


Drs. Rodolphe Samuel
Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport


Mr. Richard Panneflek
Minister of Public Health, Social Development & Labour

**Attachments: Ministerial Regulation 2020/1014
Letter with subject: Advisory Reopening of Schools, dd. August 11, 2020**

Cc: Acting Secretary General OCJS, Shermina Powell-Richardson
Head, Department of Education, Sidonia Hodge-Lacorbiniere
Head, Division of Inspection – OCJS, Dorothee Illis-Laurence
Acting Chairperson SEMC, Olga Mussington-Service

