Report on the Foundation Phase Conference

PROTEA HOTEL, MOKOPANE, LIMOPO • 30 SEPTEMBER – 1 OCTOBER 2008
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The first Foundation Phase Conference was held on Tuesday, 30 September to Wednesday, 1 October 2008 at the Protea Park Hotel in Mokopane, Limpopo. The conference was attended by more than three hundred delegates including teachers, education specialists, academics, consultants and non-governmental organisations from across South Africa.

The conference theme was “Laying Solid Foundations for Learning: Teaching reading, writing and calculating successfully”. The primary impetus for the conference was to strengthen and sustain the Foundations for Learning Campaign and to showcase best practice in the Foundation Phase, especially in the teaching of reading, writing and calculating.

Implicitly, teachers were encouraged to be confident about what they do and to value what they do as being significant towards making a difference in the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy.

With provincial and district officials, and teachers present, the programme was structured to provide exemplars of models for setting up good support processes and mechanisms at school level.

The participation of teachers from rural areas also presented an opportunity for understanding how the curriculum is successfully implemented in schools that may not be as resourced as other schools in the urban areas.

CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

a. Provide opportunities for curriculum experts including teachers to present topics that impact on the teaching of literacy and numeracy.
b. Expose delegates to good quality presentations that model best teaching practices and strategies.
c. Provide opportunities for provinces to share interventions that have been implemented to support literacy and numeracy.
d. Give an overview of the interventions that have been implemented by the Department of Education (DoE) to support literacy and numeracy.
e. Allow higher education institutions and non-governmental organisations to share interventions that have impacted on learner achievement in literacy and numeracy.
f. Exhibit learning and teaching resources that have been developed by the DoE, provinces, publishers and independent providers.
g. Encourage provincial officials to replicate this conference model in their respective provinces.
The conference was dedicated to four main sub-themes:

- Starting early for success: a focus on children from 0–5 years
- Developing essential literacy skills in the early grades
- Developing essential numeracy skills in the early grades
- Early grade reading and numeracy assessment.

The conference was planned to cater for plenary and parallel sessions on both days.

2.1 PLENARY SESSIONS

The four plenary sessions were dedicated to the four international speakers who presented their experience of literacy and numeracy projects that are run internationally, and also on how other countries were dealing with similar issues to those experienced in South Africa, as well as one session focused on the results and data collected by the Systemic Evaluation conducted by the Department of Education.

The four international speakers were:

- Mr Francis Sampa, a teacher education coordinator from Zambia. Mr Sampa is well known for his contribution towards the development of the Zambian literacy strategy. The paper was titled: Developing Essential Skills for Literacy.
- Dr Luis Crouch, a well known researcher who has carried out extensive studies in South African education over the last fifteen years. He co-presented a paper titled: Strengthening Educational Interventions through Effective Collection and Utilisation of Data: Lessons from Developing Countries.
- Prof Sandra Hollingsworth, a visiting professor from the University of California who presented a paper titled: Developing Instructional Approaches Based on Early Grade Reading Assessment: Lessons from Mali and Niger.
- Dr Ernesto Schiefelbein, a former Minister of Education in Chile who presented a paper titled: Strategies for Preventing Reading Difficulties.

The two local speakers were:

- Mr Qetelo Moloi, Director for Systemic Evaluation in the Department of Education. Mr Moloi co-presented a paper titled: Strengthening Educational Interventions through Effective Collection and Utilisation of Data – Lessons from South Africa.
- Mr Aarnout Brombacher, a mathematics consultant who presented a paper titled: Teaching for Fulfilment and Enjoyment – A Focus on Numeracy Teaching and Learning.

2.2 PARALLEL SESSIONS

Almost 60 presenters made up of academics, curriculum specialists, teachers, consultants and teacher trainers were selected to deliver focused presentations in the parallel sessions. This included paper presentations, workshop sessions, how to teach sessions and video presentations related to the teaching of literacy, numeracy and life skills.

A call for presentations was placed in the newspapers and presenters wanting to make presentations were selected by a team at the DoE based on the relevance and quality of presentations as submitted. A total of 90 submissions were received from different stakeholders. Through a selection process, 60 presentations were selected for the programme.

For the most part, the programme was dedicated to presentations on practical teaching and modelling of classroom practice. Of the 60 parallel session presentations, more than 95% focused on literacy and numeracy, and included a range of presentations on the teaching of reading and writing skills, numeracy concepts and problem solving, and the assessment of reading and writing. The Life Skills presentation focused on an integrated approach towards movement education for the young child.

Each parallel session included a video presentation that showcased current projects and initiatives being run at school level to strengthen literacy and numeracy.

2.3 EXHIBITION

Nearly 46 exhibitors from all over the country displayed appropriate and relevant learning and teaching support materials for Foundation Phase Education during the conference. Both the national and provincial Department of Education displayed posters and curriculum support documents. A few schools displayed children’s arts and crafts.
Ms Palesa Tyobeka, the Deputy Director General for General Education and Training in the Department of Education opened the Foundation Phase Conference by welcoming all delegates, including both local and international guests, senior provincial officials and representatives from USAID and UNICEF.

A special welcome and appreciation was conferred to the international and local conference speakers. These included Mr Francis Sampa from Zambia, Dr Luis Crouch and Prof Sandra Hollingsworth from the USA, Dr Ernesto Schiefelbein from Chile and Mr Aarnout Brombacher, a South African mathematics consultant.

Ms Tyobeka stated that it was a great moment for her to welcome a wide range of delegates to a conference that was aimed at sharing best practice and inspiring all stakeholders towards laying solid foundations for learning. She briefly introduced and welcomed the Head of Education in Limpopo, Reverend Z C Nevhutalu and the MEC for Education, Dr P A Motsoaledi. Dr Motsoaledi, in his introduction of the Minister of Education, made two significant remarks, these being that:

- the Minister hates mediocrity with a passion and promotes excellence
- she pays meticulous attention to detail, reading every document that crosses her desk and correcting mistakes (he encouraged all teachers to follow the Minister’s example).
ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, MS NALEDI PANDOR

The purpose of the conference was “to foreground Foundation Phase education unambiguously as a critical area for development and growth in South Africa”.

The Minister encouraged conference delegates to enhance and assert the professional character of education. She reminded delegates of the purpose of the conference, which was “to foreground Foundation Phase education unambiguously as a critical area for development and growth in South Africa”.

In her opening remarks, the Minister commended conference participants on their exceptional response, and also the international and national experts who had brought their professional expertise and experiences to empower Foundation Phase educators from the different parts of South Africa.

She indicated that this conference was the first of its kind in a series that the Department of Education was promoting in its dedication to issues around Foundation Phase education that are of both national and international importance. She went on to say that Foundation Phase education is a critical component of education in South Africa and hence the sharing of professional discourses among educators is in the interests of enhancing early learning which underpins the fundamental skills and competencies that children acquire during this period.

She further stated that literacy, numeracy and life skills are the building blocks upon which the solid foundations for learning are built, and as such are the key determinants of the child’s success.

The Minister also compared the results of the systemic evaluation baseline survey of 2001 with the systemic evaluation survey that was conducted on a sample of Grade 3 learners in 2007. Outcomes from these studies contextualised the challenges that are currently being faced in the Department’s pursuit to build solid foundations for learning. She went on to echo the impact of language issues in literacy, numeracy and life skills education from the results of the study, emphasising the importance of teacher quantity, quality and ability in the classroom.

The Minister went on to give the key issues as identified by the Department of Education around Foundation Phase education:

- Universal access, that is both physical access and access to quality education, to Grade R by 2011
- Curriculum development, incorporating required skills and competencies (aimed at equipping teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to translate the curriculum into classroom practice)
- Support to teachers as executioners and practitioners of the new curriculum (aimed at providing for teachers, as seekers and readers of knowledge, to more effectively implement curricula)
- Support to teachers as managers and leaders
- The attainment of age appropriate competency levels in all three spheres of Foundation Phase education.

In order to address these issues, the Minister said the Department had launched a flagship programme, the “Foundations for Learning Campaign”. She indicated that through this programme, the Department was working to create a national focus to improve reading, writing and
numeracy abilities of all children in South Africa. She said that through the campaign, several issues were identified that need to be addressed, these being to ensure that:

- every classroom has appropriate resources for basic teaching
- all teachers plan and conduct effective teaching
- District Teacher Forums are established, and that all teachers are members in order to enhance and share teacher skills and strategies
- teachers conduct regular assessment of learner performance
- teachers are assisted to manage the assessment tasks within the continuous assessment framework.

The Minister also emphasised that good education relies on the availability of good teachers who are well versed in the knowledge areas that learners must be taught, and who also have thorough knowledge of the various ways in which knowledge can be learnt.

However, she indicated that the Department was struggling to attract African language students in Foundation Phase initial teacher education programmes, and attributed this to the low status associated with teaching in the Foundation Phase.

She went on to mention that the Department was working towards increasing the supply of Foundation Phase teachers in South Africa by:

- encouraging high quality learners to choose Foundation Phase teaching as a career of choice through a “Teacher Recruitment Campaign”
- providing bursaries through the “Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme”.

Recognising that the Department still has a long way to go in making more significant progress in Foundation Phase education, the Minister stated that it needs the support of other role players in the sector.

She indicated that she was hopeful that the conference would crystallise the many issues that need to be addressed in Foundation Phase education, and provide the impetus for all stakeholders to work together for solutions that would be of benefit to all.

In her closing remarks, she gave the conference delegates a few key questions that she felt they should keep in mind in order to build and strengthen Foundation Phase education in South Africa, particularly as they prepared for the systemic evaluation and international test in 2011.

(Full speech attached in appendix)
The lesson on learning through home language and then transferring to a foreign language is summed up in “If you can ride a Zambian bicycle, you can ride an English bicycle even faster”.

Mr Sampa in his opening remarks stated that the conference theme, “Laying a Solid Foundation for Learning” was chosen with special consideration to the different experiences and economic levels of African countries. He further stated that regardless of this, all nations built their houses on solid foundations, and equated this to the need to lay solid foundations for quality learning for all children.

He recognised that many studies, particularly in the southern part of Africa, indicate that there are poor levels of reading and writing among learners in early years of schooling and also a poor culture of reading among children and adults. He specified that this greatly affected the quality of education in the region.

He indicated that the correct choice of language policy at the Foundation Phase is paramount for effective learning and active participation because it prevents the negotiation of learning a language while at the same time getting knowledge.

Indicating that language policies need to be critically reviewed, Mr Sampa reiterated that language is the most important factor in the transfer of knowledge and skills. He emphasised that initial language acquisition needed to be meaningful especially at the foundation stage of learning where it is imperative that both the learners and the teachers use a language that ensures a strong foundation for early literacy learning. He pointed towards the fact that in many African countries the language policies mandate both teachers and learners to operate in a language that is alien to most of them, creating a situation that makes initial literacy in a second language an almost impossible objective. He went on to say that this also dilutes cultural heritage and places low educational value on African languages.

