

Help for Birth to three Caregivers in the Townships of Cape Town

Nomathemba Tidlini



In the Townships of Cape town quite a number of women care for young children in so-called "Educare centers". Often the centers are the carers' homes, which they have expanded a bit – small houses and simple conditions. For many years, the Centre for Creative Education (the Steiner/Waldorf training centre in Cape Town) has offered mentoring and a one-year part-time training course for these caregivers who are interested in support and further training. One of those responsible for this training is Nomathemba Tindlini, who writes about her experiences in recent months.

At the beginning of May the Birth to Three training started with the new group in Cape Town. We started with 20 carer/teachers. Unfortunately, two have since dropped out, one got sick and the other one moved to a new place and lives too far from the educare centre, so she cannot travel all the way to continue working there, as it is expensive.

At the end of the second module the students from 2018 were invited to receive their certificates; eight of them managed to attend the ceremony and four couldn't come for various reasons. It was a happy time for them as they always appreciate celebrating their achievements in life.

Now there are 18 carers/teachers continuing with the monthly sessions.

Sadly, one of our centres, Khethokuhle Educare, burnt down - fortunately it happened on a weekend when children were not at school. No one knows how the fire started. For a while they had to run the programme at a teacher's house until they were able to obtain three containers – two for classrooms and one smaller one for a kitchen. They have linked the two classroom containers with a covered roof area which then gives them an additional space between the containers where the children can play outdoors under cover.

Little Angels Educare in Mfuleni now has a new cement building for the birth to one-year-olds. It is a nice room for the little ones.

In 2019 there are 23 centres that I am working with both in Cape Town in the Western Cape and in Alice and Whittlesea in the Eastern Cape; there are 17 centres in Cape Town, 3 in Alice, and 3 in Whittlesea.

It is amazing to see the implementation; carers/teachers are working hard to implement what they have learned from the training. They appreciate the knowledge they have gained from the training. It



is easy to see that they are working hard to change the way they did things from before they came to the training. The children show they know what comes next, and there is no long waiting for the teacher to say what is going to happen next; the rhythm flows and it is breathing.

We were lucky - Louisa Feiter of the Samara Foundation and I went to the wood supplier where we were given off-cuts of wood which we took to each centre. As I was doing the mentoring we had the opportunity to show the carers/teachers that they can work with children to make some of the toys for their centres instead of buying all the time. We sanded the wooden blocks with some children who enjoyed the working together. Play is rich inside and outside.

The interaction with children has improved a lot. At the beginning the carers/teachers used to sit behind the table a distance from the children and the children sat at the tables for a long time doing different activities. But now that those tables are taken away there is much more direct interaction with children than before. The other important thing is that they have started planning their day using their notes from the training. For example, when they plan the morning circle they check if what they plan is good for the age group and if it meets the children. They now regularly share ideas.

Our work with the Birth to Three carers/teachers is only possible because of support from IASWECE and the Norwegian kindergarten, Stjerneglimt Steinerbarnehage. I would like to thank you all for the love and respect of our work.

Nomathemba Tindlini was born in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1972. In 1996, after finishing high school, she became a part-time domestic worker and later, after the birth of her first daughter, she became a full-time nanny. In 1998 she began to study early childhood development at the Centre for Creative Education. After her second daughter was born, she worked as a kindergarten assistant at Michael Oak Waldorf School for five years. In 2012, she joined the Birth to Three Project and worked with Eldboerg Paulsen with training sessions and mentoring in the centres. In 2015 she became a full-time Birth to Three Project mentor, and since 2016 she has worked as a trainer and mentor.