



Western Cape

3rd Annual ECD & Foundation Phase Conference 2026

From Policy to Practice: Advancing
Quality in Early Education”

ecd

28th-29th May 2026

Venue: Lagoon Beach Hotel & Spa

1 Lagoon Gate Drive, Lagoon Beach, Cape Town



The 3rd Annual ECD & Foundation Phase Western Cape Conference 2026, proudly hosted by Eminence Corporate Solutions, is a premier platform dedicated to advancing early learning and foundational education in South Africa. Scheduled to bring together educators, policymakers, researchers, civil society leaders, and development partners, this year's gathering continues the vital work of strengthening the earliest years of a child's educational journey.

Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Foundation Phase education are globally recognised as the cornerstone of lifelong learning and social progress. In South Africa, the sector is undergoing a period of rapid transformation, with increased policy attention, investment, and innovation. Against this backdrop, the 2026 conference will spotlight cutting-edge research, scalable solutions, and inclusive practices that ensure every child is given the opportunity to thrive.

Themed around innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability, the program will feature keynote addresses, plenary discussions, and case studies on critical issues such as:

- Strengthening professionalism and leadership in the ECD workforce
- Leveraging technology and AI responsibly in early learning
- Nutrition, health, and wellbeing in the early years
- Policy reforms, funding models, and registration frameworks for ECD centres
- Community-driven interventions for vulnerable contexts
- Global and local best practices shaping South Africa's early learning landscape

Delegates will benefit from interactive dialogues, evidence-based insights, and practical tools that bridge the gap between policy and practice. By fostering collaboration across sectors, this conference seeks to empower educators, influence policymakers, and inspire communities to reimagine the future of education — starting with the foundations.

Now in its third year, the conference has become a signature convening in the Western Cape, known for shaping conversations that matter, building partnerships that last, and catalysing change that impacts children, families, and society at large.

“

Children are naturally curious, and that curiosity should be encouraged and nurtured.”



01 EDUCATION SECTOR

Early Childhood Development (ECD) Professionals

- ECD Practitioners
- Childcare Educators
- ECD Coordinators
- Early Years Program Directors
- Curriculum Designers for ECD
- Teacher Trainers for ECD
- Educational Psychologists (Specialising in Early Childhood)

Foundation Phase Educators

- Foundation Phase Teachers (Grade R to Grade 3)
- Foundation Phase Curriculum Developers
- Learning Support Teachers
- Special Needs Educators (Early Intervention)
- School Principals
- School Leaders / Heads of Departments for Early Years

Government & Policy Makers

- Department of Education Representatives
- Policy Analysts in Early Childhood and Primary Education
- Local Government Officers
- Education Planners and Researchers

Education Consultants

- Curriculum and Pedagogical Consultants
- Early Childhood Development Specialists
- Advisors on Educational Resources and Tools

NGOs and Civil Society Organisations

- Child Welfare and Advocacy Organisations
- NGO Representatives Focused on Education and Child Development

02 CORPORATE SECTOR (VERTICAL COMPANIES)

Educational Technology Providers

- EdTech Companies Specialising in Early Childhood Education
- Software Developers for Classroom Management Tools
- Companies Offering Interactive Learning Platforms
- Publishers of Early Learning Books or Digital Content

Learning Resource Manufacturers

- Companies that Produce Learning Materials (Books, Toys, Kits)
- Educational Game Developers
- Manufacturers of Classroom Furniture & Equipment for Early Childhood Education

Healthcare & Child Development Professionals

- Pediatricians Specialising in Early Childhood Development
- Speech Therapists and Occupational Therapists
- Child Health and Nutrition Experts
- Mental Health Professionals for Children

Corporate Sponsors of Education Initiatives

- Corporate CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) Teams Investing in Early Childhood Education

Consulting Firms Specialising in Education & Child Development

- Management Consultants for Educational Institutions
- Strategic Advisors for Educational Programs

03 LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

School Librarians

- Library Managers Specialising in Early Childhood & Primary Education
- Teacher-Librarians Supporting ECD and Foundation Phase Education

Public Librarians

- Children's Librarians
- Librarians Focused on Early Literacy Programs

Library Science Professionals

- Library Educators and Trainers
- Library Program Coordinators for Early Literacy

Information Resource Managers

- Catalogers of Educational Materials for ECD & Foundation Phase

Librarians in Educational NGOs

- Community-based Librarians Supporting Children's Education and Literacy

04 RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC SECTOR

Academics and Researchers

- University Professors/Researchers in Education & Child Development
- Postgraduate Students in Education, Child Psychology, or ECD
- Educational Research Analysts

Academic Publishers

- Publishers of Educational Journals, Research, and Books

05 PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Parents of Young Children

- Parent Educators or Parent-Teacher Organisation (PTO) Representatives
- Caregivers and Childcare Workers Interested in ECD Programs

06 OTHER RELATED STAKEHOLDERS

Community Development and Social Workers

Social Workers Specialising in Child Welfare

Community Development Experts

Business and Social Entrepreneurs

Individuals Creating Impactful Social Enterprises for Early Education

Innovators in Childcare Products and Services

WHY SHOULD THEY ATTEND?



