



Basic Concepts
Building Thinking - Harnessing Potential
foundation

Ikamva Labantu Mediation Teaching Programme

Participant Feedback Report:

- **Mediated Learning (Session 1 – 20 July 2026)**
- **Language Development (Session 2 – 28 July 2026)**

Overview

The Mediation Teaching Programme commenced successfully with two three-hour training sessions designed to introduce participants to the principles of mediated learning and the central role of language in children's cognitive development. Session 1 was attended by 15 participants, with one participant absent. Session 2 was attended by 13 participants, with the same participant absent, while two classroom assistants were unavailable as they had commenced five weeks of practical placement.

At the conclusion of the second session, participants were invited to reflect on three questions:

- What did I discover?
- How will I use what I learnt?
- Where do I need more support?

The responses provide valuable insight into participants' understanding of the training content, their commitment to applying the principles in practice, and their perceived support needs. Overall, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive and demonstrates that participants are already beginning to shift from viewing teaching as the delivery of activities towards understanding mediation as an intentional way of interacting with children throughout the day.

1. What I Discovered

One of the strongest themes emerging from the feedback was participants' growing appreciation that **mediation extends beyond planned teaching activities**. Many recognised that mediation begins when children arrive at the centre and continues throughout the day through every interaction, routine and conversation. Participants increasingly viewed themselves as active facilitators of children's thinking rather than simply caregivers or practitioners.

Language development featured prominently throughout the responses. Participants repeatedly commented on the importance of deliberately increasing the amount and quality of language used with children. They recognised that vocabulary is not developed incidentally but through

intentional conversations, questioning, explanation and meaningful interaction. Several participants were particularly struck by the discussion highlighting the relationship between language exposure and cognitive development, recognising the transformative effect that rich language experiences can have on children's learning.

The training also appeared to broaden participants' understanding of children's capabilities. Many reflected on the importance of allowing children opportunities to think independently, solve problems for themselves and explore rather than immediately providing answers. This represents an important shift towards promoting cognitive independence, one of the central aims of mediated learning.

Participants also demonstrated an increased awareness of the importance of relationships in learning. They highlighted welcoming children warmly, listening attentively, making eye contact, using facial expressions and positioning themselves physically at the child's level as important components of effective mediation. These reflections indicate that participants are beginning to appreciate that children's emotional security and sense of connection are closely linked to their willingness to learn.

Several participants were surprised to discover that meaningful communication begins long before children develop spoken language. The realisation that babies can engage in reciprocal interactions through gesture, facial expression and vocalisation broadened participants' understanding of communication and language development from infancy.

Perhaps most significantly, many participants commented that they had discovered there is an important distinction between being a practitioner and becoming a mediator. Rather than simply managing children or completing activities, they began to understand that a mediator intentionally develops children's language, thinking and learning through every interaction.

2. How I Will Use What I Learnt

Participants' responses demonstrated that the training had already begun influencing how they intend to interact with children in their daily practice.

The strongest theme concerned the intentional use of language throughout the day. Participants described plans to introduce more vocabulary, engage children in richer conversations, ask more questions and encourage children to express themselves. Many recognised that language development should occur continuously rather than only during structured teaching activities.

Another recurring theme was encouraging children to become more independent thinkers. Participants reflected on allowing children time to think, explore and solve problems for themselves instead of immediately supplying answers. This suggests an emerging understanding of the mediator's role in promoting thinking rather than simply transmitting knowledge.

Participants also placed considerable emphasis on building warm, responsive relationships with children. They described practical strategies such as interacting at children's eye level, praising children's efforts, involving every child in activities, listening carefully and ensuring that children feel respected and valued. These responses indicate that participants recognise mediation as both a cognitive and relational process.

Importantly, participants also identified ways of transferring their learning beyond their immediate classrooms. Community-based workers planned to support practitioners in implementing mediated learning approaches, while others intended applying the same principles with their own children at home. Participants working with babies described intentionally increasing their use of singing, body language and verbal interaction to strengthen early communication.

Collectively, these responses suggest that participants are already beginning to translate theoretical principles into practical strategies that can be implemented immediately within their own educational settings.

3. Where I Need More Support

Responses regarding additional support were particularly encouraging. Most participants indicated that they currently felt well supported and did not identify any significant areas of concern following the first two sessions. Many commented that they were still absorbing the new ideas presented and wished to continue learning as the programme progressed.

Where additional support was requested, it tended to focus on practical application rather than conceptual understanding. Some participants wanted greater familiarity with the mediation checklist introduced during the training and guidance on using it confidently within their daily practice. Others requested examples of effective conversation starters and questioning techniques that could naturally extend children's thinking during free play and everyday classroom interactions.

Community-based workers expressed a desire to further develop their ability to support practitioners in adopting a mediated learning approach, recognising that changing practice requires patience, encouragement and ongoing coaching.

Several participants acknowledged that their support needs may only become clearer once they begin implementing the new strategies consistently. This demonstrates a reflective approach to professional learning and suggests that participants view the training as an ongoing developmental process rather than a once-off intervention.

Overall Reflections

The participant feedback following the first two sessions provides strong evidence that the programme is achieving its initial objectives. Participants are beginning to shift their understanding of teaching from delivering activities towards intentionally mediating children's language, thinking and learning throughout the day.

The responses also suggest that participants are internalising several foundational principles of mediated learning, including the importance of rich language experiences, responsive adult-child interactions, encouraging independent thinking and recognising every interaction as an opportunity for learning.

Equally encouraging is the positive attitude displayed by participants towards their own professional development. Rather than expressing uncertainty or resistance, the majority demonstrated enthusiasm for implementing the approaches discussed during the training and

confidence in continuing their learning journey. The relatively small number of support requests, together with the practical nature of those requests, suggests that participants feel well supported while recognising that mastery will develop through continued practice, mentoring and reflection.

As the programme progresses, future sessions and mentoring visits will build on these strong foundations by providing additional opportunities for participants to observe, practise, reflect upon and refine their mediation skills within authentic early childhood settings.