

# National Education Report Card

<b>Government schools</b> 24,979	<b>School-age children</b> 11,217,000
No-fee schools 69%	Attendance 97%
Over-crowding 25%	Accessibility 78%
Sanitation 61%	Through-put 62%
Libraries 7%	Performance 28%

**About the report card**  
The report card provides an overview of education for children across South Africa. A few key indicators have been selected to give a good range of information about meaningful access to education. The two sides of the report card distinguish between indicators that relate to schools (provisioning) and those that relate to learners (outcomes).

Realising the right to education requires a number of considerations: schools must be accessible and affordable; they must provide enabling learning environments with adequate infrastructure and educational materials; learners need to attend school regularly and be able to concentrate; and there should be sufficient and suitably qualified teachers. All of these requirements need to be met to ensure *meaningful* access to education.

<b>Government schools:</b>	Number of ordinary public schools (2007 data) <small>Department of Education (2009) Education Statistics in South Africa 2007. Pretoria: DoE.</small>
<b>No-fee schools:</b>	Proportion of public ordinary schools with no-fee status (2009 data) <small>Children's Institute analysis of provincial lists and national Education Management Information System data.</small>
<b>Over-crowding:</b>	Proportion of schools with more than 45 learners per classroom (2006 data) <small>Department of Education (2007) National Educational Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS). Pretoria: DoE.</small>
<b>Sanitation:</b>	Proportion of schools with flush toilets, ventilated pit latrines or Enviroloo toilets (irrespective of working condition) (2006 data) <small>Department of Education (2007) National Educational Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS). Pretoria: DoE.</small>
<b>Libraries:</b>	Proportion of schools with library spaces that are stocked with books (2006 data) <small>Department of Education (2007) National Educational Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS). Pretoria: DoE.</small>
<b>School-age children:</b>	Number of children aged 7 – 17 years (6-year-olds excluded as seven is compulsory age to start schooling) (2007 data) <small>Statistics South Africa (2008) General Household Survey 2007. Pretoria: StatsSA. Children's Institute analysis.</small>
<b>Attendance:</b>	Proportion of school-age children (7 – 17 years) reported to be attending an educational institution (2007 data) <small>Statistics South Africa (2008) General Household Survey 2007. Pretoria: StatsSA. Children's Institute analysis.</small>
<b>Accessibility:</b>	Proportion of school-age children (7 – 17 years) who have a school within 30 minutes' travel of their home (2007 data) <small>Statistics South Africa (2008) General Household Survey 2007. Pretoria: StatsSA. Children's Institute analysis.</small>
<b>Through-put:</b>	Proportion of 16 – 17-year-old children who have completed compulsory basic education phase (grade 9) (2007 data) <small>Statistics South Africa (2008) Community Survey 2007. Pretoria: StatsSA. Children's Institute analysis.</small>
<b>Performance:</b>	Proportion of grade 6 learners who achieved the 50% benchmark for literacy (language of learning and teaching) (2005 data) <small>Department of Education (2005) Grade 6 Intermediate Phase Systemic Evaluation Report. Pretoria: DoE.</small>

Much of the data comes from Children Count — Abantwana Babalulekile, a monitoring project of the Children's Institute, UCT. Department of Education reports are available at [www.education.gov.za](http://www.education.gov.za).

**About the South African Child Gauge**  
This poster is a companion to the *South African Child Gauge 2008/2009*, in which many of the indicators are discussed more fully. The *South African Child Gauge* is an annual review of the situation of the country's children, produced by the Children's Institute, UCT. It includes a review of legislative developments affecting children, a series of essays and a set of child-centred statistics. The theme of the 2008/2009 issue is 'meaningful access to basic education'. Previous issues have focused on HIV/AIDS, poverty and social services.

**About the Children's Institute**  
The Children's Institute, University of Cape Town, contributes to policies, laws and interventions that realise the rights and improve the conditions of all children in South Africa, through research, education, advocacy and technical support.

For more information about the Institute see [www.ci.org.za](http://www.ci.org.za).  
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# 2008/2009 SOUTH AFRICAN CHILD GAUGE

## The right to education

- The right to basic education is guaranteed in section 29(1) of the Constitution. This right is immediate and unconditional and corresponds to schooling from grades 1 to 9.
- Section 29(2) establishes the right to further education (grades 10 – 12) that the State must make "progressively available".
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which South Africa is signatory, sets a higher standard of universal free education at the primary level (Article 28). Article 11 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child requires states to make secondary education progressively free and accessible to all. The ideal of universal free education has not yet been achieved in South Africa.
- All rights are interdependent, and education is a precondition for the realisation of other rights. A good education can provide an opportunity to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

**Footnotes**  
1 Community Agency for Social Enquiry and Joint Education Trust (2007) *Learner Absenteeism in the South African Schooling System*. Report to the Department of Education. Braamfontein: CASE.  
2 Statistics South Africa (2008) *General Household Survey 2007*. Pretoria: StatsSA. Children's Institute analysis.  
3-4 Fleisch B, Shindler J & Perry H (2009) Children out of school: Evidence from the Community Survey. In: Pendlebury S, Lake L & Smith C (2009) *South African Child Gauge 2008/2009*. Cape Town: Children's Institute, UCT.  
5 Ardington C & Leibbrandt M (in press) Orphanhood and Schooling in South Africa: Trends in the vulnerability of orphans between 1993 and 2005. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*.  
6 Department of Education (2005) *Grade 6 Systemic Evaluation Report*. Pretoria: DoE. Data from the 2007 national assessment were not available at the time of publication.  
7-9 Department of Education (2007) *National Educational Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS)*. Pretoria: DoE.  
10 Information on no-fee schools provided by provincial education departments; analysis by the Children's Institute.  
11 Wildeman R (2009) How budgetary frameworks support meaningful access to basic education. In: Pendlebury S, Lake L & Smith C (2009) *South African Child Gauge 2008/2009*. Cape Town: Children's Institute, UCT.  
12 See 6 above.

