



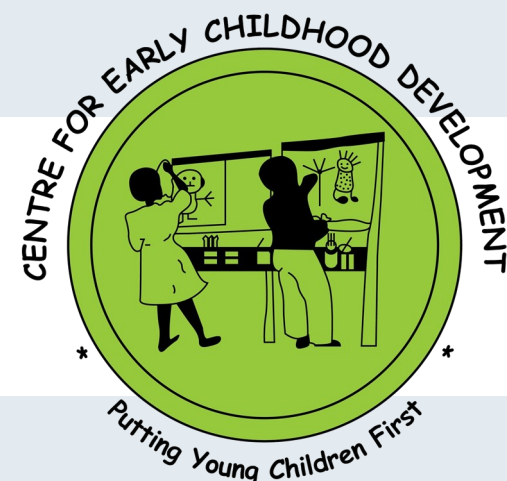
Quality Early Childhood Development in South Africa: Celebrating three decades of ECD in South Africa

Lessons from the Past | Opportunities for the Present | Shaping the Future

Conference Programme

30 September - 2 October 2025

College of Cape Town, Crawford Campus
174 Kromboom Road, Crawford, Cape Town



higher education
& training
Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

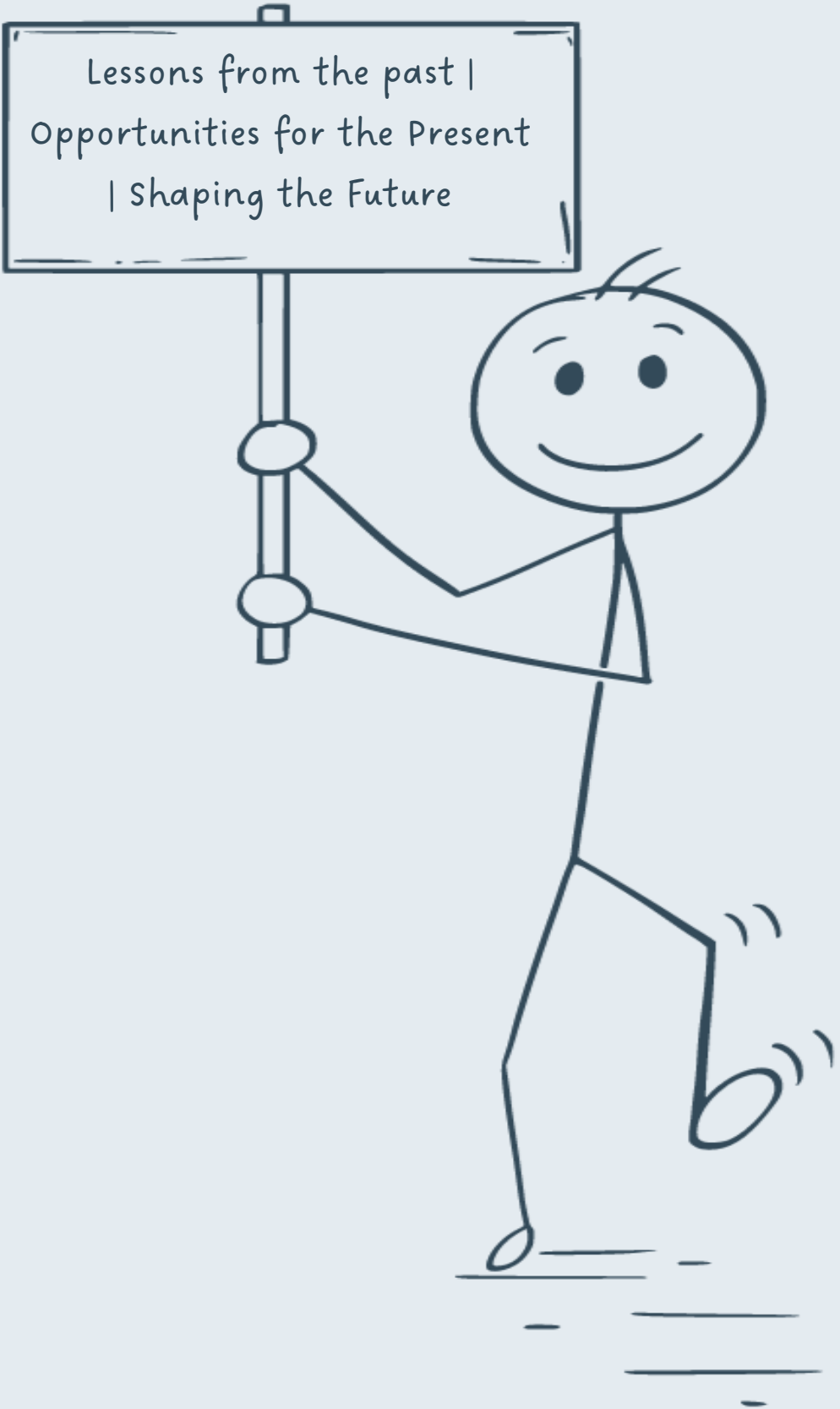
COLLEGE OF
CAPE TOWN
Inspiring minds

The conference programme is subject to change



Day 1: Tuesday,30 September 2025

10h00 - 11h30	Registration	
11h30 - 11h40	Conference Welcome - College of Cape Town	
11h40 - 12h00	Conference Opening - CECD	
12h00 - 13h00	Panel Discussion: Gauging Progress and Advancing Early Childhood Development <i>Wiedaad Slemming (Director of the Children’s Institute at UCT, and Associate Professor in the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health at UCT)</i> <i>Linda Biersteker (Developmental Psychologist and adult educator focusing on early childhood development)</i> <i>Tatenda Mawoyo (Researcher at the Institute for Life Course Health Research at Stellenbosch University)</i> <i>Mastoera Sadan (Chief Sector Expert: Social, in the National Planning Commission (NPC) Secretariat, DPME)</i> Facilitator: Lori Lake, Communications and Education Specialist, Children’s Institute, UCT	
13h00 - 13h45	Networking, Exhibition walk through - Lunch	
14h00 - 14h30	Keynote Address: <i>Dr Imtiaz Sooliman, Founder and Chairman of the Gift of the Givers</i>	
14h30 - 15h50	‘Khawuleza’ Event	
