The impact of the **RECM Foundation's** support of **Faith Educare:** From small beginnings to a space where young children can thrive

In the heart of Pelican Park, in Cape Town's Cape Flats, is a small early childhood development (ECD) centre with a big story. Faith Educare began in a small home, and thanks to the determination of its principal, Gwendoline Speelman (Gwen), and the support of the RECM Foundation, it has grown into a safe, spacious and better-equipped environment where young children can learn, play and thrive.

Gwen did not establish Faith Educare as a business venture. Her journey began after she witnessed an infant being mistreated at a ECD centre she was working for as a teacher.

Unable to accept what she had seen, she resigned from her job. Within days, four children from the previous centre arrived at her home. The children's parents trusted her and wanted their children to remain in her care. Those four children were the start of Faith Educare. Through word of mouth, the centre grew into an important space in the Pelican Park community and for the families that reside there.

Gwendoline Speelman (Gwen)
Founder & principal of
Faith Educare, Pelican Park.

Gwen has always understood the realities faced by the families of the young children in the community. Many parents struggle financially but still want the best for their children. Rather than increasing fees beyond what families can afford, Gwen has always deliberately kept them low.

"For me, it's not about the money. I would rather stick to the low fees, so that they can have a brighter future and a safe space."

This commitment meant that Faith Educare was providing an essential and accessible service to its community, however, doing so within the limitations of a small family home.

The importance of partnerships

When the Centre for Early Childhood Development (CECD) began working with Faith Educare in 2021, the priority was helping the centre move towards full registration as a partial care facility. With funding from the Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDT), CECD supported the centre through the Land Use Management approval process and getting approval of building plans. The planning looked beyond the immediate needs of the centre, with future development in mind.

Infrastructure funding from DEDT enabled the upgrade and expansion of the centre. The RECM Foundation then became a critical partner in making the environment more suitable for young children, supporting the development of a child friendly outdoor play area with shade, artificial lawn and a vibrant mural on the walls enclosing the property. It is now a place that children are excited to come to, to learn and play, everyday.

When further infrastructure improvements were required, the RECM Foundation continued to support Faith Educare. These improvements helped the centre obtain its health clearance certificate, an important step towards registration and access to the government ECD subsidy. Faith Educare currently has 16 children enrolled, which is in line with the norms and standards stipulated in the Children's Act, 2005 (Act No. 38 of 2005).

Classroom space

Before

After

Outdoor space

Before

After

Gwen describes the RECM Foundation's support as nothing short of amazing. She shares that the physical transformation was deeply personal and emotional for her. For years, she had wanted to create more space for the children, but family circumstances and financial constraints meant she could not do it herself.

"They did something amazing, something that I actually wanted for a long time but could not ever do myself."

It is now a bright, inviting space for young children to learn through play and thrive. The outdoor area gives them an environment in which they can explore and develop physically. The centre is safe, organised and equipped to provide a good quality early learning programme.

When asked about the day they finally got to use the new space, with excitement, Gwen says, *"The children were so excited about the new space. They saw every brick being placed, they could not wait to be in their new space."*

When the construction was finally complete, Gwen remembers her late husband opening the gate and telling the children: *"This is your space." Adding, that "They [the children] were screaming and dancing."*

The new infrastructure was much more than an extension to a building. It was the realisation of a vision Gwen had held for years, a space designed around the needs of young children rather than forcing young children to adapt to an unsuitable space.

As you walk into Faith Educare now, it is no longer the dark cramped space that once squeezed 10 children into a living room, where every available corner of Gwen's home had been used for early learning.

A place families can trust

For families in the community, the centre provides much more than an early learning programme. It offers children a safe place to learn and develop while caregiver's work. Lindsay George, a mother of a past child and a current child at the centre, remembers the first time she walked into Faith Educare. *"The first time when I came to Faith Educare I could feel the warmth. I could also sense the passion for children."* She describes Gwen as a generous, understanding, passionate and patient person, who cares for the children in the community.

