

Early childhood education now compulsory ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The government will this year start the ball rolling on making early childhood (ECD) compulsory for all children.

President Cyril Ramaphosa announced this in his 2019 State of the Nation address on Thursday.

He said it was essential in equipping children to succeed in education and is the single most important factor in overcoming poverty, unemployment and inequality.

With over 700,000 children accessing early childhood education in the last financial year, we have established a firm foundation for a comprehensive ECD programme that is an integral part of the education system," Ramaphosa said.

"This year, we will migrate responsibility for ECD centres from social development to basic education, and proceed with the process towards two years of compulsory ECD for all children before they enter grade 1."

Ramaphosa said a key priority would be to increase literacy levels among primary school learners.

"The department's early grade reading studies have demonstrated the impact that a dedicated package of reading resources, expert reading coaches and lesson plans can have on reading outcomes. We will be substantially expanding the availability of these early reading resources across the foundation phase of schooling."

Ramaphosa also set another ambitious target, ensuring that every school child in the country has access to a tablet with digital workbooks and textbooks within the next six years.

The President will start with schools that have been historically the most disadvantaged and are located in the poorest communities.

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