



KwaZulu Natal

3rd Annual ECD & Foundation Phase Conference 2026

Reimagining Early Childhood Development:
Integrating Policy, Practice & Innovation

ecd

14th-15th May 2026

Venue: The Southern Sun Elangeni & Maharani, Durban



Dear Delegate,

On behalf of Eminence Corporate Solutions, it is with great pleasure that we extend this formal invitation for you to attend the **3rd Annual Early Childhood Development (ECD) & Basic Education KZN Conference**, scheduled to take place from **14th & 15th of May 2026** at the **Southern Sun Elangeni Maharani Hotel in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal**.

This year's conference, themed "Reimagining Early Childhood Development: Integrating Policy, Practice & Innovation" & "Building the Foundations for Lifelong Learning: Towards 2030 and Beyond", brings together a diverse community of educators, policymakers, researchers, non-governmental organisations, and ECD practitioners to engage in collaborative dialogue and strategic planning aimed at strengthening early learning and basic education outcomes across the province.

Conference Highlights Include:

- Keynote addresses from national and provincial education leaders
- Panel discussions on the implementation of the ECD 2030 strategy
- Insights on digital transformation and innovation in basic education
- Breakaway sessions focused on policy, curriculum, funding, and infrastructure
- Exhibition of ECD materials, technology, and support services
- Networking opportunities with stakeholders across all education levels

We believe your presence and contributions will add great value to the conference, and we look forward to your participation in shaping a more inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education system for all children in KwaZulu-Natal.

Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to reach out. We look forward to welcoming you to this pivotal event.

Warm regards,
Thulani Dube –Conference Producer



WHO SHOULD ATTEND?



- ECD Directors
- ECD Centres Principals / Teachers
- Grade R Coordinators
- Foundation Phase (Grades R 3) Teachers
- Primary School Teachers / HODs / Principals
- Intermediate Phase (Grade 4 6) Teachers & Heads of Departments
- Educators / Sub teachers
- Virtual Education Specialists
- Course Designers
- Instructional Technologists
- Policy Makers / Education Administrators
- Basic Education Researchers
- Government Education Personnel (e.g. Department of Basic Education)
- Learning Support / E Learning / ICT specialists
- Curriculum Designers
- Blended Education Specialists
- Health Professionals (where relevant)
- Parents / Guardians
- NGOs, Trusts, & Foundations involved in education
- Consultants and Service Providers (e.g. educational technology, software)

SECTORS / EXHIBITORS THAT CAN ATTEND

- **Educational Resources & Publishers**

Providers of learning materials, books, early reading / numeracy programmes.

- **EdTech & Digital Learning Tools**

Software providers, digital platforms, e learning, virtual learning tools, educational apps, video / multimedia resources.

- **Hardware / ICT / Infrastructure Suppliers**

Devices, classroom tech, internet / network providers

- **Play Equipment / Kindergarten / Furniture**

Suppliers of playground equipment, pre school furniture, kindergarten design or fit out

- **Health, Nutrition & Wellness Related Organisations**

Dieticians, nutrition programmes, health practitioners focused on child health, sanitation, hygiene

- **Inclusive Education / Disability / Access**

Organisations working with special needs, disabilities, accessibility, inclusive learning designs

- **Regulatory / Government Bodies / Departments of Education**

For policy, oversight, grants, infrastructure, compliance

- **Non profit Organisations / NGOs**

Organisations focused on child development, community support, and early childhood development projects etc.

- **Higher Education / Teacher Training Institutions**

Universities, teacher colleges etc., especially those dealing with early childhood education pedagogy, research etc.

- **Consultants & Service Providers**

Training, capacity building, professional development, advisory, quality assurance.

- **Media, Print / Publishing, Communications**

Those who produce print / digital materials for young children

ecd NEWS

You can apply on your own!

- 1 Create a profile on eCares using your cellphone number and personal password
- 2 Login and begin the simple step-by-step application
- 3 Remember to have certified ID copies and completed Form 30s for you and ALL your staff
- 4 You can click "SAVE" at any time and revisit the application at a later stage to complete it.
- 5 Once you submit, you can login at any time to see the status of your application.

CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



Dr Ashnie Mahadew
Senior Lecturer
University of
KwaZulu-Natal

Brent Hutcheson
Educator, Innovator,
Founder , Care for
Education



Nelisiwe Zondi
Founder and CEO
African Languages
and Literacy Training
Institute (ALLT Institute)



Bilkish Vawda
Principal
Pretty Palms
Pre-School



Mareldia Tape
Director
CEO of Grassroots



Judy Tate
Executive Director
Khanyisa Inanda Seminary
Community Projects



Dimpho Lephaila
Communications
Associate,
Innovation Edge



Tanya Patten
Early Learning
Specialist,
Focus on iThemba
(RF) NPC



Siwaphiwe Sibeko
Programmes Officer
Funda Wande



Modupi Mazibuko
ECD Programme Manager
Penreach



Thulile Makofane
ECD Director
Penreach



DAY 1: BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR HOLISTIC ECD

07:30 – 08:30 | Registration and Morning Tea

08:30 – 09:00 | Opening Ceremony

- Welcome by Hosts & Master of Ceremony
- Keynote Address-Opening remarks -The 2030 Strategy for ECD that will delve on- universal access to high-quality, registered ECD programs with a focus on vulnerable children. The address includes milestones- implementation roadmap and mass registration campaign
- Cultural performance by local ECD centre

09:00 – 09:45 | Keynote: A Life-course Perspective on ECD

Focus:

- Nurturing Care Framework: Five pillars explained
- Long-term impact of early childhood investment
- Global and local success stories

09:45 – 10:45 | Plenary Session: Operationalising the Nurturing Care Framework in SA

Discussion Points:

- Integration of health, nutrition, and learning
- Challenges in responsive caregiving in resource-poor areas
- Cross-sector collaboration models

10:45 – 11:00 | Tea Break

11:00 – 12:00 | Panel Discussion: Quality Assurance and Assessment Practices

Discussion Points:

- Monitoring tools for ECD centres
- Standardised vs contextualised assessment
- Role of practitioners in quality assurance

12:00 – 12:45 | Speed Sessions (15 minutes)

1. Accreditation of ECD Programmes
 - Policies, barriers, and steps to compliance
2. Teacher Qualification & Training
 - Aligning qualifications with classroom needs
3. Understanding Neurodiversity in the Early Years
 - Recognising and supporting diverse learners

12:45 – 13:45 | Lunch & Exhibition Visit

13:45 – 14:30 | Keynote: Children's Mental Health in a Shifting World

Focus:

- Effects of poverty, trauma, and neglect
- Community-based intervention models
- Building resilience from infancy

14:30 – 15:30 | Plenary Session: In (Re) search of Children's Mental Health

Discussion Points:

- Role of caregivers and teachers in early detection
- Integration of mental health support in ECD
- Gaps in rural support services

15:30 – 16:15 | Interactive Session: Using Technology in the Early Years – Risks & Opportunities

Format:

- Short presentations + Q&A
- Apps, digital play, screen time balance
- Protecting children from online harm

16:15 – 16:30 | Day 1 Wrap-Up & Reflections

DAY 2: SYSTEMS, STRATEGY & THE FUTURE OF ECD

08:00 – 08:30 | Arrival and Networking Tea

08:30 – 09:15 | Keynote: The Future of ECD – AI, Policy & Innovation

Focus:

- Emerging technologies in early learning
- Policy frameworks for digital inclusion
- AI tools that support (not replace) educators

09:15 – 10:15 | Plenary Session: Exploring AI in Teaching – Embracing the Future

Discussion Points:

- AI-assisted learning and assessment
- Ethical concerns
- Capacity-building for ECD professionals

10:15 – 11:00 | Plenary Session: Policy and Data Challenges in ECD

Discussion Points:

- Lack of reliable data
- Fragmentation of policy across departments
- Tracking developmental milestones at scale

11:00 – 11:15 | Tea Break

11:15 – 12:15 | Plenary Session: Infrastructure, Service Delivery & Municipal Inflexibility

Discussion Points:

- Poor infrastructure in rural ECD centres
- Water, sanitation, and space
- Municipal roles and bureaucratic obstacles
- Infrastructure and digital upgrades (libraries, virtual labs, e-learning tools)

12:15 – 13:00 | Speed Sessions (15 minutes)

1. Access to Finance & Funding for ECD Centres
 - NPO vs private models
2. Registration and Regulatory Compliance
 - Practical steps for centres
3. Role of the Private Sector in ECD
 - Funding, partnerships, and innovation

13:00 – 14:00 | Lunch & Networking

14:00 – 14:45 | Plenary Session: Training and Professionalisation of ECD Workforce

Discussion Points:

- Pre-service and in-service training gaps
- Professional development models
- Career pathways in ECD

14:45 – 15:30 | Stakeholder Roundtable: Funding, Regulation & the Way Forward

Participants:

- Government officials
- Donors and NGOs
- ECD forum representatives
- Private sector voice

Output:

- Joint communique & action commitments

15:30 – 16:00 | Conference Closure & Key Takeaways

- Summary of themes
- Call to action
- Vote of thanks

16:00 – 17:00 | Networking & Exhibitor Engagement



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



Venue: The Southern Sun
Elangeni & Maharani, Durban

3rd Annual ECD & Foundation Phase Conference 2026

14th-15th May 2026 | The Southern Sun Elangeni Maharani Hotel

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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.