	1. Building on purpose: A walk through and ECD infrastructure project in an informal settlement	Sarah Atmore - CECD
	2. Read & Play at Home - the Power of Partnerships in Parent Engagement	Dorette Louw - Book Dash
	3. ECD Connect - the Helpful Assistant	Peter Schutte, Yome Twetwa, Justin Shanks - DGMT / ECD Connect
	4. From Pit Toilets to Progress: How Safe Sanitation is Transforming ECD Learning Environments	Nyaradzo Mutanha, Nonjabulo Mtwla - Breadline Africa
	5. Tech That Works For ECD: Scaling Quality, Not Just Content	Tracey Chambers, Lyndsey Petro - Grow ECD
	6. Best Practice Model in ECD - ECD High/Scope	Mmasoki Margaret Letsoalo - Golang-Kulani Early Learning Centre
	7. From Level 4 to Diploma: A Bridge to ECD Success	Rebecca Wakeford - Midlands Community College & Ruby Motaung - TREE (Sivulithuba Collaboration)
	8. Step by Step on the ECD Ladder	Cathy Gush - Lebone Centre
	9. Engaging the Senses Through Play: Unlocking Children’s Potential Through Meaningful Experiences	Chantel Fernandez - Maskew Miller Learning (MML)
	10. Early Childhood Development as a Crime Prevention Strategy in South Africa	Roxanne Robbins - Play with a Purpose Educational Trust
	11. Playgroups an Equalizer	Tseli Scharer - Ntataise Lowveld
	12. A Call to Action for ECD Workers and Managers to Explore How They Can Support Father’s Role and also Coparenting Relationships	Jonathan Hoffenberg - The Parent Centre
	13. Inclusion of Children with Disabilities - Challenges and Possibilities	Kudakwashe Zinyemba - Shonaquip Social Enterprise
15h50 - 16h30	Networking, Exhibition walk through - Tea/Coffee	



