



Democratic Alliance
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Debate on Budget Vote 16: Basic Education

Honourable Chairperson,
Honourable Minister,
Honourable Members, and
My fellow South Africans,

Good day.

Schools are supposed to be the safe havens where educators and learners can educate and learn without the worry of violence and crime. When parents leave their children at the school gates, they should do so with the comfort that their children will be protected with no harm coming their way. Sadly, this is not always the case, as we note reports and see videos trending on social media of horrible incidents on school grounds.

Violence in schools interferes with the goals of school systems that are meant to provide education and enculturation to the younger generations. Classroom overcrowding and ineffective discipline render a school environment unconducive to learning and teaching but primed for crime and violence. Time spent resolving violence-related problems takes up valuable teaching time and makes the work of educators more difficult.

It is against this background that it was heartening to witness the signing of the “Safe Schools Protocol” agreement between the Minister of Basic Education Siviwe Gwarube and her Police counterpart late last month.

This signalled a concerted effort to make sure our schools are conducive for both educators, learners, and all entering these facilities. This agreement is a clear vision to create safe and child-friendly schools and will ensure that all schools are linked to local police stations and supported through functional School Safety Committees.

These committees will implement school-based crime prevention programmes that address Gender-Based Violence; bullying; gangsterism; alcohol and drug abuse; and possession of weapons, deploying visible policing in hotspot areas, especially during high foot traffic times before and after school. Honourable Chairperson, these are crucial measures to make sure that our schools are not breeding grounds for gangsterism and crime. Children should never be involved in criminal elements especially not at schools.

Educators should have the peace to carry out their responsibilities without fear and intimidation and be the true carers and nurturers they ought to be, grooming the future leaders of this nation and beyond.

Honourable Chair, the South African Early Childhood Review 2024 indicates many ECD centres are unregistered and do not meet the norms and standards, with many practitioners working in these centres who are not necessarily qualified. This is further compounded by the fact that early childhood development training has largely been ignored in the South African higher education policy space.



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To address these challenges, Minister Gwarube has undertaken and launched a nation-wide drive to register and formalise ECD centres across the country by using a simpler and user-friendly online registration system.

The Department of Basic Education wants every young child in South Africa to have access to a quality ECD programme, and every programme to provide three things: Quality learning and development opportunities; a safe and nurturing environment; and good nutrition. Registration is the first step in making this possible, we must work to prepare leaders in this phase so that it becomes easier for them succeed in the educational journey.

Many times, we place a lot of energy and focus on when learners are exiting their schooling careers, and prop money and resources into camps and curriculum catch-up programmes. However, with this renewed focus to water the log while it's still wet is a welcome note. Honourable Chairperson as stated we welcome this budget vote because it places learners at the centre especially those in the Foundation Phase, where the greatest inequalities begin. *In Setswana we say lore lo ojwa lo sale metsi.*

I THANK YOU!!! KE A LEBOGA!!! BAIE DANKIE!!!

FREEDOM. FAIRNESS. OPPORTUNITY. DIVERSITY.