



EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT GRADE R ROADMAP 2019 – 2024

A DISCUSSION DOCUMENT FOR CONSULTATION



GAUTENG PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Growing Gauteng Together



Strategic Goal 1:

Early Childhood Development (ECD)

Priority 1:

Complete the universalisation
of Grade R and begin
the preparations for the
introduction of Grade RR



FOREWORD BY MEC PANYAZA LESUFI



A number of studies are showing the long-term benefits of early childhood education. Policymakers and educators are starting to place more emphasis on high-quality pre-school and child care programs, as well as making access to them universally. Currently, less than 30% of children under the age of four in Gauteng are enrolled in a pre-school programme. Research continues to point toward the importance of programmes which develop the cognitive, social and academic level of children. During these formative years, the brain is still growing and developing – making those first few years an important opportunity for education to begin.

Gauteng is committed to improving early childhood development and more children are accessing this crucial building block of learning. Investment in Early Childhood Development (ECD) is well-documented to be one of the most effective, long-term strategies for poverty eradication. Children learn the skills that will help them flourish, early in life, when the brain has the maximum capacity to develop.

Across government, ECD policies are a national priority programme included to support the principle of investment in our young children.

The NDP focuses on maximising the capabilities of our people and of the country, with an emphasis on improving ECD. Investment in ECD is critical to ensure better performance in formal schooling which will result in improved post-schooling outcomes. Thus, the NDP recognises quality ECD as one of the measures to reduce the acute impacts of poverty. Policy developments in the last two years provide clear direction for the scaling up of ECD provision. Government has committed to making ECD a public good and accelerating access to essential components of a comprehensive package of services from conception to formal school-going age.

The Gauteng Province has achieved 92% of the set target to universalisation of Grade R access based on the target of 160 000 learners by 2019. Over 147 417 learners have benefited from Grade R programmes in the 2018/19 financial year. Of this number, 107 079 were in 1325 Public Primary Schools with 3 686 Grade R sites, 2 238 from 55 Special Schools with 180 Grade R sites, 17 245 were in 496 independent Schools with 980 Grade R sites and 20 855 were in 688 community-based ECD centres.

The Department will be expanding Grade R to all public primary schools regardless of their socio-economic status. In addition, private Grade R sites will be registered through the introduction of provincial regulations. This is being done to ensure that there is an adequate mix of public, private and community-based Grade R sites.

In order to ensure that effect is given to the vision of the NDP, with regards to changing the leadership and institutional arrangements for Early Childhood Development, it is imperative that this should take priority in the short to medium term. In the State of the Nation Address on 07 February 2019, President Cyril Ramaphosa indicated that:

“This year, we will migrate responsibility for ECD centres from Social Development to Basic Education, and proceed with the process towards two years of compulsory ECD for all children before they enter Grade 1”.

With a growing emphasis on early education, it’s a natural expectation that there would be a need for early education educators. Between now and 2035, it is predicted that employment for preschool educators across the ECD sector, both public and private, will grow faster than the average occupation. This would require the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the ELRC to finalise the professionalisation of ECD practitioners, determine the norms, standards and conditions of service of these professionals

The benefits of early childhood education will assist in reaching our goal of Growing Gauteng Together!

Mr Panyaza Lesufi
MEC for Education, MPL



TEN PILLARS OF ECD QUALITY IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

PILLAR 1: COMPLETE UNIVERSALISATION OF GRADE R

- Increasing **Access** to Grade R towards reaching full coverage, where all Primary Schools have Grade R Classes and enrolling learners at the appropriate age. To reach full coverage the Number of Grade R Classes must be equal to the number of Grade 1 Classes.
- **Infrastructure** Expansion, which will include provisioning of ACTs for Grade R, revamping of unused Government buildings, forming partnerships with Churches or any other structures which are appropriate for Grade R children.
- Funding of Grade R will continue as determined in the National Norms and Standards for Funding Grade R, also ensuring that the Pro-poor policy is adhered to. The policy of **No Fee paying** schools applies to Grade R learners as well.
- Improving **Qualifications** of Grade R Practitioners; the Department will continue to fund Grade R practitioners to study towards a B. Ed Foundation Phase Teaching qualification. Face to face support sessions will also be provided for practitioners to ensure high success rate. Attendance to these support sessions is mandatory and practitioners are urged to prioritise them.
- Conditions of Service of Grade R practitioners are currently discussed at National ELRC. However, GDE has reached an agreement at Provincial Chamber for a Transitional Dispensation to recognise the qualified practitioners, by increasing their stipend to be equal to REQV 13 Basic Salary, pending finalisation of conditions of service by National DBE. GDE also continues to pay the differentiate stipend, according to qualifications, plus an annual increase.

The following Pillars 2 – 8 are focussing on improving the quality of teaching and learning in Grade R Classes.

