

NASCEE ROUND UP

18/09/2026

WELCOME TO THE NASCEE ROUND UP

This edition of the NASCEE Round Up brings you the latest conversations, reflections and opportunities from across our network. Hear from our colleagues as they share insights from recent events and partnerships, highlighting the value of collaboration, shared learning and building stronger connections across the education and nonprofit sectors.

We also look ahead to upcoming NASCEE and partner events, new resources and opportunities for organisations working to strengthen education in South Africa. From the Teen Survey 2026 launch and conversations on AI in basic education, to opportunities for networking, learning and collaboration, there is plenty to explore. Keep reading to catch up on what's happening, discover what's ahead and stay connected with the NASCEE community.

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From Fragmentation to Collaboration - What we heard across NASCEE's regional events

Across NASCEE's regional networking events in Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria, one message came through clearly: civil society organisations need better access to government priorities and stronger relationships with education officials, while government needs greater visibility of which NGOs are working in its schools and what support they provide.

The events highlighted the continued fragmentation of the education sector, with limited information about where organisations are working and how their programmes align with government priorities. At the same time, they showed a real willingness to address this together. Senior government representatives openly shared their priorities and implementation plans, creating space for more purposeful conversations and stronger collaboration.

There was a shared recognition that we are stronger when we work together, and it was encouraging to hear provincial and district officials express a clear interest in working more closely with civil society. Reliable data emerged as a critical part of making this possible. Government representatives, funders and NGOs all spoke about the need for accurate, up-to-date information on civil society activity in schools.

Participants responded enthusiastically to NASCEE's ecosystem mapping platform, NED Connect, and recognised its potential to strengthen visibility, coordination and alignment across the sector. The thoughtful discussions and strong attendance across all three events reflect the growing interest in building a more connected education ecosystem.

We encourage all education NGOs to register on NED Connect and to keep their organisational and programme information up to date, helping to build a clearer and more complete picture of who is working where, and where stronger connections can be made.





Identifying Shared Priorities at the Western Cape Regional Event

The second Regional Networking Event of the year was filled with energy as education sector members gathered at the Wesgro offices in Cape Town City Centre. The event was centred around the important conversation about the need for collaboration across the sector. The presentations from Edu Invest, the WCED, and NASCEE shared a common thread: no single organisation can transform the country's education system; collective effort is required to make a real impact.

Beyond the importance of collaboration, the event also highlighted the challenge people face in understanding how to collaborate, and how even established partnerships can collapse without the proper backbone support. Practical strategies for strong collaborations were shared by the panel, which were well-received by the audience made up of NGOs working across various focus areas.

I left the event feeling that there is increased appetite for less competition and more collaboration within civil society, and that the department and funders are more open to engaging with a coordinated, partnered civil society sector.





From Ideas to Action: Reflections from the Eastern Cape Education Partnerships Conference

In August, I attended the 2026 Eastern Cape Education Partnerships Conference, hosted by Axium and the LEAP Institute in collaboration with NASCEE. As the third partnership conference, it was an opportunity to reflect on how the conversation has evolved since NASCEE's involvement began in 2025.

Last year, the National Education Directory (NED) was still an idea. This year, I had the privilege of sharing the progress of NED Connect on behalf of NASCEE and highlighting its potential to strengthen connections between civil society organisations, government and funders.

What stayed with me most, however, was the conversation around collaboration. In a sector often shaped by competition for limited resources, it was refreshing to see stakeholders consider what can be achieved when collaboration, rather than funding, is placed at the centre.

Meaningful partnerships require organisations to look beyond individual identities and interests and focus on the shared purpose of improving learning outcomes. They also require trust, openness and a willingness to share knowledge, resources and opportunities. These are not always easy conversations, but they are essential if partnerships are to move beyond intention and create meaningful change.

The conference is still shaping its identity, but its value as a space for engagement is becoming clearer. For NASCEE, it presents an opportunity to help create spaces where organisations can move beyond working alongside one another towards finding meaningful ways to work together.



Reflections from the Africa NPO Summit

On 10 September 2026, NASCEE attended the inaugural Africa NPO Summit, hosted by the Nonprofits Consulting Hub at Blueberry Hill Hotel in Honeydew, Johannesburg. The summit brought together organisations from across the nonprofit sector for conversations on strengthening organisations, building sustainable systems and increasing the sector's contribution to society.

One of the highlights was seeing strong representation from the NASCEE community, with members including Columba Leadership, Royal Bafokeng Institute, KHULA Education, Siyavula Foundation, the Centre for the Advancement of Science and Mathematics Education (CASME), SmartStart South Africa, Edunova SA, ORT SA CAPE and LETCEE among those in attendance.

NASCEE Chairperson, Mororišeng Maapola CA(SA), M.Inst.D, facilitated a session on "Building Organisations That Thrive", creating space for important conversations around governance, compliance, credibility, legitimacy and collaboration.

The discussions reinforced an important point: organisational impact is supported by what happens behind the programmes. Strong governance, effective systems, accountability and meaningful partnerships provide the foundation that enables organisations to deliver sustainably and build trust with the communities, funders and partners they serve.

The summit also prompted reflection on the broader contribution of NPOs in South Africa. While the sector is often recognised for its role in addressing social challenges, its contribution extends further. NPOs also create employment, develop skills and provide opportunities, particularly for young people and women. Strengthening the sector therefore has implications not only for social development, but also for livelihoods and economic participation.

For NASCEE, engaging beyond the education sector provided an opportunity to learn from organisations working in different contexts while recognising the common challenges and opportunities that connect the nonprofit sector.