Highlighting that the ability of reading fluently and writing clearly among many learners is attributed to the choice of the right language policy, Mr Sampa said that when literacy is introduced in a language that is foreign for most children, learning becomes meaningless. He gave a few examples of pedagogical advantages for introducing literacy in a language that is familiar to learners:

- Learning first in a known language follows the basic principle of working from the known to the unknown
- Learners are able to express themselves in a meaningful way and hence can participate in their own learning processes
- It prevents a cognitive overload in learners as they are concerned with only one thing at a time as opposed to having to negotiate both the reading skill and the new language
- It reinforces the learner’s self esteem by validating their cultural identity.

However, he acknowledged the growing awareness by many African countries of the need to revisit the curriculum at foundation level and introduce initial literacy in languages that can engage learners. He went on to say that nonetheless, English still needed to be taught and could remain as a medium of instruction, but at
foundation stage initial learning needs to be in a language that is familiar to the learners.

He further stated that essential literacy skills in the early grades cannot be achieved without the use of assessment tools. These tools, he said, can support policy, teaching and learning to determine educational progress and success. He went on to say that the teachers needed to understand the importance of the assessment and be trained to collect data that adequately addresses learner outcomes, and added that parents could be used as a valuable source of information or an audience for assessment results.

Following from the discussion on the importance of conducting learner assessment, Mr Sampa stated that laying a solid foundation for early literacy requires extensive and systematic training both pre-service and in-service. The continual professional development of teachers, he said, is an assurance for long term stability and sustainability of the focus on early literacy programmes. He affirmed that teachers are at the heart of any successful education reform process. He also said that a strong partnership between parents and educators is important as parents play a critical role in their children’s education.

Mr Sampa identified some challenges that were being faced in the process of laying a strong foundation for learning. These are:

- lack of sufficient time for teachers to plan, teach, reflect and collaborate with colleagues
- insufficient resources for support materials
- limited provision of early literacy expertise to ensure implementation of high quality instructional programmes
- under-staffing in many schools
- over-enrolment in classes
- low salaries and lack of motivation among teachers
- poor health and nutrition among learners
- Impact of HIV/AIDS resulting in many orphans and vulnerable children.

In conclusion, Mr Sampa observed that as a cornerstone to quality learning, literacy enables children to acquire knowledge that is necessary to assist them to make informed decisions about their future and influence change in their homes and communities. He urged the conference to discuss ways in which Africa could open its borders and share approaches to early learning.
6.1 MR QETELO MOLOI: DIRECTOR SYSTEMIC EVALUATION, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The presentation was titled “Strengthening Educational Interventions through Effective Collection and Utilisation of Data – Lessons from the South African Systemic Evaluations”

Mr Moloi began his presentation by stating that measurement is increasingly being emphasised as an integral part of educational quality improvement initiatives in South Africa. He said accurate, timely and valid measurement is an impetus for action while clear evidence is a crucial ingredient for effective strategy particularly because it substantiates conclusions that are arrived at in various studies.

He stated that the Department of Education has large scale data on learner performance in literacy and numeracy, and contextual factors that might impact on teaching and learning. These data, he said, are indicative of observed levels of achievement by language and readiness to learn.

He pointed towards fluency in reading as a predictive factor to education achievement. He linked fluency and comprehension to levels of readiness to learn. He indicated that democracy, philosophy and reading are intertwined and are necessary for any level of development. He further stated that for any level of development to be achieved, access to reading materials is highly imperative especially as we move from the elitist education approach.

Mr Moloi went on to say that data could be effectively used as diagnostic reports for schools, particularly to:

- identify strengths and competencies that may need to be amplified
- set realistic improvement targets based on empirical evidence, and
- monitor individual progress over time.

In conclusion, he gave the conference a few points for reflection on how the education sector could improve the quality of achievement through effective collection and utilisation of data:

- Establishing (or elevating them where they exist) clear measurable standards
- Assessing in line with appropriate standards
- Providing necessary resources and support
- Targeting specific skills and groups without necessarily being exclusive of the rest.
In the discussion that ensued from his presentation, Mr Moloi responded by stating that the reading context and the ability to understand how text works, serves as a predictive factor for readiness to learn. He indicated that this is why a language policy becomes important for a school. He stated that the development of assessment tools in the respective languages is imperative as it prevents distortion that come with translations.

He went on to emphasise the importance of comprehension or the ability to understand text. He said this was a critical skill which also provided a good screening tool.

6.2 DR LUIS CROUCH: RESEARCH VICE-PRESIDENT AT RESEARCH TRIANGLE INSTITUTE, NORTH CAROLINA

(See annexure for personal profile)

“You can’t fatten cattle by weighing them more often – you have to feed them.” The message from the analogy is that teachers should not spend too much time measuring and reporting but do it effectively and that assessment data should be used for helping children and teachers.

Dr Crouch’s presentation focused on learner assessment data, particularly on how this data has been used to help children and teachers. He stated that international good practice on using data is to empower teachers to help learners. Data can be used to:

- Drive decision-makers to make better educational decisions (e.g. fund more learning materials)
- Refine instructional packages
- Receive in-service support based on data
- Improve teaching based on observed results.

He further stated that it is important to set some standard, so that learner performance can be measured against that standard. He went on to say that measuring learner performance against a standard could be used to:

- Identify weaker schools or children
- Identify weaknesses in the teaching process
- Identify additional factors.

This in turn would enable stakeholders to develop relevant in-service training programmes that are directly linked to the needs and prevent generic training about broad issues.
Dr Crouch cited a few case study examples. The first one he gave was that of Uruguay. He said that so far this was the only case of whole country improvements in learning in middle income countries. He said Uruguay used quality measurement and support as simple underpinnings for education improvements. Uruguay managed to close the inequality gap by thorough measurement and thorough item and error analysis, and also feedback to teachers.

He stated that this was achieved by asking teachers to participate voluntarily in school clusters thus allowing for the exchange of ideas. Participating schools were targeted based on poverty levels. All activities were planned outside school hours and the teachers were paid to attend.

The exercise involved the training of teachers, with a particular focus on updating their teaching and subject skills. The teachers were then asked to apply what they had learnt over the following two weeks after which they evaluated the results, and then learnt further tricks to implement for the next couple of weeks.

The results of the sample were returned to all schools and were used as guides in the self-correction of their assessments.

Dr Crouch said this technique was successful because it allowed for detailed and universal measurement, while also making use of the feedback.

Dr Crouch also gave a case study example from India. He stated that in India results were achieved through efforts from NGOs. These organisations used campaign style data collection as a means to carry out learner assessments. The method used is known as the Pratham Assessment Method, and it looks at the learner’s reading skills.

![Pratham Assessment Method](image)

**Figure 4: Pratham Assessment Method**
The learners are given a story, complex paragraph, easy paragraph, words and single letters to read and they are assessed by their levels of fluency in reading. The findings from this study were used to motivate politicians, raise awareness and also garner permission to carry out pilot interventions.

Dr Crouch noted, however, that the statistical properties of this test have only recently been evaluated.

He went on to say that the approach was undertaken by a highly motivated and massive NGO effort that enabled India to get quick results. Further, it was driven through a campaign approach by volunteers who had a lot of experience with similar yet smaller pilot projects. Nevertheless, the approach proved to be effective and efficient. He urged the conference delegates to learn from this example but to focus on measurement, data and goals.

The last case study that Dr Crouch presented on was the case of Liberia. He stated that the Liberian approach was similar to that used by India but not as large. Additionally, he said the method used went into a bit more detail on the reading tasks that were given to the children and data was gathered on factors associated with reading.

He further emphasised that the assessment was very broad as it involved reading comprehension, sound awareness, letter and word recognition and fluency, oral fluency in text as well as comprehension. Additionally, this assessment had good statistical properties. He went on to state that gathering data on associated factors allows for the detection of key influences such as access to books, teacher qualifications and policy.

In his final remarks, Dr Crouch reiterated that the focus of all these case studies was on learner assessment data and that these data have to be used to assist children and teachers. He said successful cases of good practice have ranged from three month projects to three year projects. He stated that with enough focus, drive and explicit and systematic instruction, desired results can be achieved in a relatively short space of time.

6.3 PROF SANDRA HOLLINGSWORTH: VISITING PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

(See annexure for personal profile)

“We do not give teachers in the pilot schools a menu of activities to choose from, we give them an explicit recipe for success.”

Prof Hollingsworth delivered a very informative and stimulating presentation on the topic: Developing Instructional Approaches based on Early Grade Reading Assessment: Lessons from Mali and Niger.

She stated that the Early Grade Reading Assessment of the primary cycle students’ literacy abilities in Mali and Niger brought out the fact that teaching foundational literacy requires very experienced teachers. She stated that the collaborative team’s goal had been to make a successful transition to the national language (in this case French) by Grade 3, while maintaining maternal languages.

This, she said, meant that they had to ensure that the children learned to read in the first year of school in their
maternal languages. She reiterated that the main aim of reading in any language is so that:

- students can decode text
- students read with appropriate speed and accuracy
- students understand and discuss what they read and hear.

She stated that these are the skills that are assessed by the Early Grade Reading Assessment measures.

Quoting Mr Sampa from his keynote address, Prof Hollingsworth said young children who are literate in their home languages have the cognitive skills and conceptual knowledge needed to successfully and quickly transfer to a second language. She stated that according to the Systematic Method for Reading Success, reading and writing need to be taught well and learned quickly.

She indicated that this programme is designed for teachers with little or no training in reading. She said it requires novice teachers to systematically teach the research-based subcomponents of literacy every day, these being:

- Phonetic awareness
- Phonics
- Most common words on sight
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension
- Spelling and writing

She said the programme is structured in two books. Book 1, she said, uses only single-syllable words in approximately 30 thirty minute lessons (depending on the language), while Book 2 uses single and multi-syllabic words, spelling and writing in approximately 25 thirty minute lessons followed by regular instruction.

After giving statistical examples of success, Prof Hollingsworth concluded her presentation by stating that from the programme, lessons learnt were that:
• it is critical to have systematic training and practice for supervisors and teachers in high-risk schools
• it is important to support and measure teacher implementation (ongoing improvement)
• it is important for teachers to be in classrooms ready to teach from planned lessons
• it is important for students to attend class regularly
• it is important to support daily success in reading and writing
• it is important for teaching professionals to teach from data, not give in to popular opinions.

Basically, she said, the better the teacher mastered the routines, the better students learned to read and write. She reiterated that the goal of literacy is to teach children to understand and communicate well in national languages. She further stated that it is faster to obtain literacy through mastery of their maternal languages and it also preserves the ability to communicate with family and friends in their traditional cultures.

6.4 MR AARNOUT BROMBACHER: SOUTH AFRICAN MATHEMATICS CONSULTANT

(See annexure for personal profile)

“The fact that in as much as the job of teachers is to teach children how to calculate, it is equally their job to empower them to make sense of the world in which they are living by empowering them to become problem solvers”

The presentation was titled: Teaching for Fulfilment and Enjoyment – A Focus on Numeracy Teaching and Learning.

In his introductory remarks, Aarnout Brombacher indicated that he sees a very clear, causal link between education, poverty and crime. He also said he firmly believed that the future of South Africa will be determined by the impact that teachers have on the lives of children in the first three or four years of schooling. He went on to state that numeracy and literacy are the enablers to effective participation in and constructive contribution to society.