PILLAR 2: ASSESSMENT AND DIAGNOSIS

- This pillar will focus on assessment where children are in terms of their developmental milestones throughout the academic year. Grade R by its nature must prepare learners to be ready for formal schooling. It is therefore critical that Grade R teachers keep track of learners' developmental milestones (Perceptual Skills, Sensory-motor, Cognitive, Emotional, Social and Psychological development)
- Grade R teachers will be capacitated on the utilization of Learner Readiness Observation Tool, which will assist in observing the child's development and reporting to parents frequently and reporting to the next teacher.
- The SIAS policy will also be utilized for Early Identification of barriers to learning and early intervention strategies

PILLAR 3: RESOURCES

- Creating the Stimulating Play-based environment is very key in Grade R, as this promotes the development of all milestones and inclusivity for all children. The resources will also build foundational skills for acquiring of Literacy and Numeracy and will have to create interest for reading and writing skills.
- There will be a combination of Indoor and Outdoor Resource which will be integrated into daily Play-Based activities.
- Over and above these, GDE will also introduce Interactive ICT Resources, which will be utilised minimally by the learners and more by teachers.
- Coding and Robotics games will also be introduced incrementally.
- Grade R Teachers will be continuously trained on effective utilisation of the resources to improve the quality of learning amongst learners
- The Resources will be targeting the following: Maths, Home Language Development, Emergent Reading and Writing, Life Skills, Science, Technology & Arts

PILLAR 4: LEARNER READINESS SUPPORT

This pillar is focusing on the core responsibility of Grade R, which is to prepare learners for readiness for formal schooling. Play Based Learning as a didactical approach will be used at all times, ensuring that teachers are supported on "Play with the Purpose" strategies.

- Grade R Teachers are encouraged to continue with the online play-based learning to sharpen their skills on planning for "Play with the Purpose" activities.
- Perceptual Skills
- Sensory-motor, Cognitive, Emotional, Social and Psychological development
- Mediation of guideline booklet on early identification and support of barriers to learning

Learners with Special Educational Needs will be supported in accordance with their special needs and where they are. Various Departmental teams will work collaboratively in ensuring that this category of learners is supported appropriately.

PILLAR 5: TEACHER SUPPORT

Over the next 5 years the Department will be working with other partners to provide Grade R Teachers with training and support in improving the teaching of Early Grade Mathematics and Home Languages.

- The focus of this programme will be on improving the content knowledge, teaching methodologies, utilization of learning resources and Curriculum Differentiation.
- Grade R Teachers will also be trained on Assessment Practices in Grade R. This is to ensure that Grade R learners are assessed and progressed appropriately.

PILLAR 6: EMERGENT READING AND WRITING

This pillar is linked with GET's Reading Revolution Strategy.

Learners in Grade R have to develop Emergent Reading and Writing skills to be ready for reading throughout their schooling life.

- This includes creating learners' interest and readiness for Reading
- Develop indicators of early language development and Spoken language; for individual growth
Schools will be encouraged and supported to establish Stimulating Reading Corners where the following activities will be done, amongst others:
- Word Recognition, Sight words, High frequency words, Reading Aloud, Story Telling, Picture Reading, Group Guided Reading and other strategies

PILLAR 7: SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS, DISTRICT AND HEAD OFFICE SUPPORT

To institute and improve School Based Support for Grade R Curriculum implementation, all levels of support must prioritise support for Grade R and include it in their support programmes, starting from Heads of Department for Foundation Phase to SMT's, to Districts (Circuit managers, CES CLI) and Head Office.

- SGBs will ensure that Grade R Practitioners are duly contracted, have the required qualification and documents. They will also ensure that the Language of Teaching and Learning (LOLT) in Grade R Classes is the same as the LOLT in Grade 1 classes.
- SMTs will provide Grade R with the appropriate support, taking into account that the pedagogical approach used in Grade R is mostly Play Based
- Circuit Managers will ensure that all their schools are working towards Full Coverage (number of Grade R classes to be the same as number of Grade 1 classes), with the ratio of 1:30
- CES CLI will ensure that Grade R Classes are provided with the appropriate teaching and learning support to improve the quality of learner readiness for formal schooling.
- HO will ensure that all training programmes for HOD's, SMTs, SGBs will include the Grade R components as well.

PILLAR 8: STAKEHOLDER AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are the primary caregivers of their children and must be involved as much as possible in the daily learning activities of their children.

- Schools should take initiatives for parental involvement as part of the learning environment of the children. Many Research reports show that parental involvement improves learning outcomes considerably.
- The Department will also assist schools and introduce parental involvement programmes that will reach all parents using daily messages through collaborations with other partners

The Department will make a concerted effort in ensuring that All ECD Stakeholders are involved in the Departmental programmes relevant to them, such as the following, amongst others: Other Government Departments; ECD Training Organizations; Higher Education Institutes; NGO operating in the ECD Space; Funders with interest in ECD; ECD Forums; Labour Parties and others

PILLAR 9: PREPARATIONS FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF GRADE RR

The Department will continue with its roles and responsibilities as outlined in the Integrated ECD Policy, however with more attention being given to:

- Improving the Qualifications of Grade RR Practitioners
- Training them on implementation of National Curriculum Framework (NCF)



- Training of practitioners on integration of Didactical Approaches such as Play Based Learning and Reggio Emilia Approach
- Developing strategies for Improving Stimulating Programmes
- In the next 5 years the Department will explore and establish ECD Centres of Excellence Models, which will serve as hubs for the sector as Centres for Learners, Professional Development, Research and Development, Parental programmes, information hubs

PILLAR 10: READINESS FOR ECD FUNCTIONS SHIFT

Given that Functions Shift is a legislative process and a function of DPSA, the Department will focus on activities that will lead to the Provincial Readiness for this eventuality. The activities will include the following, amongst others:

- The establishment of GCR ECD Transitional Team comprising of DDGs, Chief Directors and Directors from the affected Departments
- Establishment of Work Streams which will be aligned to National Work Streams
- Gathering of contextual data and information to inform decision making processes
- Stakeholder engagement
- Review of the current Cabinet Memo to be aligned to the new mandates

CONCLUSION

These are the first steps for the Department to invest in Early Childhood Development through stabilizing Grade R in Public Schools.

Consultations will be on-going with ECD Stakeholders as part of preparation for Grades R and RR in ECD Centres and Private schools.





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