The conversations at the summit highlighted the value of collaboration, shared learning and strong organisational foundations. As NPOs navigate an increasingly complex environment, creating spaces for organisations to learn from one another and strengthen their practice remains an important part of building a more resilient sector.

NASCEE thanks the Nonprofits Consulting Hub for convening the summit and creating space for these valuable conversations. The event offered an opportunity to connect, reflect and consider how organisations across the sector can continue contributing to stronger communities and a more sustainable South Africa.





Reflections on the Mpumalanga Foundation Phase Collaboration Symposium

Participating in the Mpumalanga Foundation Phase Collaboration Symposium was a valuable reminder that improving foundational learning requires more than strong individual programmes. It requires a shared understanding of the provincial landscape, alignment with the Mpumalanga Department of Education's priorities, and a willingness among funders, implementing partners, government and civil society to coordinate their efforts. Bringing together more than 60 stakeholders, the symposium created an important space to explore how collective action can strengthen literacy, numeracy, school readiness and the conditions that enable young learners to thrive.

I attended from two connected perspectives: as part of the Mpumalanga Province Grade R Capacity Building Programme (MP-R), and as a representative of NASCEE, which supported the strategic breakaway discussions and feedback panel. From the MP-R perspective, the discussions reinforced the value of a coalition model, where complementary expertise is brought together, partnerships with the Department are strengthened, and approaches can be integrated into existing systems.

NASCEE also presented NED Connect, a platform designed to map who is working where and support better coordination across the education ecosystem. What stood out was how often participants returned to the platform during the feedback panel. They saw its potential not simply as a database, but as a practical tool for identifying complementary initiatives, connecting with partners, understanding geographic coverage and making better informed decisions. It reinforced the importance of accessible, reliable information in moving collaboration from intention to action.

In Group C, which focused on integrating evidence into policy and effective collaboration, I appreciated the honesty of the discussion and the determination to move beyond identifying familiar challenges. There was a clear emphasis on implementation, making the proposal for a steering committee particularly significant. Such a structure could maintain momentum, clarify responsibilities and ensure that the ideas generated translate into practical action.

My main reflection is that the symposium should be seen as the beginning of a process rather than a once off event. The energy and willingness to collaborate are clearly present. The next step is to sustain that momentum through agreed priorities, clear actions and timelines, regular progress reviews, and continued use of evidence and platforms such as NED Connect and the Data Driven Districts (DDD).

For MP-R and NASCEE, the symposium strengthened our commitment to supporting a connected provincial ecosystem where partnerships are purposeful, information is shared and collective effort leads to stronger outcomes for children in Mpumalanga.





Connecting Across the Literacy Ecosystem - the 2026 LITASA Conference

Representing NASCEE at this year's LITASA Conference was a useful reminder of just how broad and interconnected the literacy ecosystem really is.

Across the programme were conversations about everything from early literacy, multilingualism and teacher development to assessment, technology, community-based programmes, publishing, libraries and family engagement. There were also important discussions about some of the less visible pieces of the puzzle - sustainable funding, monitoring and learning, implementation, and how different actors work together.

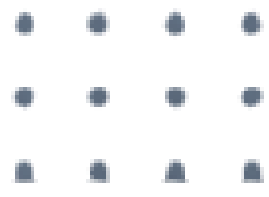
That breadth reinforced something that sits at the heart of NASCEE's work: improving education outcomes is rarely about one programme, organisation or intervention. It requires many different parts of the system to see one another, understand how their work connects, and find practical ways to collaborate.

It enjoyed the opportunity to have conversations face to face - discovering work we did not know about, reconnecting with existing partners, introducing organisations to one another, and hearing directly about the challenges people are trying to solve.

It was also helpful to think about these real-life interactions in relation to what we are building through NED Connect. In person, connection often starts with simple questions: What are you working on? Where are you working? Who are you working with? Who else should you be speaking to? It was a useful reminder that the value of sector data is not simply in collecting information, but in whether it helps people understand the landscape around them and identify meaningful points of connection.

The conference left me thinking less about connection as an abstract idea, and more about the small, practical ways it happens – through shared information, introductions, conversations and a clearer understanding of who is doing what. That is a useful lens to take back into our work at NASCEE, and particularly into how we continue to shape NED Connect.





Community Notice Board

Upcoming NASCEE Events

Canva Webinar

Clear, Powerful Designs for NGO
Posters, Reports & Social Media

25 September 2026

MEL PLC

Google Clasroom - Self-paced learning
module 2
Members Only

01 October 2026

AI in South African Basic Education Series - Lefa AI

with Human Studios

Episode 3

01 October 2026

Upcoming Partner Events

Mapping Eastern Cape ECD Organisations Through NED Connect

With the Eastern Cape ECD Regional
Hub

28 September 2026

Free AI for Professionals delivered by WeThinkCode

September 2026 intake

[Click here to register](#)

Opportunities

The Instructional Leadership Institute – The Future Fund

A nationwide campaign inviting South Africans to contribute R10 per month to support the development of future school leaders. This initiative helps equip emerging leaders with instructional skills to improve teaching and learning across schools.

[Click here for more information](#)

Teen Survey Launch 2026

A focused study within the National Reading Barometer (NRB)

NLSA Pretoria Campus, 228 Johannes
Ramokhoase St, Pretoria CBD

23 September 2026

Registration closes on 18 September 2026

[Click here to register](#)

Injini EdTech Week 2026

Focus Rooms, Johannesburg

[Click here to register](#)

12-13 October 2026

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