Aarnout Brombacher also hoped that his presentation will point towards the fact that in as much as the job of teachers is to teach children how to calculate, it was equally their job to empower them to make sense of the world in which they are living by empowering them to become problem solvers. He stressed that by providing children with fun, exciting and challenging activities, they will experience numeracy/mathematics as fulfilling and enjoyable.

He also said he hoped that his presentation would be able to show that the children of South Africa have infinite potential, and also to suggest that it was necessary to reflect on teaching to determine whether the children are being empowered or disempowered.

His presentation was largely anecdotal, drawing on his experiences in foundation and intermediate classes over the last four years.

He concluded his presentation by indicating that the simple games played by children and the simple games played by young people in communities are essentially mathematical in nature. He said this demonstrates their ability to make sense of and to experience mathematical challenges as fulfilling and enjoyable experiences. He reiterated that the job of teachers is to help these children realise their potential by allowing them to think and to solve problems. He said numeracy/mathematics is not the mimicking of meaningless, senseless drill, but can be an empowering, enjoyable and fulfilling experience if only children were allowed to experience it in that way.
Dr Ernesto Schiefelbein's presentation was under the sub-theme “Effective Strategies for Preventing Reading Difficulties”.

Dr Schiefelbein started his presentation by stressing that reading is essential to success in our global society. He said, however, that despite the fact that most children read fairly well, in most developing countries only half of the children learn to read. The concern, he said, was on the large numbers of children whose education (and quality of life) is jeopardised because they do not read well enough to ensure understanding.

He went on to review research findings on the impact of early reading difficulties, on prevention, intervention, and sound instructional approaches to ensuring optimal reading outcomes.

He stated that the research findings were organised in 10 closely related topics:

- Ability gaps
- Vocabulary gaps
- Children enrolling with poor vocabulary or low cognitive levels
- Provision of near universal access to primary education (the international commitment to the Education for All initiative)
- Failure to learn to read adequately for continued school success
- Reading as the centre piece of early grade instruction
- Good early literacy environment and patterns of effective instruction
- Selection of optimal cost-effective approaches for the provision of remedial treatment where necessary
- Evaluation of ongoing policies to increase students’ achievement in order to facilitate the selection of optimal strategies for early stimulation, preschool and elementary education
- Use of impressive results to assess other ongoing learning campaigns.
Fifty-five parallel presentations were delivered in five venues over the two days. The presentations focused on the four conference sub themes. The presentations took the form of paper presentations, workshop sessions, ‘how I teach’ sessions and video presentations.

7.1 SUB-THEME: STARTING EARLY FOR SUCCESS – A FOCUS ON CHILDREN FROM 0-5 YEARS

PRESENTER: DR AUDREY KLOPPER (NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY)

Topic: “The use of multi-media to enhance reading, writing and mathematical skills for young learners”

The presentation focused on visual and auditory perception, which is ‘the use of eyes and ears in learning’. Children learn more effectively when words, visual images and auditory input are combined. The presentation alluded to the fact that quality of communication in teaching is a determinant of learning success.

The presentation also highlighted the use of multi-media, which encourages:

- learners to work independently in a self regulatory manner
- integration of activities to support teaching
- learner centred focus
- links to prior experiences
- reduction of fear of failure
- edutainment to motivate learners, and
- self assessment and immediate feedback.

Figure 5: Learners actively involved and working at their own pace
PRESENTER: SHARON CALDWELL (MONTESSORI FOUNDATION – SOUTH AFRICA)


Human beings are geared up to think mathematically and all children are born with a mathematical mind. Children can learn emergent numeracy skills in the early grades through play by manipulating concrete objects and they can get a sense of colour, size and texture.

Learning concepts at the concrete level (use of five senses) must happen first before reading and writing of a mathematical sum happens.

Children must be encouraged to:

- sort out and match objects in accordance to colour, size, length etc.
- count freely – no limitations
- play freely with 3D objects (which allows them to learn the geometric language, i.e. top, under, above, next to, opposite etc.)
- sing, count, and rhyme
- have a sense of mass and volume by being encouraged to engage in planned sand and water activities.

Children are curious by nature and must be given the freedom to explore and discover, and be allowed to discuss what they saw in the park/zoo for example.

PRESENTER: HEIDI VAN STADEN (SOUTHERN AFRICAN MONTESSORI ASSOCIATION)


The Montessori Association focuses on the use of real instruments and apparatus, which enables learners to acquire the necessary skills and competencies at an early age.

Montessori Math materials allow for:

- Concrete experience (that is hands on, manipulative, and visual)
- Graded presentation (that is simple to difficult)
- Concepts to be transferred
- Independent learning
- Collaborative learning, and
- Movement (the hand feeds the mind, and movement reinforces learning).

Children are taught reading and writing skills in accordance with their developmental levels.
Teachers need to be careful not to prepare and produce materials that cannot be linked to learning and development. Movement activities can be planned as the build-up towards an event, where learners stand a chance to learn, develop and build self-esteem. Children’s play should encourage exploration and discovery, and movement should be progressive and aligned to the children’s developmental stages.

There is a need for the Department of Education to conduct a survey on the skills acquired by learners in line with Learning Outcome Four (LO4) – Physical Development and Movement.

The importance of timetabling was highlighted. The presentation indicated that the class timetable should be organised accordingly to dedicate appropriate time to movement activities.

Alternative activities should be planned to accommodate rainy and sunny days while also integrating numeracy and literacy. Teachers need to consider that movement and physical development is not only about sport and competition, but that it also promotes success in all areas of life as it encourages discipline.

**PRESENTER: MALIGA PILLAY (UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL)**

**Topic:** “Teaching Numeracy in the Early Years Using the Emergent Approach”

The Emergent Approach to learning makes use of the four learning theories (see Table 1).

The teaching of emergent numeracy skills encourages learners to construct meaning through inquiry and self discovery of their own understanding and interpretation of a given situation. Educators need to understand that learners need plenty of concrete experiences of the meaning of numeracy skills and concepts. This approach is basically child initiated and yet adult/teacher led. Through concrete activities learners are stimulated, inspired, motivated and challenged.

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**Table 1: Four Learning Theories in the Emergent Approach**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>BEHAVIOURIST</strong></th>
<th><strong>CONSTRUCTIVIST</strong></th>
<th><strong>SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST</strong></th>
<th><strong>SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children seen as ‘empty vessels’</td>
<td>Constructs knowledge through active involvement</td>
<td>Understanding through interaction</td>
<td>Learning through socio-cultural practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill-based teaching in a planned sequence</td>
<td>Emphasis on autonomy. Active learning by doing</td>
<td>Value of discussion with peers and teacher</td>
<td>Children and adults construct numeracy understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct teaching followed by praise</td>
<td>Use of published schemes and pre-number activities</td>
<td>Relate maths activities to children’s own experiences</td>
<td>Emphasise meaning to what children say and do</td>
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</tbody>
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The presentation focused on the critical issues that South Africa is faced with in the education system. The focus was on those years in which children are taught the fundamental skills and competencies that will enable him or her to learn and develop a clear concept of the world, when ‘a child learns to read so that in the future he or she can read to learn’.

It is important to start where the impact will be the greatest and hence focus attention on the foundations for learning whilst providing support to the continual development of education.

This can be achieved by finding practical solutions that support teacher development, training and advancement while also developing programmes that support children and their extended families to be more willing to learn and participate.

Craft Education can build content-rich programmes that create upliftment, development, community stimulation and education, and then assist in delivering them for South Africa.
7.2 SUB-THEME: DEVELOPING ESSENTIAL NUMERACY SKILLS IN THE EARLY GRADES

PRESENTER: DR HELENA WESSELS (NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY)

Topic: “Data Handling and Chance”

The teaching of data handling should focus on:

- collecting the data to answer questions
- sorting the data while giving reasons
- using representations like pictures, cluster and bar graphs, pictographs, and number line plots
- describing a collection of information, explaining reasons for grouping, and answering questions about the collection
- reading and interpreting data in tables and lists.

Traditional instruction in data handling creates the problems of too much focus on procedural knowledge that is not integrated, resulting in learners learning isolated and fragmented skills. Data handling should be taught with the view to enable learners to think statistically and to interpret data critically, whilst being able to communicate their opinions and reasons.

PRESENTER: MARGIE OWEN (HOME LANGUAGE PROJECT)

Topic: “Piloting a Multilingual Maths Programme at Roseheath Primary School”

This programme involves the use of home language alongside the language of learning and teaching, being taught by a monolingual teacher. Learners are organised into pairs according to the language that they speak.

The programme was planned for a Maths Language Development lesson once a week for an hour, where half of the lesson was used for numeracy and the other half for language.

The learners are expected to:

- read in their respective home language
- check if they understand what they read in English
- explain what they read in English to their partner
- write it down.

This model works best in an environment where learners are proud of their home language, and have the ability to read and understand the use of their home language as a tool for learning.
PRESENTERS: SALLY CAMPHER, MARIE JORDAAN AND CAROL LAWRENCE (HEIDEDAL PRIMARY SCHOOL, GEORGE, WESTERN CAPE)

**Topic:** “Shapes all Around Us – A Practical Workshop”

The three teachers from the Western Cape conducted a practical workshop that demonstrated the characteristics of two dimensional (2D) shapes and three dimensional (3D) objects. Children use 3D objects such as boxes, cylinders, cones and balls as playing objects. A list of the core vocabulary linked to shapes was listed – position (next to, under, above etc), direction (left, right etc). The demonstration focused on how different shapes could be used in a fun way to teach numeracy through a variety of games – tiling, patterns, shape hopping game, shadow puzzle.

PRESENTERS: PENNY SMITH (COUNT) AND VICKY LINDSAY (MATHS FOR PEACE)

**Topic:** “Family Maths Programme”

The Family Maths Programme has been designed for parents and other caregivers to be able to learn maths with their children in an informal and supportive environment.

The programme involves adult family members attending maths lessons with their children. This model is aimed at building good and respectful communication and building relationships.

A pilot study was conducted in 2006/7 in schools in Gauteng, Limpopo and Mpumalanga, and a Family Maths Facilitator’s Guide was developed. The impact on learners was measured by an independent evaluation and it was found that the Family Maths Programme had given rise to the following:

- learner attitudes toward mathematics had changed
- learner attitudes toward school in general had changed
- maths skills, understanding, grades and test scores had improved
- parents’ maths skills, understanding, and classroom practice had improved
- relationships between teachers and parents had improved
- relationships between learners and parents had improved.

The programme is an effective yet inexpensive way to teach maths in a fun, informal and intuitive manner which can be done both at home and in the classroom.

PRESENTER: POOMONEY GOVENDER (GAUTENG EDUCATION DEPARTMENT)

**Topic:** “Problem Solving Strategies to Construct Number Sense”

The presentation took the form of a workshop session and participants were given the opportunity to engage in different problem solving activities that seek out strategies to solve word problems.

Many computational maths problems can be solved in various ways, some of which do not require an understanding of numbers. This strategy can be used to develop number sense using realistic or suitable word problems. This method is advantageous in that it can be used at all levels of development as teachers encourage learners to choose their own methods.

Essentially this method encourages the child to verbalise and explain his/her methods to peers. In this way the child is given an opportunity to structure and sequence his/her reasoning. The child is able to clarify the thought processes which he or she is using to solve a problem.

