



Radio Stations : **All Community Radio Stations**
Subject : **Early Childhood Development**
Audience : **Parents, caregivers and educators**
Program Topic : **What to look for in a good ECD centre (LOVE)**

Guidelines to the presenter

- Presenter – please familiarize yourself with the brief and the use the facts effectively by referring to them from time to time during the show.
- You should be seen as a peer rather than an authority.
- Offer guidance or opinion rather than telling people what to do.
- Encourage people to seek further information
- Always keep the objectives and outcomes in mind and drive these.

Topic:

What to look for in a good ECD centre

Objectives:

- To build up knowledge about and demand for high quality ECD centres and programmes.
- To inform parents what to look for, across a wide range of indicators, that would indicate quality.
- Be reminded that young children learn through play and active experiential learning.
- To encourage them to go and observe at the ECD centre of their choice to ensure quality.

- To encourage them to get involved in the ECD centre of their choice and play an active role in their child's education.
- To inform them of the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Social Development and local government.

Introduction

Welcome to <Show name>

We've spent the last couple of weeks looking at language development from birth, and how this both reflects the incredible and rapid brain development taking place, as well as being an important building block for further brain development. We took this discussion further to see how emergent literacy, emergent maths, as well as the development of science and technology thinking, starts in the early years, long before a child goes to school. We've seen the incredibly important role parents and caregivers play in this early intellectual development through the quality time they spend in LOVE, PLAY, TALK with their little one.

This week we're going to help parents identify what to look for in a good ECD centre when their little one is ready to move into an out of home ECD setting.

Join us today as we discuss this on <Show name>

Questions	Facts/Information
<p>1. <i>I notice you use the term ECD centre. What does this refer to?</i></p>	<p>An ECD centre refers to an out of home early childhood development facility caring for more than 6 children. The term ECD centre covers crèche, play school, pre-school or pre-primary. In terms of South Africa's Children's Act, such a centre is legally required to be registered with the Department of Social Development as a Partial Care Facility. It's important for parents to check that the centre they choose IS registered</p>

<p>2. <i>What are some of the things that parents should be looking for?</i></p> <p>3. <i>I see you have started with staff. Are they the most important?</i></p>	<p>as a partial care centre AND has ECD programme registration. Both these certificates should be openly displayed. Registration enables the Department of Social Development to check that the centre meets the required health, safety, staffing and programme standards that will protect your child.</p> <p>Any good centre should be open to letting you look around as long as a staff member is in attendance, and to answering your questions. There are a number of things that parents should check out before they enroll their child in an ECD centre. We'll look at each of them in more detail during this programme: the staff; the teacher learner ratio; safety and protection; health and hygiene; the learning programme; the teaching and learning toys and equipment; space for indoor and outdoor play; parent involvement and communication with parents; governance and financial transparency if the ECD centre is a community based initiative; key policies.</p> <p>Obviously everything is important, but you are giving over the care of your precious little son or daughter to other adults, and you want to make absolutely sure that they will love, care for, protect and stimulate your little one in the best way possible. Observe carefully how the staff interact with the children: is there ALWAYS adult supervision? Do the adults get down to</p>
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	<p>the child’s level and talk WITH the children about a range of topics? Are they kind, loving, patient and genuinely interested in each and every child? Do they play with the children? Do they quickly attend respectfully to a child who is crying or involved in a situation than can get out of hand? And what about the children: do they look relaxed, happy and busy? Are they all involved in some play or activity? Are they talking confidently to each other and other teachers? In terms of Department of Social Development requirements on qualifications, there should be at least one staff member who has an NQF level 4 qualification in ECD at the ECD centre. Preferably all the teachers should have this level of qualification or be studying towards it.</p>
<p>4. <i>What about the ratio of children to staff?</i></p>	<p>In terms of the Children’s Act regulations, there should be at least 1 person employed for every 6 children under 18 months of age; 1 for every 12 children between 18 months and 3 years of age; 1 for every 20 children aged 3 – 4 years; and 1 per 30 children aged 5 to 6 years. All staff should have been screened in terms of the National Child Protection Register to make sure they have never been convicted of child abuse.</p>
<p>5. <i>What languages should teachers be using?</i></p>	<p>As far as possible, teachers should be using children’s mother tongue. Research shows that children learn far better in their mother tongue and a strong foundation in mother tongue is an</p>

