



File no.: 19/2/P
Reference: 20250812-5816

Curriculum and Assessment Management Minute: 0002/2025

To: Deputy Directors-General, Heads: Curriculum Support, Heads: Management and Governance, Circuit Managers, Deputy Chief Education Specialists, Intermediate Phase/GET Coordinators, Intermediate Phase Subject Advisers, and Principals of all ordinary public schools offering Grades R–7

Subject: Implementation and Administration of Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education Assessment in schools

1. Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education (MTbBE) is an overarching anchor of basic education in most of the familiar languages of learners, particularly for African languages native speakers in South African schools. Some of these languages were previously not developed as Language(s) of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LoLTAs).
2. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) released National Assessment Circular S11, dated 31 July 2025, regarding MTbBE assessment.
3. The initial incremental implementation and assessment of Phase 1 of the MTbBE will start towards the end of this year, starting in Grade 4, and then extending the Foundation Phase LoLTA model to all official languages.
4. The selected Phase 1 subjects are Mathematics, and Natural Science and Technology. Other subjects will be added during the Phase 2 implementation.
5. The DBE will set the end of the year (2025) tests in Mathematics, and Natural Sciences and Technology for Grade 4 learners, focusing on the nine official African Languages, as part of the MTbBE implementation of assessment. Refer to paragraphs 7.3 and 7.4 to note the 80:20 English and Afrikaans combination with the African Language.

6. **MTbBE target group**

- 6.1 Quintile 1–3 public schools who offer an African Language(s) as the LoLTA in Grades 1–3 but previously switched to English (as LoLTA) in Grade 4, will be the target group since assessment data from various studies by the DBE pointed to a larger gap in the achievement of those learners who change their medium of instruction in Grade 4 as compared to those who do not.
- 6.2 The 2025 Grade 4 national MTbBE assessment results will be utilised as a baseline to inform the system.
- 6.3 Quintile 4–5 schools who are in the same situation as those in Quintile 1–3 may also participate during the Phase 1 implementation to benefit learners.

7. **Test design**

- 7.1 The mark allocation, content, and weighting of the cognitive levels will follow the guidelines provided by the Annual Teaching Plans and *Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements*.
- 7.2 A single test will only have two languages, i.e. one African Language and English/Afrikaans.
- 7.3 The percentage language split in the tests is as follows:
 - (a) Grade 4 in 2025: 80% African Language and 20% English/Afrikaans;
 - (b) Grade 5 in 2026: 70% African Language and 30% English/Afrikaans;
 - (c) Grade 6 in 2027: 60% African Language and 40% English/Afrikaans; and
 - (d) Grade 7 in 2028: 50% African Language and 50% English/Afrikaans.
- 7.4 In Grade 4, Section A of the test will be in the African Language (80%) while Section B will be in English/Afrikaans (20%). The same will apply where there is a combination of Afrikaans and English.
- 7.5 The weighting regarding the types of questions will be as follows:
 - (a) 40%: Multiple choice;
 - (b) 20%: Closed responses (short questions – one word answers, etc.); and
 - (c) 40%: Open ended.

8. **Mode of collection**

Both the exemplar (Term 3) and end of year test will be sent via the Directorate: Examinations Administration. The MTbBE end of year tests will be collected at the DBE together with the General Education Certificate tests.

9. Administration

- 9.1 The nationally-set MTbBE test will be administered by schools under normal examination circumstances. Schools will be assisted to set their own tests implementing the principles of translinguaging adopted for the MTbBE strategy, using a nationally developed test framework for Terms 1–3.
- 9.2 The Directorate: Curriculum General Education and Training (GET) will disseminate terminologies for all African Languages in the two subjects to schools. These terminologies had been verified and authenticated by the Pan South African Language Board.
- 9.3 The DBE understands that because it is the first time since 1994 that we are using African Languages as LoLTAs for Mathematics, and Natural Science and Technology, and it being formally assessed in Grade 4, there will be lengthy discussions around appropriate terminologies, and we would appreciate feedback.
- 9.4 Exemplar tests will be made available at the beginning of Term 3 in preparation for the end of year examination. The Western Cape Education Department will communicate with schools how the tests will be collected.
- 9.5 This assessment replaces the school-based end of year test in the two subjects that schools print. Therefore, schools are expected to print the MTbBE end of year tests which include an answer book (two in one). Mathematics has 11 pages while Natural Science and Technology has 18 pages. This applies to the tests for all languages.
- 9.6 A common timetable for the two subjects is proposed as follows:

| Date | Day | Subject | Time | Duration |
|----------|-----------|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| 10/11/25 | Monday | Natural Science and Technology | 08:30 – 09:50 | 1 hour 20 min |
| 12/11/25 | Wednesday | Mathematics | 08:30- 09:30 | 1 hour |

- 9.7 Since the MTbBE Grade 4 test will be replacing the end of year Grade 4 examination in November 2025, it will form part of the progression and promotion mark.
- 9.8 Like any other examination in the GET, the subject educators will mark and record the marks on CEMIS.

10. **Moderation and monitoring**

10.1 Moderation of the marking will follow the normal examination protocols.

10.2 Subject advisers will monitor and support the MTbBE implementation and assessment.

10.3 A random sample of marked scripts will be collected from schools by the DBE for external moderation, analysis, and reporting. Communication regarding this will be sent at a later stage.

11. District officials and principals are kindly requested to bring the content of this minute to the attention of all educators, parents/guardians and learners.

SIGNED: BJ LORISTON

DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL: CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT MANAGEMENT

DATE: 2025-09-11