Figure 8: Use of practical methods to solve word problems
PRESENTER: CALLY KUHNE (UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN)

Topic: “A Learning Pathway for Number (LPN): A Trajectory for Number Concept Development”

The presentation was basically a report back on a three year research-based project that was conducted in Paarl, Western Cape, and highlighted the main features in children’s early number development. Number knowledge and sense, mental and written calculation, and algorithms are developed progressively across grades.

The Learning Pathway for Number (LPN) was essentially a trajectory for the development of number concept development for the early primary grades.

It provides a conceptual framework for learning and teaching numbers in the early grades, and also provided for a research based mathematical guide to be developed. LPN highlights the main components for children’s early number development.

A graphic representation of the stages of number development is shown in figure 9 below.

PRESENTER: MANARE SETATI (UKUQONDA INSTITUTE)

Topic: “Learning About Numbers and Computation by Working at Problems”

The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) requires that problem solving be a major learning activity in numeracy. This has implications on the way teaching and learning should take place in the classroom.

“Solving problems” is a very important skill to be developed in all learners. There is a difference between the terms “learning to solve problems” and “solving problems”. The former involves learners engaging in finding various strategies that could be used to solve a problem while the latter is basically an attempt to solve problems which involves learners learning what is intended for them to learn. Problems are used as vehicles for learning the intended mathematics. In problem solving, the focus shifts from the solution of the problem to what mathematics is learnt while wrestling with the problem.

Number concepts can be developed by presenting learners with carefully chosen problems and providing them...
with the necessary but non-permanent support and an environment that encourages them to speak their minds.

Facilitating the transition from concrete and informal ways of solving mathematical problems to more efficient, abstract and formal ways of teaching happens through four distinct developmental stages:

- Stage 1: Emergent numeracy
- Stage 2: Counting and calculating
- Stage 3: Number based calculating
- Stage 4: Advanced calculating – use of algorithms.

**PRESENTER: JANET VAN HEERDEN (KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION)**

**Topic: “Thinking Skills to Enhance Problem Solving”**

The presentation concentrated on “cogmotics”, which is thinking the way you think.

The need to develop critical and creative thinking skills is fundamental in the early grades. Teaching involves many challenges, among them meeting needs of different children. To achieve this, teachers need to define thinking strategies. Successful thinking occurs through exercising the mind and through creative thinking. This encourages broad thinking, flexibility, weighing up ideas, and generating new ways of learning how children think.

Applying thinking skills to daily lessons enhances:

- Fluency (the ability to propose many solutions)
- Flexibility (the ability to look at something from different perspectives)
- Originality (the ability to produce new ideas).

**PRESENTER: FREDAL WILKENS (SMILE EDUCATION)**

**Topic: “The Use of Resources to Enhance Numeracy Learning in the Foundation Phase”**

The presentation was basically centred on perceptual learning (that is using the five senses, these being sight, touch, smell, hearing, and taste). In all stages of learning children make use of the five senses, and teachers should take advantage of these to enhance learning. Memory development is also fundamental for learning. Naturally, young children have a short term memory span, hence learning needs to be repeated and reinforced using a wide variety of activities to teach and consolidate the same concept.

Manipulatives such beads, buttons, blocks and counters are essential apparatus for numeracy.

Text rich classrooms should have appropriate wall charts including weather, counting, colour, birthdays, children’s art exhibits, etc. Classrooms should have 2D cardboard or plastic shapes, 3D objects, tape measures, bathroom scales, counting frames, clock faces, geoboards etc.

These resources must be used effectively to teach mathematical concepts and skills.

**PRESENTER: SELINA MADUNA (TEACHER AT TSHEPANA PRIMARY SCHOOL, ORANGE FARM, GAUTENG)**

**Topic: “Meaning Making in a Numeracy Class where the Teachers and Learners do not Necessarily Speak the Same Language”**

This was a video presentation on examples of good practice at Tshepana Primary in Orange Farm. Teachers face many challenges when communicating with learners
because they all speak different languages. Her classroom success story was realised through the use of what she coined as the “three ps”, that is;

- Practical
- Practice, and
- Participation.

The essential components for good teaching are:

- Planning thoroughly for every lesson
- Using co-operative learning strategies
- Using multimedia resources.

Co-operative learning strategies can be implemented in every lesson by getting learners to work in pairs and groups which must be changed accordingly, using different criteria. Co-operative learning is a good way to foster language development.

As a Foundation Phase educator she feels that teamwork is very important because it encourages good working relationships and creates a positive culture.

PRESENTER: GERTRUIDA SMIT (CAPE PENINSULA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY)

Topic: “The Relation between the Development of Two Digit Number Sense and Methods of Computation”

In order to assist learners to develop number sense, educators need to teach with a view to making learners understand.

Developing number sense requires teaching for understanding, and a rich integrated input is needed for understanding.

Real mathematics education is based on:

- Reality principles
- Activity principles
- Interaction principles
- Integration principles
- Guidance principles
- Starting with real life context
- Learning by doing
- Listening, sharing and reflecting
- Levels of understanding.

The line model is used very effectively to teach initial computation of two digit numbers. The line model makes use of strings of beads on a counting frame and number lines. Learners can manipulate the beads by moving them backwards or forwards, or moving them from left to right on the number line.

PRESENTER: UNA KOCH (JUNIOR STUDENT PUBLISHERS)

Topic: “Developing Skills for Mental Maths”

The teaching of numeracy must be an interactive process. Children must be given adequate opportunity to express their responses verbally.

Children must be able to explain why, what and how they have reached a conclusion. Teachers need to be careful not to mark the children’s work as wrong, as this discourages chances to improve.

It is equally important to pay attention to individual learners to ensure that no one is left behind. There are areas where the teacher/child ratio cannot always accommodate every child getting adequate individual attention from the teacher.

Mental mathematics strategies include:
- Rote counting
- Rational counting
- Skip counting
- Breaking up numbers
- Checking answers
- Making own sums
- Playing maths games.

PRESENTER: PROF. PIET HUMAN (UKUQONDA INSTITUTE)

Topic: “Closing the Gap between Counting and Column Arithmetic”

It is important to have a strong sense of numbers in order to understand place value, column sums and use of algorithms. Young learners must be given ample opportunity to engage in counting activities. Learning in the early grades involves a lot of concrete experience where learners may count fingers, concrete objects and use illustrations to get the answer. Gradually they must be introduced to advanced methods such as breaking and building numbers, (that is the two digit range), using a counting frame or number cards.

They must be able to make sense that $28 = 20 + 8$ and not $24 + 8$. Once learners have had enough experience in counting beyond 100 and 1000, breaking up and recomposing 2 and 3 digit numbers, their understanding of place value would be extended.

A solid foundation in learning decades 10’s, 100’s and 1000’s will help children to understand and make sense of column arithmetic and use of algorithms which they will encounter in the Intermediate Phase.

PRESENTER: BRENDA LEKGETHO (TEACHER, LIME ACRES PRIMARY SCHOOL, SIYANDA DISTRICT, NORTHERN CAPE)

Topic: “Breaking Up Numbers: Doubling and Halving”

Building and breaking up numbers assists learners to:
- visually see the value of each number
- see how the number symbol is created through the use of groupings
- see what the number symbol looks like
- understand what ‘1’ stands for in numbers ‘11 to 19’
- practice writing numbers.

Figure 12: Examples of use of fingers to double and halve

Word problems also help extend learners’ ability to develop a strong sense of numbers. Building up and breaking down of numbers helps learners to understand the concepts of doubling, halving and the four basic computational skills, these being addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

Doubling lays the foundation for multiplication by 2 whilst halving lays the foundation for division by 2. Doubling lays the basis for multiplying and dividing by 2. Learners need lots of practice to be able to double, and later halve the numbers easily. Learners may use their fingers initially and work in pairs if more than two hands are needed.

PRESENTER: ELMARIE LOMBARD (TEACHER TRAINER FOR SUPEDI TRUST)

Topic: “How to Get Learners to Investigate Bonds, Using Dominoes to Teach Numeracy Concepts”

Knowing basic number facts through learning of bonds and tables improves children’s calculation abilities. Teachers usually focus on rote and memorisation, or drill practices to teach number facts. Number facts can be taught using number rods and coloured counters.
Dominoes can be used very effectively to teach children number facts related to single digit numbers from 3–9, and two digit numbers from 10–20 etc.

Dominoes can also be used to copy and make number patterns. Teachers can make dominoes using cardboard.

**PRESENTERS: PENNY SMITH (COUNT) AND ROSHINI GOVENDER (GAUTENG EDUCATION DEPARTMENT)**

**Topic:** “Unpacking Mathematics Outcomes”

The goal of education is to learn to solve problems, analyse, organise, communicate and make connections, and it is said that mathematics is at the heart of this process. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) is designed to pursue these critical outcomes which aim to:

- identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking
- organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively
- work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community
- collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information
- communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes
- use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others
- demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

In order for teachers to teach maths for understanding, they need not only understand the maths they are teaching today, but also prepare the learners for the maths they will encounter in the future.
PRESENTERS: BUSISWE MPINTSO (PAKAMANI PRIMARY SCHOOL, CRADOCK DISTRICT, EASTERN CAPE) AND CHARLOTTE VAN GENSEN (MICHAUSDAL PRIMARY SCHOOL, CRADOCK DISTRICT, EASTERN CAPE)

Topic: “Developing Numeracy Skills in Foundation Phase”

Essential mathematical skills to be taught in the Foundation Phase are:

- Counting
- Calculating
- Reasoning
- Estimation
- Problem solving
- Investigating
- Interpretation
- Describing
- Analysing
- Communicating.

These skills were demonstrated using examples. Learners need to understand numbers and have good number sense to understand how numbers are used in their everyday lives.

PRESENTER: RONICA PARDESI (PARKSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL, GAUTENG)

Topic: “Identifying Errors in Children’s Mathematical Thinking and Methods of Remediation”

There are some common misconceptions, errors and mistakes that are made by learners in the classroom. A misconception can be understood as being what a learner thinks is incorrect with regards to his/her understanding of a concept, an error is a mistake that is repeated and that the learner thinks is correct, while a mistake is something that a learner knows is wrong and allows for it to be corrected.

Errors often take place when learners think they understand. This is not incorrect knowledge, but incomplete knowledge. An error may only surface once existing knowledge is applied to new situations.

Errors occur when there is:

- little or no progression in terms of conceptual mathematical development across the Foundation Phase
- little or poor monitoring of the development of pre-number concepts
- inadequate oral work.

To mediate the teacher needs to:

- allow learners to talk about their answers
- provide opportunities for learners to identify their own misconceptions
- understand that not all learners in the class will understand entire concepts or strategies.

It is important for the learner to practice in order to consolidate mathematical concepts and skills, and also to develop the ability to apply these to many situations. It is important for learners to understand their own strategies so that they can solve problems.

It is important for the teacher to allow children to have access to teaching aids such as concrete aids, number blocks, counting frames, etc. that they can manipulate as they practice. The teacher must know each child’s level of understanding through the strategies that the child uses to solve problems.

Many misconceptions will remain unknown unless teachers make specific efforts to uncover them. Identifying a misconception creates an opportunity for the delivery of effective teaching.