	<p>important building block in learning another language like English. In some ECD centres there are children from many language groups and teachers switch between languages. As parents, you can really support your child by building a strong foundation in mother tongue at home and encouraging them to ask if there's anything they don't understand at home and at school.</p>
<p>6. <i>In terms of safety and security, what should parents look out for?</i></p>	<p>The centre should be securely fenced and gated, with any access by outside persons controlled. The playground should be free of any hazardous or dangerous objects like corrugated iron, broken glass or anything that might hurt young children. Playground equipment like swings, climbing frames, see saws etc should be in good repair with nothing broken or dangerous. It should also be free of litter. If there are children playing outside, there should always be an adult supervising. There should also be a well known plan in the event of an emergency such as a fire or a child being injured. Emergency contact numbers should be clearly displayed.</p>
<p>7. <i>Young children seem to get sick very easily, so I imagine health and hygiene is very important?</i></p>	<p>It certainly is. Most importantly, the centre should always have available a supply of clean, safe drinking water, either from a tap, or properly treated and kept in covered containers. Children should either have their own mug or be given a clean washed mug to drink from so that they are not sharing utensils</p>

and passing around germs. Each teacher should supervise hand washing after toilet routine and before eating. Children should wash their hands with soap and preferably dry them on their own little towel. If a basin of water is being used, it should be changed frequently. If there's no piped water, a more hygienic way is to use a 'tippy tap': a 2 litre plastic soft drink bottle with a hole punched in the lid, that can be tipped up over each child's hands to wash off the soap. Preferably the toilet area should have child size toilets and hand basins. However, even if long drop toilets are used, these should be clean and free of flies. An adult should always supervise toilet time, and children should not be allowed to relieve themselves in the garden or playground area. If the ECD centre provides mattresses for the children to have a sleep during the day, these and the blankets should be clean and hygienic.

Another area to check for health and hygiene is the kitchen, especially if the ECD centre is providing your child with snacks or meals. The kitchen should be clean and tidy, and kitchen staff should wash their hands before touching food. Check that the food served is healthy, nutritious and sufficient. Children should not be allowed in the kitchen area, as there is danger of burns and other accidents. Children's health should be checked by the teacher each morning, and children who are obviously sick, should preferably be kept at home. If possible

<p>8. <i>In the last few weeks we have learned so much about early brain and intellectual development in young children. I imagine the quality of the teaching and learning programme is also extremely important?</i></p>	<p>there should be a separate sick bay for children who feel unwell during the day.</p> <p>You are so right. This is usually one of the main reasons why parents want their young children to attend an ECD centre programme – so that they get the added stimulation and early education from qualified ECD teachers who can provide an exciting and active learning programme through play. As we’ve emphasized so much already, young children learn through play, so the role of a good ECD teacher is to create an exciting active learning environment that will stimulate the children to try out a range of different learning experiences throughout the day’s programme. It is also a requirement of the Children’s Act that centres have their ECD programme registered with the Department of Social Development, but this has not yet happened in all provinces. The daily programme should be displayed on the wall of each classroom, and teachers should keep to it as far as possible. Parents need to check that there is a balance of activities – some teacher directed activities like ring time and story time, but that there should be plenty of time for children to play freely and to choose where, with what and with whom they play. The teacher’s role at this time is to move around and interact with the different groups of children, chatting to them, extending their learning or just joining their play where</p>
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<p>9. <i>So if children learn through play, it assumes that they need toys and play materials. What kinds of teaching and learning equipment should parents expect to see in a good ECD centre?</i></p>	<p>appropriate. Importantly – teachers should be INVOLVED.</p> <p>They certainly do need toys, materials and learning equipment to play with. However, many of these things can be made out of waste materials by good teachers. Even the child size furniture can be made from cardboard, flour and water paste and paper mache. Musical instruments like shakers can be made by filling small soft drink bottles with sand, shells, pebbles or seeds; drums can be a tin with leather or plastic stretched tight over it; cymbals can be pot lids. Dolls can be made using stockings filled with foam; cars can be made from wood, boxes or plastic bottles with wheels for lids. Many of the ECD non-profit organisations that train ECD teachers also teach these teachers how to make toys and equipment from waste. Even books can be made. This is an area that parents can really get involved, have a lot of fun creating toys for their little ones AND support their early learning. If your ECD centre has the resources to buy some toys and equipment, you should see the following areas in a good ECD centre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An art or creative area where children can draw with crayons, paint, use scissors to cut and paste, play with playdough and have fun making all sorts of different things. Remember it's the process of creating that's important –
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not what the end product looks like!

The children's art work should also be displayed on the walls, with their names and the date clearly written top left.