As a single mother, Lindsay emphasises that reliable childcare is essential. *"Being a single parent, it's not easy. Leaving my child here at the centre and going to work, having that peace of mind was amazing."*

The relationship between the centre and families extends beyond childcare.

"It's become more of like a family, it's actually like a whole support system" say Lindsay. Adding that "I think what's special about Faith Educare is that family relationship. And it's a lot to do with Gwen."

Liliyana Rose George (8), Lindsay George, Elijah Carter George (5)

The impact a good quality early learning programme can make

The difference that a good quality early learning programme can make is significant. Lindsay shares that she has watched her son Elijah (age five) grow alongside other children of similar age not attending ECD centres, and has observed noticeable developmental differences that she attributes to him attending Faith Educare. *"He started walking first. He started using the toilet first. He speaks so well."*

She describes her son as confident and independent. She says he enjoys practicing his numbers, shapes and colours at home. Laughing, she shares that he doesn't like anyone helping him, he will tell us that he learnt it all at school. Lindsay expressed her sadness that, as Elijah is her last child, he will be leaving Faith Educare at the end of this year, as he goes to grade R next year.

Liliyana says she enjoyed her 4 years at Faith Educare and that it "*helped very much with [her] schoolwork*". Adding, "*we learned ABCs, shapes, numbers and words.*" She describes Faith Educare as *"a nice creche - we had lots of fun learning"*. Her favourite activities were playing outside, drawing and colouring in.

Lindsay says that Liliyana also developed crucial social and emotional skills at Faith Educare, describing her daughter as confident, with leadership qualities and many friends, some who also attended Faith Educare. She adds *"her confidence is amazing... teacher Gwen told me that she has leadership skills. And then when she went to school, and as the years is going by, I can tell because even when I get there, she's in front because teacher asked her to help with this and help with that."* Gwen adds that Liliyana was always helping with the other children, helping them line up and with their work. Lindsay says that Liliyana also helps her older sister with her homework.

Lindsay shares a starkly different experience with her eldest daughter, who attended a different ECD centre. She shares that the children were well cared for, however, she believes they did not have a good quality early learning programme in place. Reflecting on her eldest daughter's educational journey, Lindsay shares that her eldest daughter repeated grade one and that she continues to struggle academically. She believes that a stronger early learning foundation may have better prepared her for formal schooling. This showcases the importance of a good quality early learning programmes and why investment in ECD centres can have an impact that lasts long after a child leaves the centre.

Investing in the future

The RECM Foundation and Faith Educare's journey continues. The RECM Foundation continues to invest in Gwen's development, with the next step being supporting her with obtaining her Level 1 ECD qualification towards the end of the year. This is a crucial step in working towards the centre achieving gold registration status with the Department of Basic Education.

Gwen is currently participating in CECD's leadership and management training, teacher training, and training in introducing financial literacy concepts to young children.

Gwen continues to embrace every opportunity to learn. *"You're never too old to learn. Whatever training there is, they [CECD] just involve me."* Her continued professional development is important because a good quality early learning programme depends not only on the spaces children occupy, but on the people who teach and care for them.

Gwen attending CECD's leadership and management training on 3 September 2026

From infrastructure to opportunity

What began as support for infrastructure has become an investment in people, opportunity and possibility. The RECM Foundation's support didn't simply improve a building, it helped turn Gwen's home into a safe, compliant and good quality early learning environment, while supporting children, caregivers and the sustainability of the centre.

BACK: CECD Development Worker and ECD Trainer, Kirsty Johnson, with Principal Gwen.
FRONT: Elijah, Lindsay and Liliyana.

For Gwen, the centre's principal and founder, it has brought a dream she had for years to life, making something possible that she could not achieve alone.

For the caregivers of these young children, it has brought peace of mind that comes from knowing their children are safe, cared for and are receiving a strong foundation for their education.

For the children, it has given them something they deserve from the very beginning: a safe space where they can learn, grow and thrive.

For the families and ECD centres in Pelican Park, it is proof that with the right investment and support, the impact can reach far beyond a single centre and far into the future.

Thank you to the RECM Foundation for supporting Faith Educare.

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