Day 2: Wednesday, 1 October 2025

DAY 2	Main Room				
09h00 - 10h30	Panel Discussion: The Role of Local Government in Advancing Quality ECD in South Africa <i>Deputy Mayor Eddie Andrews - City of Cape Town</i> <i>Mr Abe Du Plessis - Saldanha Bay Municipality</i> <i>Ms Nobayeni Dladla - Independent Consultant</i> Facilitator: Yusrah Ehrenreich, CECD				
10h30 - 11h00	Networking, Exhibition walk through - Mid Morning Tea				
	Main Room	Belgravia Minor Hall	Room 17/18	Room 19/20	5th Room
11h00 - 12h00	<i>Listening as Learning: Fully Attuned in the Reggio Emilia Approach</i> <i>Tessa Browne - Africa Reggio Emilia Alliance (NPC)</i>	<i>Cascading Competence and Capacity in Home-based ECD Programmes</i> <i>Mary Venter & Rene King - Khululeka Community Education Development Centre</i>	<i>ECD Funding – Empowering the Future through Strategic Investment</i> <i>Elvina de Lille & Fazeelah Isaacs - Care College</i>	<i>Understanding Trauma in the ECD Space: Why Safety Comes Before Learning</i> <i>Arina Kitching - Learn2Live Community Centre</i>	<i>Recognising a Constitutional Right to ECD in South Africa</i> <i>Tatiana Kazim & Tshepo Mantje - Centre for Law and Society, University of Cape Town</i>
12h00 - 13h00	<i>Abandoned by Government, Trapped by Law: Unfunded Grade R Entangles Grade R Providers in Regulatory Webs</i> <i>Tarryn Cooper-Bell, Katherine Sutherland & Daniel Peter Al-Naddaf - Equal Education Law Centre</i>	<i>Sowing Seeds of Change: A Farm-Based ECD Model for Rural Transformation in South Africa</i> <i>Denver Swanepoel - ZIFUMANE Foundation</i>	<i>Redefining Foundational Learning and Pedagogical Leadership Through a Complexity-Informed Lens in Disadvantaged ECCE Contexts</i> <i>Dr Ayesha Carrim - UNISA</i>	<i>Virtuous Hope, Responsive Care, and Early Learning: Findings from the iThemba Home-based ECD Programme</i> <i>Lidia Matabaro & Sam Walker - iThemba Projects</i>	<i>Measuring Practitioner Support for Self-sustained Engagement for Four- to Five-year-olds in South Africa: A Study of the Use of LEGO PLAY 2.0 Classroom Observation Tools</i> <i>Nkhensani Baloyi, Rachel Neville & Roelien Herholdt - JET Education Services</i>
13h00 - 14h00	Lunch				
14h00 - 15h00	<i>Strategic Litigation as Enabling Jurisprudence: Advancing the Right to Early Childhood Development</i> <i>Fanelesibonge Philasande Ndebele, Sheniece Linderboom & Kiara Govender - Legal Resources Centre (LRC)</i>	<i>Rooted and Resilient: Leadership, Networks, and Sustainability in Knysna’s ECD Centres</i> <i>Judy-Marie van Noordwyk - Knysna Education Trust</i>	<i>Strengthening ECD Service Delivery on the Ground: The Power of Partnership</i> <i>Linda Biersteker, Jabu Mthembu-Dlamini & Leigh Morrison</i>	<i>Let's Play: Sparking Learning Magic</i> <i>Linda Smith - Care for Education</i>	<i>Digital Injustice in the Early Years: Historicising the Digital Divide and Mapping Equitable Futures in Marginalised ECD Contexts</i> <i>Enock Mapuranga - University of South Africa</i>
15h00 - 16h00	<i>Strengthening Financial Sustainability in Rural ECD Settings through Capacity Building and Mentorship: A Case Study from the Eastern Cape</i> <i>Thandile Ntshwanti - Ntshwanti Consulting</i>	<i>Beyond Outcomes: Cultivating Creative and Critical Thinkers</i> <i>Lisa Wingham & Elizna Krog - ORT SA CAPE</i>	<i>Space Design and Learning: Creating an Inclusive Environment for the Young Child (1/12 - 6 Years)</i> <i>Hawa Tayob - Montessori Early Learning Foundation (MELF)</i>	<i>From Monolingual Policy to Multilingual Practice: Rethinking Language Use in Early Mathematics Education</i> <i>Tholisa Matheza - Schools Development Unit</i>	<i>Empowering Parents, Enriching Childhoods: Strengthening Partnerships in Early Learning through the Families4Children Project</i> <i>Julie Hay & Suzanne Clulow - Singakwenza Early Childhood Education</i>
16h00 - 17h00	Plenary Discussion: Let’s Talk ECD Budget: Exploring Public and Private Investment in Early Childhood Development in South Africa <i>Mr Daniel Peter Al-Naddaf, Legal Researcher Admitted Attorney - Early Education Law Centre</i> <i>Other panelists to be confirmed</i> Facilitator: Yusrah Ehrenreich, CECD				
	Networking, Exhibition walk through - Tea/Coffee				

