

# SA making strides in Early Childhood Development

Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga and Angolan Education Deputy Minister on Tuesday visited the Esikhisini Primary School in Atteridgeville, west of Pretoria, to observe the strides being made in South Africa to improve learning outcomes at the Early Childhood Development phase.



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This, according to the Basic Education Department is in line with the needs of the fourth industrial revolution.

The Minister and Deputy Minister Pacheco Fransisco visited the school on the sidelines of the Africa Play conference.

The Africa Play Conference, the first of its kind in Africa, will explore how learning through play can improve the quality of early childhood development and become an integral part of education systems.

Set in a playful atmosphere, the conference brings together 400 thought leaders, educators, policy makers and researchers from around the world to discuss, share insights and inspire new ideas and ways of learning that will equip children all over Africa to become creative, engaged, lifelong learners.

The Esikhisini Primary School is part of the activities linked to the Play Conference which commenced in Pretoria today.

After observing, the Minister said she is pleased with the outcomes of the new programme.

“We are making good progress and we hope it will over time bear good results and progress,” the Minister said.

Fransisco said he was impressed with the changes that South Africa has in place in the education system.

“This will go a long way in improving and advancing education in South Africa,” he said.

Research indicates that while children from better-off homes make good progress following Grade R, children from poor households do not, and the gap between these two groups widens with age.

Quality preschool programmes enable poor children to be ready to benefit from Grade R.

In December 2012, the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in the Presidency, in partnership with the Department of Basic Education (DBE), commissioned an Impact Evaluation of the Grade R programme.

Through combining various data sources it was possible to create a very large dataset of 18,102 schools, which allowed precise measurement of the impact of Grade R on test performance in mathematics and home language for Grades 1 to 6.

The first few years of a child’s life lay a foundation for cognitive functioning, behavioural, social and self-regulatory capacities, and physical health. These early determinants reinforce each other.

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