

7 JUNE 2022

## BASIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TO HOST INDABA ON EARLY GRADE READING RESEARCH

The Department of Basic Education will host a two-day Early Grade Reading Research Indaba to address the reading challenges in the basic education sector. From 8-9 June, speakers and panelists from world-leading developmental, research and government bodies will contribute insight and thrash out the issues in a bid to chart the way forward regarding reading outcomes in schools.

One of South Africa's biggest developmental challenges is the number of children who cannot read for meaning in the early grades. These children fail to thrive in the foundation phase and beyond, with far-reaching consequences for the country as a whole.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has risen to this challenge with the Early Grade Reading Study (EGRS) programme, a series of impact-driven randomised trials conducted in partnership with various developmental and academic institutions.

Since 2012, EGRS has generated a wealth of evidence into how best to implement early grade reading support solutions in South African schools. Specifically, an on-site model of paper-based lesson plans and regular in-person coaching visits has delivered robust evidence of sustained impacts on reading outcomes. The challenge is how to implement the model cost-effectively at scale. To address this question, the second Early Grade Reading Study (EGRS 2) was conducted in Mpumalanga from 2017-2020. Interventions aimed to improve learning in English as a First Additional Language (EFAL) in grades 1 to 3. The on-site model was compared to an alternative model using electronic tablets preloaded lesson plans, audio and video clips and a specialised "virtual coach".

The outcomes confirmed the sustainable impact of on-site coaching but found that virtual coaching had little discernible impact: A cost-effective alternative to on-site coaching has yet to be found. All early grade reading stakeholders – from government, developmental and academic role-players to the parents, teachers and learners on the ground – are invited to join the Indaba's [live stream](#).

### The Early Grade Reading Research Indaba

Can alternative ways of providing professional support to teachers create the same kind of change in teaching practice and learning outcomes as coaching, but at a lower financial cost?

#### Media Enquiries:

Elijah Mhlanga - Head of Communication: 083 580 8275 | Hope Mokgathe - Spokesperson to Minister: 079 817 0427

Terence Khala - Media Liaison Officer: 081 758 1546

Is it more sustainable and effective to intervene in the home language or EFAL? How should parents be involved? What is the optimal use of technology? Where do donors and partners fit in? These are the big questions posed by EGRS 2, answers to which the DBE's forthcoming Early Grade Reading Research Indaba will seek to find

## High-impact speakers and topics

**Session One** of the Indaba opens with a key-note address by Deputy Minister of Basic Education, Dr Makgabo Reginah Mhaule, followed by high-level reflections and international experience on "The Importance of Evidence Building" from Muriel Mafico, UNICEF's Representative in South Africa, Andy Karas, USAID's Southern Africa Mission Director, and David Evans, senior fellow at the Centre for Global Development.

Prof Brahm Fleisch, Professor of Education Policy and Head of the Division of Education Leadership, Policy and Skills at the Wits School of Education, weighs in on early grade reading in research and practice.

**In Session Two**, Stephen Taylor, DBE Director of Research, Monitoring and Evaluation, presents key EGRS findings, and Dr Fatima Adam, Director of Research and Evaluation at the Zenex Foundation, chairs a panel on the international experience of early grade reading.

**Session Three** delves into EGRS findings in detail, as the DBE's Carol Nuga Deliwe, Nompumelelo Mohohlwane and Lesang Sebaeng as well as other participants address the specifics of pedagogy and classroom materials and debate the emotive topic of home language versus English.

**Session Four** focuses on "Technology and Learning Loss", with input from the DBE's Prof Martin Gustafsson and Kholosa Nonkenge, Young Impact's Dr Noam Angrist and The Learning Trust's Sibongile Khumalo.

**Session Five** concludes the Indaba with a "Reflection on Donor Collaboration and Partnership" with Zenex Foundation CEO Gail Campbell, UNICEF SA Education Manager Dr Andile Dube, and USAID Education and Youth Team Leader Dr Felicia Wilson-Young.

## Members of the Media are invited to Join in the Indaba as follows:

**Date:** Tomorrow, Wednesday 8th and Thursday 9th June 2022

**Venue:** Kievits Kroon Country Estate, 41 Reier Rd, Kameeldrift-East, Pretoria, 0035

**Time:** 09:00

**Virtual Link:** [YouTube Livestreaming: DBE channel](#)

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Indaba by name, indaba by nature! At the end of every session, the (virtual) floor opens for discussion. Be sure to join the live stream and catch the conversation.

The indaba will be available on the [DBE Youtube channel](#) and other platforms such as Facebook.

## ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

(Catch more updates and new content on DBE TV – Channel 122 on Open view HD and on the DBE Channel on [YouTube](#))

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