

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

ORAL REPLY

QUESTION 111.

DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 04/03/2025

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 07/2025

111. Ms T E Magagula (ANC) to ask the Minister of Basic Education: to ask the Minister of Basic Education:

How will early childhood development centres be equipped and leveraged to strengthen the early identification and intervention of learners with special needs, especially in rural and township areas?

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

ORAL REPLY

QUESTION 111.

Response

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) is actively implementing various initiatives to support Early Childhood Development (ECD) practitioners in strengthening inclusive practices and early identification of children with special needs, particularly in rural and township areas. Early identification and screening tools:

- In collaboration with the Department of Health, the DBE has developed a screening tool that will be included in the Road to Health Booklet to assist in early identification of developmental challenges.
- The DBE is currently developing an ECD-specific screening tool for practitioners to help identify and support children with disabilities at an early stage.

Capacity Building and Training for ECD Practitioners:

- The DBE is integrating inclusive education practices into the learning and teaching support materials for ECD practitioners to ensure they have the necessary guidance and resources to support children with special needs.
- The DBE is also developing a module on inclusivity as part of the PlaySA online training course, which will help equip ECD practitioners with strategies to create inclusive learning environments.

Strengthening Inclusive Practices at ECD Centres:

- The DBE is working towards embedding inclusive principles in the curriculum, teacher training and classroom practices to ensure that all children, regardless of their abilities, receive quality early learning support.
- Special attention is being given to providing accessible learning environments by integrating adaptive learning materials and ensuring that infrastructure improvements prioritise accessibility for children with disabilities.

Since the migration of Early Childhood Development (ECD) from the Department of Social Development to the DBE, I have prioritised efforts to formalise, strengthen and expand access to quality ECD services. Establishing a strong foundation in the early years ensures that children receive quality education, develop essential cognitive and social skills and are prepared for lifelong learning — regardless of their circumstances.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

ORAL REPLY

QUESTION 111.

ECD is not merely about preparing children for school — it is about preparing them for life.

By investing in quality early learning systems, we:

- Reduce school dropout rates;
- Improve literacy and numeracy outcomes; and
- Ensure that every child, no matter their background, has an equal opportunity to succeed.

By ensuring strong early learning systems, we are building a future generation that is educated, skilled and ready to contribute to South Africa's economic growth.

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ORAL REPLY

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COMPILED BY:

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DATE: 04/03/2025

OFFICIALS INVOLVED

QUESTION NO: Ê111. IS APPROVED

SIGNED

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DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL: DELIVERY AND SUPPORT

DATE: 07/03/2025

QUESTION NO: Ê111. IS APPROVED

SIGNED

MR HM MWELI

DIRECTOR-GENERAL

DATE: 07/03/2025

QUESTION NO: Ê111. IS APPROVED

SIGNED

DR MR MHAULE, MP

DEPUTY MINISTER

DATE: 11/03/2025

QUESTION NO: Ê111. IS APPROVED

SIGNED

MS S GWARUBE, MP

MINISTER

DATE: 25/03/2025