## Physical access: Getting children to school

- School attendance is an important measure of access to education because children need to be in school to learn. In South Africa, the attendance rate is very high (96.5%) and has increased over the past few years despite many children travelling long distances to reach school. Equal proportions of girls and boys attend school.
- The attendance rate can mask drop-out amongst older children. The national attendance rate remains around 99% until the age of 13, after which it declines with age, dropping to 95% of 15-year-olds and 74% of 18-year-olds.
- The attendance rate does not necessarily reflect the regularity of attendance, or progress through school. Absenteeism rates are estimated at around 4%<sup>1</sup>, and less than three-quarters of learners are in the age-appropriate grade<sup>2</sup>.
- In 2007, nearly 400,000 children were out of school. Disability is the single most significant barrier to school attendance, while social grants are associated with higher attendance rates.<sup>3</sup> Maternal orphaning is associated with lower rates of attendance<sup>4</sup>, and also with poorer educational outcomes<sup>5</sup>.

## Meaningful access: Education quality

- Access to schools is just the starting point for realising the right to education. Basic education is only meaningful when it builds children's capacity to think for themselves and apply what they have learnt in different contexts.
- In South Africa schooling is compulsory to the age of 15 years, or completion of grade 9. One way of measuring meaningful access is by looking at attainment or "through-put" – ie the proportion of children who complete grade 9 within a reasonable period. In 2007, only 62% of children aged 16 and 17 had completed grade 9, suggesting fairly high rates of repetition and drop-out before the end of compulsory schooling.
- Meaningful access to education can also be measured through performance, which is assessed in the basic education phase through standardised tests for grades 3 and 6.
- Very few learners achieved the 50% benchmark in the 2005 grade 6 assessment (literacy: 28%; maths: 12%; science: 31%).<sup>6</sup> This indicates that most children do not acquire the skills and understanding that give substance to the right to education.

## School infrastructure: Creating an enabling environment

- National assessments suggest that service delivery to schools has improved over the past decade. Nearly 90% of schools have access to safe water, yet nearly 40% of schools still do not have adequate toilets.<sup>7</sup>
- The roll-out of science laboratories, computer labs and libraries has been slow and difficult. The most recent report indicated that only 12% of schools had equipped laboratories and 7% had stocked libraries.<sup>8</sup>
- Learners with disabilities continue to experience significant barriers to education. Only 2 – 3% of schools are equipped with ramps and toilets for learners with physical disabilities.<sup>9</sup>
- The recently published *National Policy for an Equitable Provision of an Enabling School Physical Teaching and Learning Environment* and the *National Minimum Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure* aim to address these backlogs so that 80% of schools are equipped to provide inclusive education by 2012.

## School funding: Reducing inequality

- Radical changes to the school funding norms and standards have reduced or eliminated the cost of schooling for many, and attempt to shift funding to poorer schools.
- Schools are ranked in five quintiles, with quintile 1 being the poorest and quintile 5 the least poor. Quintile 1 and 2 schools are entirely subsidised by the State and no longer charge fees. In some provinces no-fee schools have been extended to include quintile 3 schools.
- About 70% of schools are no-fee schools in 2009.<sup>10</sup> These are concentrated in the poorer provinces, which have a greater proportion of schools in the lowest quintiles.
- Education funding policy explicitly aims to redress inequalities by paying per-learner allocations on a sliding-scale, with schools in the lowest quintiles getting the largest allocations. In 2009 the annual allocation for a learner in a quintile 1 school is R807, dropping to R134 for quintile 5 schools. This redistributive funding mechanism is limited to non-personnel costs.
- The main cost of education is staff salaries, amounting to around 80% of the budget.<sup>11</sup>

## Teaching capacity: Educators and classrooms

- The national learner-to-educator ratio in 2007 was 32 learners to one educator, which falls within internationally recommended standards. The actual ratio of learners to teachers in the classroom context is under-estimated because not all staff (such as principals) are actively teaching.
- Over-crowding is a more telling indicator of the class sizes. Nationally, one in every four schools had over-crowded classrooms (more than 45 learners) in 2006. Over-crowding is worse in predominantly rural provinces such as the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, where over 30% of schools had over-crowded classes in 2006.
- Some 43% of principals and 61% of educators only had a grade 12 qualification in 2005.<sup>12</sup>



Visit [www.childrencount.ci.org.za](http://www.childrencount.ci.org.za) for more data

The map was conceptualised and developed by Luzette Berry, Katharine Hall, Lon Lake, Double-High Marera, Shirley Pendlebury, Charmaine Smith and Linda Zuzi. Design by Jenny Young.