

# Issues of placement of children to school

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The issues surrounding the placement of children in public Schools has cause a lot of frustration and anger on parents.

On 15 January 2025, the school academic year commenced. The first week of school was a nightmare for many parents and learners, despite months of anticipation for the new academic year.

In 2016, the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) introduced an online application system for grade 1 and 8 learners, this system was meant to make the application process easier for parents and manageable for GDE. But instead, it has become a nightmare, leaving parents frustrated and helpless.

On the first day of school, some learners had not been placed in schools, some had been rejected from their preferred schools and forced to settle for schools far away from their homes, and many parents have been sharing their concerns on a social media platform (TikTok) about GDE placement issues. One frustrated parent from Pretoria said her child was placed in an Afrikaans school, which is a challenge because they don't speak or understand the language at home. Another parent shared that her problem is that her child is placed outside of their neighbourhood area, and this is an issue because transport money is needed, and they won't have that kind of money on a monthly basis.

Across Gauteng, many parents have expressed frustration over placement issues. From the first day of school, parents have braved the rainy weather, waking up as early as 5 am to queue outside schools hoping to get their children placed at their preferred schools.

Speaking on SABC news, GDE spokesperson Steve Mabona has reassured parents that their children will be placed at schools across the province, even though they may not be placed at preferred schools.

The GDE's lack of readiness for the first day of school has caused a lot of anxiety, with communities calling for intervention at the public education system. GDE's struggles to cope with the huge number of learners stems from a significant shortage of teachers and administrators and this issue alone prevents a smooth start of the new academic year. The online application system is another problem, some parents find it hard to apply for their children using the online system because they don't have computers, smartphones, or internet. Another issue is parents not having proper papers, which deprives children from being placed at any schools.

These issues have led to the current crises at hand. The GDE must look at other alternative ways of applying and placing of learners correctly and on time. Communities must also work together to assist those struggling with applications to ensure a smooth start to a new academic year, it will take a collective effort to ensure schools are run smoothly from the first day. Every child deserves to start

school on time and have an equal chance to succeed.

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