PRESENTERS: AGATHA LIEBETHE AND HEATHER COLLINS (MATHEMATICS EDUCATION PRIMARY PROGRAMME, WESTERN CAPE)

Topic: “Planning Your Way to Achieving the Numeracy Outcomes”

This presentation focused on long-term planning on the Numeracy Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards.

In mathematics, each learning outcome is allocated a specific percentage therefore teachers should plan in accordance with allocations.

- Learning Outcome (LO 1) 55%
- Learning Outcome (LO 2) 7.5%
- Learning Outcome (LO 3) 15%
- Learning Outcome (LO 4) 15%
- Learning Outcome (LO 5) 7.5%

Learning Outcome 1 should be given the biggest weighting. All learning outcomes must be planned for,
taught and assessed in an integrated way across the term and year.

In mathematics each learning outcome has specific content which must be taught progressively for children to understand. Younger children need time to understand the content. Teachers need to plan their learning programmes, work schedules and lesson plans taking into account the weighting of each of the five learning outcomes.

**PRESENTERS: ZIPHORA RAMOROLA AND MAPULA NGOEPE (UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA)**

**Topic:** “Acquisition of Number Skills in the Foundation Phase”

The acquisition of number skills can be learnt in the outside environment where children are encouraged to play, touch and manipulate physical objects which are of different shapes, colour and size.

Some basic number skills that can be learnt with physical objects are:

- Counting
- Sorting
- Comparing
- Pairing
- Grouping
- Matching
- One-to-one correspondence
- Sequencing
- Ordering
- Position.

The development of number concepts is acquired by giving learners adequate opportunity to touch, feel and manipulate physical objects in order to know:

- how many
- to identify the number that matches the quantity
- the position of the number
- to write the number symbol
- to make number sense
- to solve problems.
7.3 SUB-THEME: DEVELOPING ESSENTIAL LITERACY SKILLS IN THE EARLY GRADES

PRESENTER: CHARMAINE UYS (NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY)

TOPIC: “The Impact of High Frequency Words on Basic Reading Skills”

This presentation gave an overview of a study that was conducted to demonstrate the impact of high frequency words. The research findings show that there is a strong relationship between high frequency words and reading skills (measured by word recognition and reading comprehension). Children who have good word recognition skills are strong readers.

The first phase of the research tried to determine if there is a relationship between the visual recognition of the high frequency words and reading skills (measured by visual word recognition and reading comprehension). The research was conducted with Grade 2 learners.

Phase 2 of the research focused on reading instruction and methodology. The study concluded that teaching and learning of high frequency words should be the basis of an effective Reading Instruction Programme. A good Reading Instruction Programme should support a balanced reading approach in which the main components of reading are integrated with high frequency words. High frequency words are learnt through traditional look and say with the use of flash cards or using word attack and contextual clues.

PRESENTER: MAGDELENA BENN (IMPERIAL PRIMARY SCHOOL, MITCHELL’S PLAIN)

Topic: “Managing Barriers to Reading”

Learners need to be motivated to read. It is imperative that teachers act as mediators and structure the reading process.

Some of the common difficulties that struggling readers have are:

- confusing letters and sounds
- difficulty in putting the sounds in the correct order
- not remembering sight words
- struggling to read longer words
- not remembering what they are reading
- not understanding what they are reading
substituting sounds
inserting of letters/sounds
reversing
sequencing of letters incorrectly.

These are some observations that teachers should follow up on:

- The learners read word for word
- The learners ignore punctuation marks
- The learners are holding books close to their eyes
- The learners lose places when reading
- The learners guess words.

The teacher can help by:

- teaching phonics
- teaching sight words
- practising sight words
- pairing reading with adults
- syllabification
- reading short paragraphs
- filling in the missing words
- arranging pictures in order
- pairing reading
- choosing appropriate reading material
- guiding reading
- using different strategies and interesting games
- making use of scaffolding
- picture reading.

PRESENTER: ANNA MARIE WIJUM (UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA)

Topic: “The Development of Literacy Skills: A Continued Professional Development Programme for Foundation Phase Educators to Facilitate Listening and Language Skills”

For children to learn to read, they have to acquire sufficient language competence. Educators need to provide learners with a variety of experiences to facilitate the natural transition from oral language used at home to functional literate language used in school. A balanced approach to language and literacy learning must be encouraged in every classroom.

The four language systems that need to be acquired by children are:

- Aural system – language by ear – heard words
- Oral system – language by mouth – spoken language
- Print system – language by eye – printed words
- Written system – language by hand – written words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aural system: (Language by ear)</th>
<th>Oral system: (Language by mouth)</th>
<th>Print system: (Language by eye)</th>
<th>Written system: (Language by hand)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receptive</td>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>Receptive</td>
<td>Expressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heard words</td>
<td>Spoken words</td>
<td>Printed words</td>
<td>Written words</td>
</tr>
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Table 2: The four language systems that need to be acquired by children

These language systems are the basis for listening, speaking, reading, viewing and writing.

Several recommendations for the continued professional development of teachers were:

- Group learning
- Portfolios
- Practical implementation
- Provision of opportunities to reflect on practices
- Mentoring, and
- Cluster training.
**PRESENTER:** LOUISA ZONDI (GAUTENG EDUCATION DEPARTMENT)

**TOPIC:** “Literacy Month Celebrations” (Video Presentation)

This video presentation reflected on the Gauteng Literacy Month Celebrations. The celebrations were aimed at raising the standards of literacy in Gauteng Province, and showcasing best classroom and school practices in an attempt to improve literacy levels.

The theme for 2008 was “Telling Our Stories through Writing”. Examples given were:

- Learners writing their own stories and rhymes
- Publishing of learners’ stories at both district and provincial level
- Exhibitions at school level of learners work
- Learners role-playing their own stories and rhymes
- Provincial launch of story books
- Editing and distributing the books back into the classrooms to supplement reading resources.

Learners need to learn to read by reading and to write by writing.

**PRESENTER:** OLIVE DOUGLAS (NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION)

**Topic:** “Brain Power Tutorial Games”

In order to read and write a language formal instruction should begin with learning the alphabet by learning the names and sounds of every letter through rhymes and songs.

This then leads to learning the vowels and consonants and then learning about words and syllables. This leads to learning silent letters, plurals, and suffixes. These word skills are best learnt through games – such as card games, such as Happy Families, memory games etc.

**PRESENTERS:** NTSIKI MANXIWA, PORTIA LEFUME AND ANNALIESE BAINES (EASTERN CAPE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION)

**Topic:** “How to Teach Reading”

The presentation gave an overview of the teaching of reading in rural schools where poverty and unemployment are high. The reading methodology that has been successfully used is the Concentrated Language Encounter (CLE) which is based on the language experience approach.

Children share their experiences and the teacher translates the spoken words into sentences which are read and later developed into a story. The stories are collated and compiled into a book which becomes the group and class reader.

Other reading methods to support learning to read are:

- Reading aloud
- Shared reading
- Group guided reading
- Independent reading.

Factors that need to be taken into account are children’s senses and printed text.

**PRESENTER:** LINDA RUTGERS (UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH)

**Topic:** “Spotlight on Texts in the Foundation Phase: A Planning Framework for Text Based Literacy Instruction”

The presentation was an overview of the “6 in 1” model of planning, which is an effective approach to explore and understand the model for text based literacy instruction. Refer to figure 13 on page 31.

The elements of each step were unpacked in a practical demonstration in which participants had to plan an integrated literacy experience for a group of Grade 1–3 learners.

**PRESENTER:** DR ZENDA NEL (UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA)

**Topic:** “Developing Listening Skills through the Integration of the Arts – A Trans-Cultural Approach”

This presentation demonstrated how arts could be used to develop language learning and also to improve the concentration span of learners. The focus was on the interdisciplinary approach between the various art forms such as dance, music, drama, visual arts, technology and communication and how these disciplines offer unique ways of learning across the curriculum by providing an exceptional way to study concepts vibrantly and experientially.
The study was based on the use of a music programme to foster language development. Through music, the children’s listening skills are aroused, their concentration improves and they are encouraged to respond through movement such as dance. Response to music and dance in the form of bodily movements demonstrate that children are able to listen and follow instructions. Listening, movement and dramatisation take place at the same time in one activity.

PRESENTER: DR JEAN PLACE (THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND)

Topic: “Wits Literacy Book Box Project”

The literacy book box project was identified as an approach that promotes early reading and respect for books. University students are taught to develop their own story books which they can use when teaching.

The book boxes are designed for classroom use. The students choose a particular story or play and then develop the genre accordingly. The book is packaged with puppets, puzzles, and other word games which give the teacher and learners adequate activities to engage with the text.

The success of the project is based on the premise that people get attached and develop a love for reading if they read stories that are/were written by people they know and can identify with.

PRESENTER: DIANE HENDRICKS (UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN)

Topic: “A Framework for Reading and Writing: Theory to Practice”

The presentation focused on reading and writing within a framework for literacy learning. It basically covered the development of reading and writing, key milestones and strategies to learn from theory to classroom practice.

A child learns to read and write in an integrated way through engaging with various language centred activities, oral and written experiences. The ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of learning is equally important and requires active engagement from both learners and educators. It is important for educators to create a classroom
environment that provides plenty of support for literacy in order to build children’s literacy development.

The framework for reading and writing includes four stages:

- Stage 1: Emergent reading and writing
- Stage 2: Beginning reading and writing
- Stage 3: Consolidated reading and writing
- Stage 4: Reading to learn and specialised writing

Teachers should be encouraged to use creative activities to inspire learners to want and love to write. Story telling, songs, and recording their own experiences are some of the activities that will motivate learners to want to write and create their word banks. Reading to children not only stimulates the love of reading but also supports them in learning to write.

Children need to be supported by the teachers to develop a love for writing in the additional languages.

**PRESENTERS: PROF. ANSIE LESSING AND PROF. MARIKE DE WITT (UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA)**

**Topic:** “Do Teachers Know What the Essential Literacy Skills Are?”

Literacy is defined as the ability to read and write at a conventionally acceptable level. From this definition, it is important for teachers to acquaint themselves with necessary skills to be able to support learners.

The research findings of a study that was undertaken to determine teachers’ knowledge and skills to support learners who did not master the essential literacy skills was summarised.

115 teachers participated in the study. The sample of teachers included 20.9% from Mpumalanga Province and 46.1% from Limpopo, while the rest were a geographically mixed group. Additionally, 73% of them were Foundation Phase teachers. Results from the study showed that less than 5% of the teachers from Mpumalanga and Limpopo have the confidence to support learners who experience difficulties to master sub-skills for literacy acquisition while 13% of the group from Pretoria showed a little more confidence.

The presenters said the conclusions from the study showed that mastering the outcomes for literacy implies mastering the necessary skills and sub-skills. The important sub-skills for reading are:

- Perceptual abilities
- Concentration
- Physical ability
- Oral language ability
- Conceptual ability
- Emotional factors
- Ability to decode words
- Word recognition
- Punctuation
- Comprehension
- Critical reading
- Speed reading.