Networking: Connecting with professionals across various sectors to collaborate and share best practices.



Learning and Development: Engaging with new research, educational methods, and trends in the ECD and Foundation Phase sectors.



Policy Impact: Contributing to or learning about educational policies and initiatives shaping the future of childhood education in the Western Cape and beyond.



Showcasing Solutions: Vendors and EdTech companies can showcase their products and solutions to a highly relevant audience.



Resources: Librarians and educational professionals can gain access to new resources, tools, and materials for enhancing early learning experiences.



The conference should be attended by anyone directly involved in ECD and Foundation Phase education, including educators, administrators, policy makers, vendors, and specialists from related sectors like child health, librarianship, and early learning technologies. Vertical companies that provide educational resources, tools, and services for young learners should also be present to showcase innovations in the field.

ecd NEWS

Why the **ECD MASS REGISTRATION DRIVE?**

The government recognises the important and valuable work ECDs offer children, communities and livelihoods across South Africa. We are aware of the various contexts in which ECDs operate, and understand that there have been many barriers to registration that have made the application process complex and time consuming.

For this reason we have developed a new registration process to complete the application for Bronze status that is:

- **SIMPLER**
- **FASTER**
- **OFFERING YOU LIVE SUPPORT**

CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



Chaniti Magson

Brain Harmonics
Western Cape



Prof Anass Bayaga

Department of Curriculum
Studies, Stellenbosch
University



Lee Milner

Head of Pre-School
St Dunstan's College



Whitney Richardson

Director, Kids Collab



Jacqui Dornbrack

Early Grade Reading
and Writing Curriculum
and Pedagogy expert



Dr Susan Greyling

Project Manager: Special
Projects in the Faculty of
Education, North-West
University (NWU)



Andrew Barnes

Director-Western Cape
The Love Trust



Brad Keller

CEO Keller Education



Kelsey Shepherd

Teaching and Learning
Lead, Squaring The
Education Pyramid Institute
(STEPi)





DAY 1: REIMAGINING FOUNDATIONS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

08:00 – 08:50 Registration & Morning Coffee

08:50 – 09:00 Welcome & Opening Remark

SESSION	TOPIC \ PRESENTER	KEY HIGHLIGHTS
Plenary Session 1 (09:00 – 09:40)	Keynote: Getting It Right the First Time – Leadership Tools for ECD Presenter: TBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boosting staff retention • Collaborative leadership approaches • Building satisfaction and teamwork • Tools for new leader
Plenary Session 2 (09:40 – 10:20)	EdTech's Role in Addressing South Africa's Educational Challenges Presenter: TBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scalable models for digital transformation • Tackling inequality with accessible EdTech • Mobile-first solutions for rural contexts • Lessons from success stories
Plenary Session 3 (10:20 – 11:00)	The Impact of AI in Early Childhood Education Presenter: TBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child-centered AI for soft skills • Balancing innovation with child needs • Risks of over-automation • Ethical AI frameworks
11:00-11:20 TEA / COFFEE BREAK		
Plenary Session 4 (11:20 – 12:00)	Elevating Professionalism in Early Childhood Education Presenters: TBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redefining educators' role • Play-based learning and reading skills • Professional growth pathways • Raising global standards
Plenary Session 5 (12:00 – 12:40)	Screen Time for 0–6: Fixing a Broken System Presenter: TBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “brain-rot” phenomenon • Cognitive and health impacts • Alternatives to passive screen time • Policy recommendations

12:40-13:40 LUNCH BREAK AND NETWORKING

Plenary Session 6 (13:40 – 14:20)

The Voice of the Child and Creative Practices in Early Childhood

Presenter: TBA

- Safe, Inclusive Participative Pedagogy (SIPP)
- Amplifying children's voices in learning spaces
- Global perspectives on inclusion
- Creative integration of children's input

Plenary Session 7 (14:20 – 15:00)

Podcasting Made Simple for Teaching & Professional Development

Presenter: TBA

- Leveraging podcasting in education
- Storytelling as pedagogy
- Low-cost, high-impact resources
- Case studies and classroom use

15:00-15:20 AFTERNOON REFRESHMENTS

Plenary Session 8 (15:20 – 16:00)

Neurodiversity and Trauma in Early Childhood

Presenter: TBA

- Impact of trauma on learning
- Emotional regulation strategies
- Inclusive classroom practices
- Tools for resilience

Plenary Session 9 (16:00 – 16:40)

Navigating Difficult Conversations with Families

Presenters: TBA

- Handling sensitive developmental concerns
- Trust-based family partnerships
- Culturally responsive engagement
- Frameworks for dialogue