- There should be an area for cognitive games and puzzles, that has jigsaw puzzles with varying numbers of pieces for different ages and abilities; games that encourage understanding of numbers, colours, shapes, matching, sorting, grouping and memory. There should also be equipment that encourages eye-hand coordination like threading beads, peg boards or posting shapes.
- A book area with comfortable places for the children to look at books is important. There should be a special time for the teacher to tell a story to the group every day. The ECD centre can also access books from the nearest library.
- Wooden blocks of various geometric shapes and sizes are a great favourite and really stimulate your young child's imagination, scientific thinking and creativity. Construction toys that encourage children to join pieces together to create something else are a great favourite with both boys and girls.
- A home or fantasy corner is a must where children can play imaginatively

<p>10. <i>Earlier you mentioned parent involvement and communication with parents. What did you mean by this?</i></p>	<p>and try out adult roles of mum, dad, teacher, nurse & doctor in a hospital, shop keeper, fireman and others. It is delightful to watch young children in this area and see them play out real or imagined situations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• And then of course there's the area for outdoor play. Both indoors and outdoors should have sufficient space for children to move around freely and easily. Outdoors they need to be able to develop their bodies through running, climbing, swinging, skipping and playing ball. They also need access to sand and water play. <p>The important thing is to see children constructively occupied in play or activities at all times during the day. Children should not be expected to sit still or quietly for long periods.</p> <p>A good ECD centre should be communicating regularly with parents about their child, his or her progress and activities and events happening at the pre-school. There should be a formal written report on your child's progress at least twice per year. ECD centres should also encourage parents to be involved and there are many ways in which parents can support their little one's education. Parents can help mend or make equipment; they can support special activities like baking or taking the children on an outing; they can get involved in fundraising</p>
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	<p>events, or they could serve on the parents' committee, and bring or learn important life skills in being a committee member. A community based ECD centre should be transparent about the financial management of the centre, what income is generated through fees or the Department of Social Development subsidy and how this money is spent. There should also be policies on language used; discipline; health and safety; HIV/AIDS; fee payments and other important issues.</p>
<p>11. <i>What fees can parents expect to pay?</i></p>	<p>Fee payments vary considerably depending on the area and type of ECD centre. In less resourced communities, where parents really struggle to pay fees, it is possible for ECD centres registered with the Department of Social Development to apply for subsidy for children whose parents qualify according to an income means test. Parents would have to get a signed affidavit from the police station that their joint income is under a certain amount. In most areas, the ECD centre would have to have a minimum of 20 children whose parents qualify, to be able to apply for the subsidy. Most ECD centres still cannot function using only the subsidy and still charge a fee per child.</p>
<p>12. <i>What happens if parents are not happy with something at the ECD centre?</i></p>	<p>Parents should take up any concerns they have with the principal or parents' committee. If they still have a serious concern, they should report it to the nearest office of the Department of</p>

<p>13. <i>What about baby and toddler care. You haven't mentioned that.</i></p>	<p>Social Development for investigation. Do make contact with your local councillor and make sure your municipality has prioritised ECD, that it is included in the municipal integrated development plan (IDP) and that the municipality has included support to ECD facilities and programmes in its budget. Local government has a responsibility to provide for young children's rights and needs.</p> <p>Baby and toddler care and early stimulation through play at an ECD centre needs a whole radio programme on its own as there are even more requirements for centres that take babies and toddlers. We also need to discuss child minders who care for 6 or less children and what to look for to ensure your baby or toddler is receiving the best possible care and early stimulation. Let's leave that for another time. We have focussed in this programme on children from 3 years to Grade R.</p>
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Conclusion

Good ECD centres can play a very important role in your young child's education. They broaden your child's experience and enable them to make friends and learn to play with other children, as well as getting on with a wider circle of adults. They learn important social, emotional and intellectual skills, as well as many skills and concepts that will prepare them for school – important skills like concentration; following instructions; persistence in completing a task; taking risks and trying new things; independence in seeing to their own needs for water, the toilet, dressing etc.; ability to get on with others, take turns and share. They develop self-confidence

and self-belief that they are competent learners. But if an ECD centre is going to benefit your child, it has to be a good quality centre, with good quality staff and a good quality programme. You have a right to demand this and a responsibility to ensure and support your chosen ECD centre to provide the very best for your precious little one.

Learning outcomes

After listening to this show the audience should:

- know about and be able to demand high quality ECD centres and programmes.
- know what to look for, across a wide range of indicators, that would indicate quality.
- Understand that young children learn through play and active experiential learning.
- be encouraged to go and observe at the ECD centre of their choice to ensure quality.
- get involved in the ECD centre of their choice and play an active role in their child's education.
- understand the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Social Development and local government.