**PRESENTER: THEMBISILE CHAMBALE (PENREACH COLLEGE, MPUMALANGA)**

**Topic:** “Teaching Reading in the Foundation Phase”

Reading is about constructing meaning from a written text. Therefore, it should be a fun activity that needs to be introduced early in the learners’ lives. It is equally important for parents to be brought into the reading lives of their children no matter how little their contribution is. The five building blocks necessary for teaching children to read are:

- Phonetic awareness
- Word recognition (phonics and sight words)
- Vocabulary
- Fluency
- Comprehension.

Factors that need to be taken into account when teaching reading are:

- Reading in the Foundation Phase must happen every day (shared reading, group guided reading, paired reading, independent reading).
- Learners learn to read by reading (exposed to the printed text).
- More teacher modelling is important (shared reading and group reading sessions).
- Plenty of support from the teacher (reading aloud to beginner readers).
• Focus on meaning rather than form.
• Books from other learning areas are also good readers.
• Reading is a skill that integrates listening, speaking and writing.

PRESENTER: SALLY STEWART (NUTREND PUBLISHERS)

Topic: “Developing a Skills-Based Literacy Programme that Allows for Effective Integration”

The curriculum aims at developing well-rounded, literate, thinking, caring and skilled adults whilst actively helping them to heal the divisions of the past and unlock the potential of all children moving through the system. This process starts at the Foundation Phase, with literacy as the key to unlocking the curriculum.

Without being able to listen, speak, read, write and think, children will not be able to work in any of the other learning areas.

The curriculum is packed with concepts and skills across the eight learning areas. The provision of integrated, balanced and holistic learning across all learning areas is fundamental especially in the early grades.

An example of how the seven other learning areas could be incorporated into the Literacy Learning Programme was discussed.

PRESENTER: NAREN BOODHOO (CLARENS PRIMARY SCHOOL, DURBAN, KWAZULU-NATAL)

Topic: “Teaching Children to be Good Writers”

The first response from most Foundation Phase teachers to writing is understandably the concern with the technical aspects, namely, script, form, size, shape and spacing. Teachers encourage learners to write neatly and see the relationship between the written and the spoken word.

There is also another side to writing which needs to be encouraged in the Foundation Phase, this being creative writing where learners explore ideas freely without concern for spelling or grammar.

The National Curriculum Statement is very explicit in encouraging yet another dimension to writing i.e. allowing learners to travel down the road of an author through different stages. This gives creative writing more structure.

Examples on how to implement writing as a process using Grade 3 learners are as follows:
• Context of the school – geographical and economic factors
• Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT)
• Learning experiences must be related to the children’s life or everyday experiences
• Allowing children to code switch from the mother tongue language where mother tongue is not the LoLT
• Use word wall, dictionary, classroom charts and labels.

The five stages in teaching writing are:
• Gathering ideas or brainstorming
• Drafting (getting it down) or mind mapping
• Revising (seeking responses)
• Editing (proofreading the text)
• Publishing.

Learners learn to refine their writing skills through reading. Learning to read is the platform for learning to write.

PRESENTER: AGNES VALAISHIYA (GLENHAZEL PRIMARY SCHOOL, GAUTENG)

Topic: “What is Group Reading?”

Group reading is a way to teach reading. It works well because the class is divided into smaller groups that comprise learners with mixed abilities.

To develop group reading practice it is important for learners to be trained to read in groups. Teachers need to demonstrate to the learners:
• What to do before reading (e.g. look at the book cover, read the title, look at pictures in the book, etc.)
• What to do during reading (e.g. read parts of the text in turns) and
• What to do after reading (e.g. discuss the characters, incidents, etc.)
• Equally important, is managing the groups. This could be achieved by:
• Giving each group space
• Allow the group leader to hand out the text-readers
• Allow the group to read the same text aloud
Give each group member an opportunity to read a page or two.
Engage group members in discussion.

**PRESENTER: PEGGY WILLIAMS (TEACHER AT MITCHELLS PLAIN PRIMARY)**

**Topic:** “Creative Writing in the Foundation Phase”

Children in the early grades must be taught how to read and write. Children must be exposed to writing as early as Grade R, when they engage with emergent writing skills through scribbles and drawings.

Children’s emergent writing pieces must be displayed and discussed. This is the first step towards formal writing.

Children should be encouraged to write what they say using their limited vocabulary and technical writing skills – the writing of the letters and words correctly.

The golden rules for story writing:
- Write your story as if it happened in the past
- Your story must have a structure – set the scene, people, the problem
- Include detailed descriptions of the place and people
- It must be balanced
- It must have a genre – to show feelings
- Link the beginning and the end.

Tips for improving writing:
- Think it
- Say it
- Write it
- Read it.

**Sequencing and Pacing**

**Reading development sequence**

- **before school** learning to engage with reading
- **junior primary** independent reading
- **upper primary** learning to learn from reading
- **secondary** independently learning from reading
- **evaluating**

**South African Scenario**

- Unable to independently learn from reading; many reading at Grade 8 levels
- No explicit teaching of reading in English; shortage of textbooks and reading materials (14 year olds reading at age 7-8 levels)
- Inadequate teaching of reading in mother tongue; focus on decoding not comprehension – ‘barking at print’; shortage of appropriate texts (30% comprehension levels)
- Little or no pre-school reading experience

(Rose 2006: Teacher Training Manual: 4)

Figure 15
PRESENTER: MICHAEL TRAVERS HART (READING TO LEARN PROGRAMME)

**Topic:** "Scaffolding Reading and Writing Development in the Foundation Phase" (Video Presentation)

The scaffolding learning cycles of the Reading to Learn (RtL) programme have been accepted as theoretically and practically grounded methodology appropriate as a response to the grave inequality of literacy outcomes evident in South African schooling.

The RtL approach in South African schools is highly relevant because of its sound theoretical base, its proven track record in a number of contexts, and the growing international interest in its application in different countries. It is appropriate because:

- It is theoretically sound, and is based, firstly, on a clear understanding of the reading process and on the way language works in texts to make meaning for different purpose across the curriculum. Secondly, it provides a highly explicit and supportive (scaffolded) teaching process, based on Vygotsky’s social learning theory, that which constantly affirms students and opens up their learning potential.
- Lesson sequences and teacher-learner interactions are carefully planned to provide a high level of support for reading and writing texts of all kinds across the curriculum. The strategies provide underachieving students with maximum support as they develop the knowledge and language resources required to read and write texts independently.
- Independent evaluations have found that the approach provides a pedagogy appropriate to all educational levels; is inclusive of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds; is flexible and adaptable; and is supportive of different levels of literacy development, including reading, writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Finally, and most importantly, the structured nature of the programme and the clear step-by-step process makes it accessible to teachers. This, coupled with the extensive training and material support, enables teachers to internalise the methodology and gain confidence and skills in an ordered and methodical manner.
The principles underlying the LAT are as follows:

- Providing for planned, progressive attainment assessment at regular intervals
- Addressing learner progression (as required in the National Assessment Policy)
- Providing clarity and detail on Formal Assessment Tasks
- Benchmarking and tracking learner performance across the term and year.

The LAT provides a link that aligns provincial policies with national directives. The LAT document strengthens the foundation for learning document by specifying the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards in which the content of the document is embedded. The LAT identifies the formal assessment task items and tools, and also provides exemplars of Formal Assessment Tasks.

The LAT document is a working document, and inputs and suggestions from the various stakeholders will add value to it. The final document will be ready for implementation in 2010.

The purpose of managing assessment effectively is to:

- monitor implementation of assessment requirements
- assess quality and quantity
- guide, assist and advise
- share best practice
- establish partnerships and networks
- establish an acceptable norm for ‘minimum requirement’.

The presentation focused on monitoring and tracking numeracy and the implementation of assessment in the Port Elizabeth District.
PRESENTERS: MR S A CHETTY AND MR P NAIDOO (KWAZULU-NATAL)

Topic: “Bridging the Gap”

The presentation was based on a project that was piloted in 143 schools in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Grade 8 learners from the participating schools were tested in Mathematics and English.

The rationale for the test was to identify gaps that exist between the level of Mathematics and English taught at primary schools (Grade R–7) and secondary schools (Grade 8–12).

The outcomes that were realised from the project:
- Closer working contact between schools
- Improved results
- Promotion of collegiality and teamwork
- Standard setting for Mathematics and English across the schools
- Improvement in the quality of teaching and learning
- Sharing of professional expertise amongst teachers and other resources
- Support programmes in Mathematics and English at Grade 8 level
- Closer monitoring and support by district officials offered to the poor performing schools.

PRESENTERS: MARION JOSEPH (NAPTOSA) AND DR JEAN PLACE (UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND)

Topic: “Promoting Powerful Learning through Alternative Assessment Practices”

The presentation focused on the role of pre-service teacher education in terms of improving quality of teaching/education.

The presentation focused on a process that was introduced as a mechanism that seeks to address the huge gap that exists between pre-service and in-service teacher training. Pre-service teacher education was inadequately linked to the realities of the classroom showing an existing divide between theory and practice.

In light of this, Wits University in collaboration with NAPTOSA introduced various assessment strategies that can be implemented in a variety of teaching and learning contexts, to equip teachers at pre-service training level with skills that expose them to practical situations.

The alternative assessment practices include assessing whether the teacher trainee knows how to:
- implement a range of literacy and other teaching strategies in a classroom context
- manage a class and foster discipline skills
- manage time – time on task
- adapt teaching for specific contexts
- cope in challenging contexts – limited resources.

The rationale for the programme is to equip teacher trainees to become agents of change. The collaboration between universities and teacher unions could provide the impetus for equipping newly qualified teachers with the necessary skills to address the real classroom context.

PRESENTER: DR ANIL KANJEE (HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL)

Topic: “Using Formative Assessment to Enhance Learning: Implications for Teachers and Learners”

There is a growing trend to “use assessment to improve learning.” There is a significant emphasis towards improving classroom assessment by providing:
- standardised tests for Grade 3 and 6 (Systemic evaluations)
- standardised tests for Grade 1–6 learners as from 2008
- range of assessment methods to support formal and informal assessment
- templates for reporting learner performance.

What do learners need?
- Where they are in their learning – “what have I learnt, what can I do, what do I know and what can I show?”

What do teachers need?
- What do my learners know, what can they do, what can they show?
- What can I do to get them to the “right” level?

Effective planning and teaching informs effective assessment and quality learner performance.
PRESENTER: GISELA KINGWILL (DOORNBERG PRIMARY, GRAAFF REINET)

Topic: “Teaching in a Multi-Grade Class”

The presenter related to her own experience in a multi-grade class. It is advantageous in that the younger children learn from the older children, especially when it comes to maths, sounds, and reading. She also stated that repeaters and slow learners hear the same work over again and this assists them in learning. She further said it enables all learners to develop at their own pace, irrespective of the grade. She gave an example of a good reader in Grade 2 who can go ahead with the Grade 3s. She reiterated that being in a certain grade is not an issue as it helps with the repeaters and the bright ones who try to keep up with the better kids.

Ideas for effective teaching in a multi-grade class are:

- Proper planning of lessons to ensure that all grades are taught the curriculum in accordance with policy requirements
- Time management
- Classroom organisation
- Good training and practice in classroom routines
- Adequate resources including multi-media
- Effective training as a phase teacher to cope with the different grades.

Challenges:

- Difficult to follow the set timetable – allow for flexibility in the multi-grade class
- Older grade learners intimidate younger grade learners
- It is difficult to keep to a set timetable
- It doesn’t allow for flexibility
- It is difficult for the teacher to use all the different assessment methods all the time in this type of classroom.