16:40 – 17:00 Closing Remarks & Networking





DAY 2: POLICY, PARTNERSHIPS, AND PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS FOR ECD

08:00 – 08:25 Registration & Morning Coffee

08:25 – 08:30 Welcome & Opening Remark

SESSION	TOPIC \ PRESENTER	KEY HIGHLIGHTS
Plenary Session 1 (08:30 – 09:10)	Keynote: Foundational Learning & ECD at the G20 Provincial Education Indaba Presenters: TBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial & national commitments • Aligning with global best practices • System-level measurement • South Africa's G20 role
Plenary Session 2 (09:10 – 09:50)	Early Years, Big Impact – The Early Edge Empowerment Program Presenter: TBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scalable models for digital transformation • Tackling inequality with accessible EdTech • Mobile-first solutions for rural contexts • Lessons from success stories
Plenary Session 3 (09:50 – 10:30)	Bana Pele ECD Registration Drive Presenter: TBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges of crèche registration • Simplifying bureaucracy • Advocacy for inclusive policies • Grassroots perspectives
10:30-10:50 TEA / COFFEE BREAK		
Plenary Session 4 (10:50 – 11:30)	Sustainability vs. Authenticity in GrowECD Presenters: TBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing sustainable growth and authenticity • Lessons from Western Cape GrowECD • Policy implications • A vision for the future
Plenary Session 5 (11:30 – 12:10)	GrowECD's Curriculum for ECD Centres in South Africa Presenter: TBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELOM results and insights • Custom curriculum for SA contexts • Educator empowerment • Scaling adoption

Plenary Session 6
(12:10 – 12:50)

Improving Early Learning in Vulnerable Contexts
Presenters: TBA

- Research evidence from vulnerable settings
- Innovative low-resource teaching methods
- Community-driven interventions
- Measuring long-term impact

12:50-13:50 LUNCH BREAK AND NETWORKING

Plenary Session 7
(13:50 – 14:30)

The Power of Food – Tackling Nutrition in ECD Centres
Presenter: TBA

- Nutrition as learning foundation
- Community food systems
- Fighting hunger with partnerships
- Feeding program examples

14:30-14:40 AFTERNOON REFRESHMENTS

Plenary Session 8
(14:40 – 15:20)

The Joy that the Toy Library Brings to Children
Presenters: TBA

- Toy libraries and holistic development
- Bridging literacy and play
- Fostering curiosity and joy
- Replicating success elsewhere

16:40 – 17:00 Closing Remarks & Networking

- **R4,000.00** ECD Centres / NGOs
- **R6,500.00** Private Entities / Individuals



Venue: Lagoon Beach Hotel & Spa,
1 Lagoon Gate Drive, Lagoon Beach, Cape Town



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Brought to you by
Eminence Events



AUTHORIZATION DETAILS

FIRST NAME: _____ LAST NAME: _____

JOB TITLE & DEPARTMENT: _____ EMAIL: _____

COMPANY: _____ NATURE OF BUSINESS: _____

BILLING INFORMATION/ ACCOUNT NUMBER

FIRST NAME: _____ LAST NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____

COUNTRY: _____ TELEPHONE: _____

MOBILE: _____ VAT NO: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

DELEGATE ATTENDANCE INFORMATION

TITLE	DELEGATE NAME & SURNAME	POSITION	EMAIL

REGISTRATION PER DELEGATE

- **R4,000.00** ECD Centres / NGOs
- **R6,500.00** Private Entities / Individuals

Payment Details

First National Bank
Account Number: 62870215673
Branch Code: 250665

- Electronic Transfer Payment
- Direct Deposit Payment
- Cheque Payable to ECS
- Cash Payment

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

A substitute delegate is always welcome with written notification. No substitution fees will be charged provided notification is provided at least one week prior to the event. For standard registrations, in the event you wish to cancel your registration more than 20 days prior to commencement of the event, you agree to pay a cancellation fee of 10% of the event fee. If you cancel your program registration less than 20 days before commencement of the Program, you agree to pay a cancellation fee of 30%. Registrations made at an "early bird" or otherwise discounted rate are non-refundable. If you wish to cancel your registration more than 20 days prior to the event, you will be provided credit towards an alternative event and you are liable to pay 100% of the fee.

Due to circumstances outside of our control, it is possible we may need to cancel, reschedule, or change the venue of an event. We will make all reasonable efforts to inform attendees of any such changes with as much notice as possible. Should your Program be rescheduled or cancelled by us, all fees you have paid will be credited towards an alternative event or refunded to you.

You acknowledge and agree that, to the extent the law allows, our liability is limited to the event fee and we will not be liable for any costs, damages or expenses incurred by you as a result of a cancellation, deferral, reschedule or change of venue. None of the above is intended to compromise your rights under South African Consumer Law. Photos and/or video may be taken by us at the event and as required.