****

**NAMAQUA EDUCATION DISTRICT (2016-2017)**

A Basic Concepts Project for Grade R Practitioners

**Baseline Data 2: Word Knowledge Test (November 2016)**

1**. Introduction:**

Baseline data for the project was gathered from learners in Grade 1 at the start of 2016 using the *Test of Basic Concepts Knowledge* (TBCK) and at the end of the year using the *Word Knowledge Test*. The current report will focus on the results of the Word Knowledge Test. The baseline data will be compared to the results of intervention learners in Grade 1 in 2018.

2**. Method:**

The sample was randomly drawn from the five largest Grade 1 groups in the project. See table below. These schools comprise 56% of the baseline Grade 1 learner population. The sample represented 16% (n=152) of the total learner population (n=975). The sample was made up of 75 male (49%) and 77 female (51%) learners. The same learners were tested at the start and at the end of the year for Baseline 1 and 2.

**Table 1: Baseline Sample**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| School | Place | Number of learners | Number of learners selected | Percentage of sample |
| 1.Dr Izak van Niekerk Primary | Bergsig | 164 | 45 | 29% |
| 2.Ferdinand Brecher Primary | Steinkopf | 127 | 35 | 23% |
| 3. Okiep Primary | Okiep | 110 | 30 | 20% |
| 4.Concordia Primary | Concordia | 87 | 24 | 16% |
| 5.Springbok Primary | Springbok | 56 | 18 | 12% |
| **TOTAL** |  | **544** | **152** | **100%** |

*NOTE: 10 learners were absent during the end of the year testing. 6 learners were absent at Fredinand Brecher, one learner was absent at Concordia and at Dr Izak van Niekerk and two learners were absent at Springbok Primary.*

**Test Instrument:** Word Knowledge Test

The Word Knowledge Test is a literacy test designed to determine the number of words written by learners in 15 minutes. In this project the words are written in Afrikaans. Children are encouraged to continue writing until the end of the test, but they are not rushed. Spelling errors and words classified as non-sense words are subtracted from the total number of words written during the test. Non-sense words include words that:-i) cannot be decoded, ii) are repeated in the test, or iii) have more than 2 spelling errors. The Word Knowledge Test is a direct measure of vocabulary development and early word writing skills. It is also reasonable to assume that most words that can be written by a learner could also be read by that learner. The Word Knowledge Test is based on a similar measure developed by [Marie Clay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie_Clay) (1985).

**Interpretation of the Word Knowledge Test Scores:**

The test data that have been gathered since 2010 show that learners who come from disadvantaged communities were consistently able to write between 23,45 – 26,51 words per learner, whereas learners who attended a private school; that is, relatively advantaged attained significantly higher scores (49,33). The working assumption has been that 16 points on this test represents approximately 1 year of development. This would mean that the learners from the more disadvantaged communities were approximately 1.5 years delayed compared to their more advantaged peers.

**Results:**

The test data of four of the five baseline schools was relatively consistent on this test. The scores for these schools ranged between 23,93 to 26,93 words per learner. The average score of the four schools was **24,74** words per learner. There was, however, a notable difference with the results of learners from Springbok Primary, Springbok, whose average score was 17,65 points higher than the other schools. It is suggested that such a difference would equate to over 1 year of development. The discrepancy in the scores between these schools has raised the average score on this test of the five baseline schools to **26,51** words per learner.

The above figure indicates that 63% of the learners scored between 0 – 32 words on the test. These scores indicate that there is a 1 to 2 year delay compared to learners from more advantaged schools. It is particularly concerning that 30% of the learners from these schools can only write between 0 – 16 words at the end of Grade 1. It was however pleasing that 37% of the learners are approximating the level expected of a better performing Grade 1 learner or have already exceeded (16% of learners) this level.

**Conclusion:**

The Test of Word Knowledge has yielded a set of relatively consistent scores both in comparison to previous baseline scores in Namaqua District (23,45) as well as between the baseline schools. This was with the exception of one of the more advantaged schools in the project, Springbok Primary. This is an interesting result which could in fact provide an internal control for a more advantaged school in the project. There is a relatively large range of scores in the sample (0 – 72) with nearly one third of the learner population who cannot write more than 16 words. There is therefore much room for improvement in the word knowledge of the Grade 1 learners in the Namaqua District.