A few tips on how to get the best out of learners in the multi-grade class:

- Concentrate on maths, reading and phonics
- Listen to each child read every day
- Group teaching must be well prepared, organised and planned, otherwise a shambles could ensue
- Allow older kids to help younger ones (with sums on the mat or with extra reading – it gives the older ones confidence and the younger ones the extra chance to practice)
- Have lots of worksheets and sum cards etc.
- Teach LO, TECH, EMS, A/C as a whole
- Don’t try to keep up with the top schools in the district which have single classes
- Teach new work or concepts on a Tuesday, not a Monday
- Allow time on a Friday to finish work not done
- Don’t favour one grade above the other
- Proper planning is essential.
- In the beginning Grade 1 takes so much longer – accept that they need more time (your Grade 3s can do revision work cards in that time).

The greatest concern regarding multi-grade classes is the focus on administration and assessment.
8. Gala Event

8.1 GUEST SPEAKER, MR DUNCAN HINDLE: DIRECTOR GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

“The teachers who presented their classroom successes during the conference are representative of many more teachers in the system who have dedicated their time and effort to being efficient and effective teachers, meeting their challenges with the will and determination to make a difference.”

Mr Hindle welcomed all delegates and participants to the Foundation Phase Conference and, in particular, to UNICEF for sponsoring the Gala Event on behalf of the Department of Education. He also took the opportunity to thank UNICEF for its support, not only for the conference but also for the number of support programmes in education broadly. He stated that it was partnerships such as this one that allow education to be responsive to the needs of the teachers and learners in the classroom.

He went on to commend the conference for dedicating itself to issues of importance for laying solid foundations for reading, writing and calculating. He hoped and trusted that the information shared by the guest speakers will give the education sector confidence to approach current challenges with renewed hope.

He alluded to the fact that South Africa recently witnessed how discipline to a common cause and shared vision kept leaders committed to ensuring the least amount of disruption to the South African people. He indicated that in the same way, conference participants are agents of change with the educational will to impact on how learners perform in literacy and numeracy.

He further stated that the teachers who had presented their classroom successes during the conference are representative of many more teachers in the system who have dedicated their time and effort to being efficient and effective teachers, meeting their challenges with the will and determination to make a difference. He stated that he was sure that the children who go through their hands will be able to meet the demands of the curriculum as they move through the grades to Grade 12.

He also stated that he hoped that the conference would start discussions on how the hands of all teachers could be strengthened to ensure that all learners get their
foundational learning through good and competent hands.

The occasion, he said, was a good time to celebrate some of the milestones achieved in support of the Foundation Phase particularly that this was the first year that was seeing a cohort of Grade 12 learners who have gone through the National Curriculum Statement, sit for their final examinations. He indicated that as they exit, it was important to analyse what their foundational learning was like.

Recognising the launch of the Foundations for Learning Campaign, Mr Hindle said he hoped that it will change the hands of the teachers in which the learners are placed. He mentioned that with the handing over of close to 8 300 packs of 100 story books to Foundation Phase classes in Quintiles 1, 2 and 3 over the last three years, he hoped that the learners would become more confident readers.

He also stated that the Ithuba Writing Project will provide the system with 2.4 million stories authored by local teachers in the most marginalised languages. He alluded to the fact that the writing skills gained by these teachers will be used to teach the learners the skills of good writing. He said it can be expected that these learners, if provided with the necessary support to develop their writing skills over the years, will sit for their Grade 12 exams and will write them effectively.

Mr Hindle then referred to the reading toolkit that was developed to provide teachers with necessary resources to teach reading and writing, which have been distributed to nearly 1 500 Grade 1 classes in four languages in five provinces. He stated that the toolkit is a comprehensive programme which contains graded reading support materials that teachers can use, and that aims to develop independent readers in the Foundation Phase.

Referring to Mr Francis Sampa’s keynote presentation, Mr Hindle said all these interventions recognise and place emphasis on early literacy acquisition. He stated that the Department of Education will continue to strengthen the hands involved in successfully laying foundations for reading, writing and calculating.

He then echoed the Minister’s words, thanking the partners of the Department of Education who have supported the Department over the years.

He conveyed a special thank you to UNICEF and Mr Andre Viviers for the sponsorship of the Gala Event, the travel and accommodation of the guest speakers, and the resource library CD.

He also thanked USAID for sponsoring the travel and accommodation for the guest speakers thus ensuring a rich conversation about global experiences with regard to literacy and numeracy development.

He also thanked the publishers, the NGOs in the sector, the union representatives, and Higher Education institutions for their participation. A special thank you was conferred on the publishers for their magnanimous donations of stationery items and lucky draw prizes. Mr Hindle also commended provincial and district officials who had supported the conference by attending it, and also for accepting the challenge of sharing what they do well in the classroom with the conference.

In conclusion he applauded the Limpopo Youth Orchestra for their magnificent musical performance and hoped that they would rise to fame.
Guests and entertainers at the Gala evening (all photographs © Department of Education)
8.2 SPECIAL GUEST, MS NADI ALBINO: CHIEF OF EDUCATION SECTION, UNICEF SOUTH AFRICA

“Early learning experiences not only help young children to make the transition to primary school, but also make it more likely that they begin and complete primary education”

Ms Nadi Albino, in her address, referred to the launch of the Education for All Global Monitoring Report in 2007. She said that all African countries were called upon to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and development. She stated that early learning experiences not only help young children to make the transition to primary school, but also make it more likely that they begin and complete primary education which is fundamental to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

She further stated that UNICEF and the Department of Education are working together on adopting the Child Friendly Schools (CFS) Framework in an effort to ensure the provision of quality education using an integrated and holistic approach. This framework, she said, is an attempt to make practical the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the South African Schools Act and key policies in the education sector.

She went on to say that, conscious of the fact that in any individual’s life the formative years are characterised by unsurpassed levels of human development and growth, they also provide a window of opportunity to ensure that every child gets the right and best start in life. These, she said, are the foundational years.

Having said this, she stated that the onus is on everyone to ensure that children have access to quality education through a multi-sectoral approach. She emphasised that the role played by the Department of Education in developing curricula for cognitive development for young children in the Foundation Phase is extremely important. She reiterated that it is incumbent upon the Department to ensure that educators are held in high esteem and provided with the right tools and effective training.

She further stated that South Africa has made significant progress in reaching the medium term goals of the National Department of Education to increase enrolment rates for Grade R and promoting access to early childhood development programmes by 2010. She indicated that this gave a fairly optimistic future for Foundation Phase education in South Africa.

She urged the delegates to look at how expertise in the Foundation Phase of education could be further developed, capacitated, managed and deployed. She further suggested that they should also look at ways in which they could link this expertise with communities to ensure that programmes are informed by the right of every child in South Africa, taking into account the specificities of the respective communities.
8.3 CLOSING REMARKS: DR LUIS CROUCH

In using the analogy of polar opposites, Dr Crouch spoke to the polar opposites of rote learning and critical thinking. He warned that this debate is dangerous and unproductive. He commented that research shows that generally rote is not a good idea. However, a critical distinction between rote and acquiring automatic skills is important.

Automatic skills in manipulating skills is very important. He further stressed that automaticity and conceptualisation are not enemies – they are necessary for each other. He used the example of the act of reading which is totally automatic. He ended by saying that rote is not the same as automaticity.

8.4 WRAP-UP BY MS P TYOBEKA

In presenting the gifts at the close of the conference, Ms Tyobeka remarked that the purpose of these gifts (books) is to re-invent ourselves as readers and seekers of knowledge. She stressed that we leave Makopane full of hope that we can make a difference and that the hope of the country lies in the strong and capable hands of teachers. She illustrated her point by saying that if an individual is asked to perform a particular task and he does everything else but the task required of him, he has failed.

Her message to the conference was that our charge is to make our children learn and we must collectively decide that we are going to make a difference. As teachers we must be trusted to possess the character and competencies to deliver the quality that is expected of us and work towards constantly sharpening our capabilities to improve our practice.
Master of Ceremonies, International delegates, Representatives of our partners in education from higher education institutions, non-governmental and non-profit organisations, Teachers, Delegates from other spheres of education, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

I am delighted to be speaking at the first Foundation Phase conference in South Africa – a conference dedicated to issues of education in the critical early grades of schooling.

The conference has a clear purpose – to foreground Foundation Phase education unambiguously as a critical area for development and growth in South Africa.

One aim of this conference is to empower Foundation Phase teachers to interact and participate in professional discourses and to share their own experiences and successes in the classroom.

The response to this conference has been phenomenal. I thank you for your enthusiasm.

I give special thanks to teachers who have volunteered to present and share best classroom practices.

Teachers have come from all over the country, from places like George, Mitchell’s Plain, Cradock, Libode, Lusikisiki, Nelspruit, Orange Farm and Soweto, and elsewhere. I also commend all our local and international Foundation Phase experts and academics who have so willingly opted to share their expertise and experiences at this conference.

We have invited four international experts, who have been centrally involved in changing the face of literacy and numeracy in their countries. I am sure that their contributions will inspire us to take up our own challenges in the places where we can make a difference, be that in our own programmes, schools, districts, institutions of higher learning and so on.

This conference is the first of its kind in a series that the Department of Education will promote in order to focus attention on issues in education that are of national and international importance and to provide a platform to share experiences and best practices.

Maria Montessori turns our attention to the critical importance of the early learning years when she asserts that, “The most important period of life is not the age of university, but the first one, the period from birth to the age of six”. This period is referred to as the “golden hour” – the years when a child learns fundamental competencies that will enable him or her to learn and to develop a clear conception of the world.

In formal education, the Foundation Phase must be considered to be an extension of the “golden hour”, more especially for those children who, through no fault of their own, have been deprived of sufficient support and opportunity to learn fundamental skills and competencies in the years before they enter the formal schooling sector.

In line with the theme of the conference, we need to build a solid foundation for learning. Quality Foundation Phase education is critical. It is within the Foundation Phase grades, Grades R–3, that basic literacy, numeracy and life skills are developed and advanced. In the Foundation Phase learners must learn how to read, write, count and calculate confidently and with understanding.

Literacy, numeracy and life skills are the essential building blocks upon which future learning takes place.

The results of the systemic evaluation survey that we conducted on a sample of Grade 3 learners in 2007 are now available and soon to be published.

I want to take the opportunity to reflect on the results of the survey as a way of contextualising the challenges we face in our quest to build solid foundations for learning.

Last year a representative sample of more than 54 000 Grade 3 learners from more than 2 400 primary schools participated in the second cycle of systemic evaluation at this level. The first was in 2001.

 Learners were tested in the written foundational skills of literacy and numeracy.

Some of the key findings emerging from the survey are:

- The average overall percentage score obtained by the learners in literacy was 36%, and the average percentage score in numeracy was 35%. Although the average score in the 2007 survey was a little higher than the baseline 2001 result that was 30%, clearly the scores are still unacceptably low.
Achievement of learners in numeracy and literacy varied in relation to the language in which they took the test, which coincided with the language of instruction. English and Afrikaans learners fared better, with average numeracy scores of 48% and 49% respectively, and average literacy scores of 43% and 48% respectively. African language mother tongue speakers had lower average scores. For example, for Siswati and Xitsonga learners, the average numeracy scores were 24% and 20% respectively. The average literacy score for both Siswati and Tshivenda learners was 26%. Clearly, language issues impact on learner performance in literacy and numeracy.