Day 3: Thursday, 2 October 2025



DAY 3	Main Room				
9h00 - 10h30	Panel Discussion: Laying the Foundation: 30 Years of Building Early Literacy and Language in South Africa <i>Dr Xolisa Guzula, Senior Lecturer in Applied Language and Literacy Studies - University of Cape Town</i> <i>Prof. Carole Bloch, Extraordinary Professor in Language Education - University of the Western Cape</i> <i>Ms Nonikiwe Mashologu - Founder of Bini Birdies</i> <i>Dr Shelley O'Carroll - Early Literacy Specialist</i> Facilitator: Jessica Blom, CECD				
10h30 - 11h00	Networking, Exhibition walk through - Mid Morning Tea				
	Main Room	Belgravia Minor Hall	Room 17/18	Room 19/20	5th Room
11h00 - 12h00	Evaluating the Cognitive, Social, and Motor Skill Development of Pre-school Children through Duplo Block Play in Day-care Centres <i>Mlungisi Nyamane - Osizweni Science Cenntre</i>	Scaling Quality Early Learning: Evidence from SmartStart's Innovative Childcare Model <i>Justine Jowell - SmartStart Early Learning</i>	Healing Spaces, Learning Places: Trauma-Informed Interventions for ECD in Philippi <i>Glenda Shupinyaneng - South African Education Project (SAEP)</i>	Instilling Community Leadership of ECD Centres through Community-led Monitoring <i>Bulelwa Mggobele - Ubunye Foundation</i>	Inclusive ECD Hubs: Embedding Disability Inclusion into Rural ECD through Practitioner Upskilling <i>Cathy Mather-Pike - Siyakwazi NPO</i>
12h00 - 13h00	Inclusion Matters <i>Debbie Prudhomme - Chaeli Campaign</i>	Babonise: Advocating for Fatherhood Through Sport-Based Community Engagement in South Africa <i>Rebotile Matoane & Dr Jessica Ronaasen - The Do More Foundation</i>	Strengthening Early Childhood Development through Community-Based Interventions: The Rustenburg Project <i>Ipeleng Mohlala - The Early Care Foundation</i>	Partnerships for Public Purpose: Using Outcomes-Based Finance to Drive Quality Access in South African ECD <i>Diana Duran & Walt Hetzel - The Education Outcomes Fund</i>	Storybooks as ECD Curriculum Themes: What If We Asked Different Questions? <i>Tyler Howard & Dr Mary James - Thanda</i>
13h00 - 14h00	Lunch				
14h00 - 15h00	Closing the Quality Gap: A Scalable Model for Data-Driven ECD Improvement and Advocacy <i>Nazley Giquel & Bokamoso Action Mohokare - The Unlimited Child</i>	The Cost of Care: Payment Delays and Socioeconomic Pressures Facing ECD Practitioners in South Africa <i>Matshidiso Sello - Centre for Social Development in Africa, University of Johannesburg</i>	Mobilising Parents as Partners in Early Learning: A Practical Approach through the Starting Chance Parent Support Programme <i>Bulelani Futshane - Starting Chance</i>	Creating Neurodiversity-affirming Spaces: the Role of Social Interactive Environment and Practitioner Beliefs in Early Years <i>Seipati Baloyi-Mothibeli - University of the Free State</i>	Growing Futures: ECD and Youth Employment, Reimagined <i>Carrie Mashek & Simone Janse Van Vuuren - YearBeyond</i>
15h00 - 15h30	Plenary / Conference closure				
	Networking, Exhibition walk through - Tea/Coffee				