The total number of learners who performed excellently in either literacy or numeracy or both (achieving a score of 70% or above) was 5 439, and they constituted about 10 percent of the total sample. In a total of 148 schools (about six percent of the sample), performance was outstanding (learners achieved an average score of 70% or above) in either literacy or numeracy or both. Clearly, there are 'pockets of excellence' within the system – and not only in Quintile 4 and 5 schools.

Grade 3 is the exit grade from the Foundation Phase into the intermediate phase. Low attainment levels in literacy and numeracy are unacceptable because they reduce chances of success in further education. The ability to calculate, the ability to write and the ability to read with comprehension enhance opportunities of success when pursuing learning beyond the Foundation Phase.

In summary, some of the clearly intertwined challenges we experience at the level of Foundation Phase education include the problem of teacher quantity, quality and ability; lack of sufficient support for African language learners; large class sizes; lack of resources; lack of quality leadership in schools, and the like. They are the shaky ground upon which we build education for some of our learners, especially those in rural and poor areas. This situation must change.

While we acknowledge that the challenges we face are multiple and complex, it would be remiss of me to highlight the challenges we face in Foundation Phase education without also highlighting how we, as a department, are creating opportunities to address these challenges in partnership with other key stakeholders in education.

Universal access to Grade R is a key objective for the Department. Already we have over 600,000 young children attending Grade R classes. We have committed ourselves to the provision of universal Grade R education by 2011. Our commitment is not only to provide physical access for all learners to Grade R classrooms, but also to ensure that these learners experience quality education in these classrooms.

We have implemented a curriculum that is explicit about the skills and competencies that learners must develop at different grade levels. It clearly spells out the knowledge that needs to be acquired.

At the Foundation Phase it determines that reading, writing and calculating are core skills for learning and performing effectively.

We recognise however, that teachers still struggle to translate the curriculum into good classroom practice. Teachers need support to implement the curriculum.

Over the past four years, we have provided resources to schools, particularly the most disadvantaged schools, in the form of packs of reading books and reading toolkits, as a way of supporting teachers in the Foundation Phase.

The Drop All and Read Campaign is more and more being recognised as the strategy for encouraging learners and teachers alike to take time to read.

The Ithubha Writing Project has produced nearly 2,4 million story books in languages that have previously been marginalised – stories that are authentic and authored by our own teachers.

These are some of the “tools” we want our teachers to use to more effectively implement the curriculum and so teach in ways that will improve how learners perform.

The Quality Improvement Development Support and Upliftment Programme (KIDS UP) aims to improve the quality of literacy and numeracy teaching and learning through the adequate resourcing of all schools in poor areas commonly referred to as Quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools; through the development of effective management and leadership competence in schools, and through monitoring, evaluation and support at all levels of the system.
In addition, on 18 March 2008, the Department launched a flagship programme, the Foundations for Learning campaign.

This is a four-year campaign to create a national focus to improve reading, writing and numeracy abilities of all South African children.

Through the campaign, we hope to ensure that by 2011, all learners are able to demonstrate age-appropriate competence levels in literacy and numeracy. For instance, a specific target would be to ensure that by 2011, no learner performs at a level of less than 50% in the standardised Grade 3 literacy and numeracy survey I referred to earlier.

To achieve this, the Foundations for Learning campaign has established the following “non-negotiables” as issues that it will address:

- First, every classroom must have the appropriate resources for effective teaching. A list of basic resources on this campaign is contained in the Government Gazette published on 14 March 2008. Each school must ensure that every teacher has at least the basic minimum resources in the classroom.
- Second, teachers must plan and conduct effective teaching. All teachers are expected to be in their classes teaching planned lessons during contact teaching time. The timetable must ensure that every learner in the primary school engages in reading at school for 30 minutes every day, writes a piece of extended writing appropriate to the grade, engages in mental maths for 10 minutes and written maths for 20 minutes every day.
- Third, District Teacher Forums will be established in all districts and teachers are expected to be a member of the district forum, or of a school forum, so that ideas, experience and best practice is shared and teachers can enhance their teaching strategies.
- Fourth, teachers must assess learner performance regularly. Standardised assessments will be provided by the Department of Education and the results of these assessments must be reported to the district office from where the results for each school will be sent, via the provincial office, to my office.
- To assist teachers to manage the assessment tasks within the continuous assessment framework, my Department has provided milestones for expected attainment in numeracy and literacy per term per grade.

Annual tests based on the quarterly assessments will be provided to all schools.

Good education relies on the availability of good teachers. These are teachers who are themselves fully versed in the knowledge areas that learners must learn, and just as importantly, have a thorough knowledge of ways in which this knowledge can be learnt.

We are struggling to attract African language students into Foundation Phase initial teacher education programmes.

Commentators have suggested that the low status associated with teaching in the Foundation Phase is a factor militating against the recruitment of sufficient teachers in this sector. If this is indeed the case, we need to come up with ways to challenge this perception.

The Department is playing a role in ensuring a growing supply of quality Foundation Phase teachers by:

- encouraging high quality learners to choose Foundation Phase teaching as a career of choice through a Teacher Recruitment Campaign which is being rolled out in the second half of this year, and
- providing bursaries through the Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme. This scheme recognises the Foundation Phase as a priority area for teacher development, and provides full cost bursaries to students wishing to train in this area.1

However, we recognise that we still have a long way to go, and also that we must have the support of other role-players in the sector if we are to make more significant inroads into the challenges we face.

I trust that this conference will crystallise the issues that we must address in Foundation Phase education, and start to provide the momentum towards working together for solutions that will benefit us all.

Here are some of the key questions that we should be asking:

- What are the practices that best suit our diverse learning contexts?

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1 In 2008, about 750 full cost bursaries have been awarded to students who are specialising in the Foundation Phase. These 750 constitute about 15% of the total number of bursaries granted in 2008. About 290 (39%) of these bursaries were granted to students who will be able to teach in an African language. In 2009, we want to increase the number allocated to these students significantly to 20% of the total allocation. This will translate into 1,500 new and returning Foundation Phase students receiving Funza Lushaka bursaries. Our ability to reach this target will rely on the success of the teacher recruitment campaign.
The sites of learning under stewardship of principals, to my mind, these are some of the key questions that we must be asking.

The invitation is clear and open. All of us need to work together to build and strengthen Foundation Phase education in our country. I know that, together, we can ensure that every learner will have the opportunity for a better future.

The sites of learning under stewardship of principals, teachers and parents must teach every child – from the grasslands of Limpopo to the foothills of the Eastern Cape – to learn to read, write, count and calculate at levels that will provide solid foundations for further learning and allow them to operate effectively and competitively in a 21st century environment.

Enjoy the conference, and more importantly, through it, let’s learn from and with each other.

Thank you.
9.2 PLENARY SPEAKERS’ PROFILES

FRANCIS SAMPA

Francis Sampa is currently the Teacher Education Co-ordinator working on Quality Education Services Through Technology (QUESTT project) in Zambia. He holds a Master of Business Administration (Educational Management) from the University of Leicester. Francis Sampa has served as a Senior Inspector of Schools, Principal Education Officer for In-Service Teacher Training and Reading Development Officer for the Department of International Development (DFID) in Lusaka. He is a leading researcher and evaluated the Malawi Break Through to Literacy pilot and contributed to the Review of the Primary Reading Programme for the DFID. His contribution to reading is noted in the numerous publications and papers that he has authored. He is a long term member of the International Reading Association.

DR LUIS CROUCH

Dr. Luis Crouch is a Research Vice President at the Research Triangle Institute, North Carolina, USA. He has carried out extensive research on South African education in the last 15 years. He has worked in all regions of the developing world, including some 25 countries. He has taught courses in applied education economics and planning at the University of the Witwatersrand, and at George Washington University in Washington, DC.

PROF SANDRA HOLLINGSWORTH

Prof Sandra Hollingsworth is Visiting Professor at the University of California, Berkeley. A former published historian and K-12 classroom teacher, Prof Hollingsworth studies literacy assessment and instruction in developing countries. Prof Hollingsworth’s academic work has resulted in over 120 publications in peer-reviewed journals and major book companies.

AARNOUT BROMBACHER

Aarnout Brombacher is a Past-President of AMESA (The Association for Mathematics Education of South Africa). He taught Mathematics at Westerford High School from 1988 until 2002. He won a Fulbright Scholarship and holds a Masters Degree in Mathematics Education at the University of Georgia in the USA.

He served on the Department of Education’s Mathematics Working Group. He also served as a member of the TIMSS International Expert Panel. In 2005 he was appointed by Minister Pandor to chair the Ministerial Committee for Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy. He has established an educational support company that focuses on teacher training, materials development and research related to education in general and mathematics education in particular.

DR. ERNESTO SCHIEFELBEIN

Dr. Ernesto Schiefelbein is a former Minister of Education of Chile. Currently he teaches Education Research and Development in Doctoral and Master Programs in Chile, Argentina, El Salvador, Japan and USA and is a Fellow at the Centro de Investigacion y Desarrollo de la Educacion (CIDE) in Chile. In the 1970s he developed simulation models to estimate the real level of repetition in Latin America. In the 1980s he identified the key factors explaining learning scores. In the 1990s he put into practice a personalised learning model in Universidad Santo Tomas and has recently estimated the cost-effectiveness levels of strategies frequently used to improve education in Latin America and Anglophone Africa. UNESCO has awarded him the Jan Comenius prize for educational research.
9.3 PARALLEL PRESENTATIONS

Sub-theme – Starting early for success: a focus on children from 0–5 years

Sub-theme – Developing essential numeracy skills in the early grades

Sub-theme – Developing essential literacy skills in the early grades

Sub-theme – Early grade reading and numeracy assessment
### 9.4 CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS AND DELEGATES

#### PROVINCIAL DELEGATIONS

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#### HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

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PUBLISHERS

More than 30 publishers from all over the country displayed appropriate and relevant learning and teaching support materials during the conference. Publishers donated a large quantity of lanyards, pens, rulers, lucky draw prizes, novels and dictionaries. Intellectual Wall Charts and Software Limited sponsored computer software programmes which were won by three teacher presenters in a lucky draw. The winning teachers were:

1. Brenda Lekgetho, Lime Acres Primary, Northern Cape.
2. Ronica Pardesi, Parkside Primary, Gauteng.
3. Selina Maduna, Tshepana Primary, Gauteng.

9.4 EXHIBITIONS

Amongst the large variety of displays were:

1. Exhibits by publishers.
2. The DoE display.
3. Qids-Up display.
4. School displays – from Gauteng and Eastern Cape.
5. Wits University Literacy Book Box display.
7. Poster displays by stakeholders.
9.5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. USAID for sponsoring the participation of three of the international speakers.

2. UNICEF for sponsoring the participation of two speakers, the gala dinner event, Resource Library CD, and the conference publication.

3. Shereno Printers for sponsoring the printing of the conference programme.

4. Publishers for sponsoring a huge number of lucky draw prizes.