

Siyakwazi Red Flag Report

April 2022



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About the Red Flag & Catch-up programme

2021 marks the third year that Siyakwazi has carried out the Red Flag screening assessments in schools and the second year it has been conducted in ECD centres. The screening tool was first introduced as a pilot in 2018.

The Tool is primarily used to identify children at risk of falling behind. At the beginning of the year, the Red Flag Tool is implemented and highlights which children need extra support and assistance in their learning. These children are slotted into small Catch-up groups and are supported weekly or bi-weekly with activities in the classroom supporting specific areas of development and learning.

The Tool is not an in-depth assessment of an individual child's learning and development, but instead an indicator which covers 9 developmental areas which are critical in forming sound developmental pathways in the early years. The Tool has been designed with ease of access to resources, scalability, screening of large groups and the context of supporting communities in a rural setting.

More information about the Red Flag Tool and its development can be accessed via the link <https://siyakwazi.org/early-identification-ecd/>.



Figure 1 group of children participating in the Red Flag screening. Counting beans into a cup tests numeracy skills & fine motor skills.

The Tool can assist in identification of children with disabilities and assist referral pathways to receive a diagnosis and more intensive support. Although the Tool is by no means a way of diagnosing disability, children who are identified as being unable to Catch-up in Siyakwazi's School Readiness programme may present with an underlying learning barrier or disability. As of 2020, children who remain Red Flag following retesting at the end of the year could receive an assessment from Siyakwazi's Occupational Therapist (OT) to determine if further referrals are necessary. In 2020 approx 6 children were supported accessing therapy support through Siyakwazi's Resource Centre. In 2021, a large number of children who remained Red Flag will be added to the therapy assessment list in Term 1.

A brief history of the Red Flag & Catch-up programme

2019

2019 was the first year which Siyakwazi implemented the Red Flag screening following its pilot in 2018. 5 Primary schools were screened. 1035 Children in Grade R and Grade 1 were screened and of those, 182 children (17.5%) were identified at being at risk of falling behind and supported through the Catch-up curriculum. In Grade 1 100% of children were able to catch-up and 97% in Grade R.

2020

In 2020, 1089 children were screened in 6 Primary schools with a 7th school intended as a control school. In 6 ECD centres, 49 children were screened. Despite the interrupted school calendar, children in schools were still able to Catch-up over the course of 2020. 100% of the children rescreened in Grade 1 in 2020 caught up and 92% of those in Grade R caught up. (Of the children screened at the beginning of 2020, 97% were available for retesting at the end of the year). Even though attendance in schools was low, many of the children were still supported by one-on-one Catch-up sessions in the homes with Siyakwazi's team members when schools remained closed.

The situation was somewhat different for the children in ECD centres. In 2020, ECD Centre's Catch-up rate was low and 64% of the children retested remained at risk of falling behind. (An important mention for Catch-up groups in ECD centres is that only 23% of the children who were identified at risk of falling behind at the beginning of 2020 were present for retesting at the end of the year. So, whilst the percentages were high the actual number of children was low, in many ways the number of children retested would be too low for an accurate reflection rendering the data inconclusive). It is also important to note that attendance at ECD centres was also very low, due to strict covid restrictions and starting up of ECD learning was considerably slower than that at schools.

2021

Siyakwazi was able to expand its School Readiness programme in 2021 thanks to available funding. 7 Primary Schools and 23 ECD centres were supported with Red Flag screening and Catch-up programmes. A total of 1627 children were screened and 512 (31%) identified at risk of falling behind and supported through the Catch-up programme.

There was intention to continue home-based support visits with Siyasizas and parents of Catch-up children in 2021 as had been done in 2020, but unfortunately the large number of Red Flag children meant that not all children could be consistently reached in homes. For most children they received their Catch-up interventions in the classroom, but because of schools remaining at 50% capacity for most of the year, there was invariably half the amount of time dedicated to the Catch-up curriculum as well as the standard learning curriculum.

	% of children identified at risk of falling behind		
	2019	2020	2021
Pre-Grade R	na	43%	57%
Grade R	22%	23%	35%
Grade 1	15%	11%	19%

Table 1.1 Percentage of children identified at risk of falling behind over the last 3 years.

From Table 1.1 it is clear that 2021 saw a significant increase in the number of children found to be at risk of falling behind across all age groups.

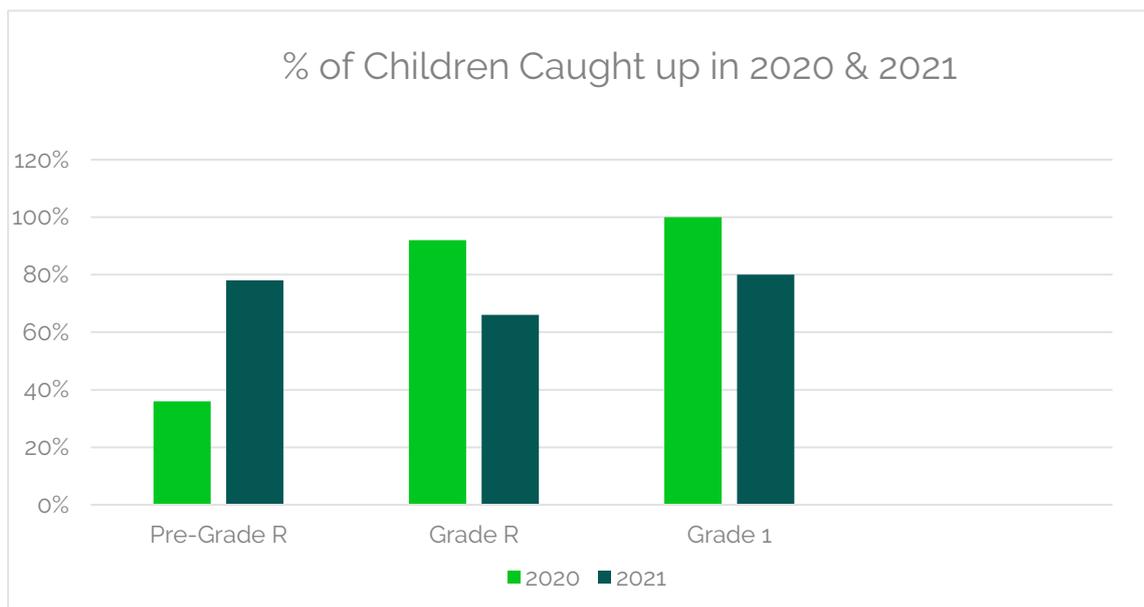


Fig 1.1 Visual representation of the significant difference in amount of children able to catch-up in 2020, compared to 2021.

The school readiness landscape in 2021

In 2021, the number of children at risk of falling behind was significantly higher than previous years.

	Pre-Grade R	Grade R	Grade 1	Total
No. of children screened	284	611	732	1627
No. of children identified as Red Flag	162	214	136	512
% of children rescreened	93%	89%	98%	93%
No. of children caught up/ %	117 (78%)	125 (66%)	106 (80%)	348 (73%)
No. of children remained red flag	33	65	27	125

Table 1.2 Children Identified through the Red Flag screening tool in 2021 across each age group

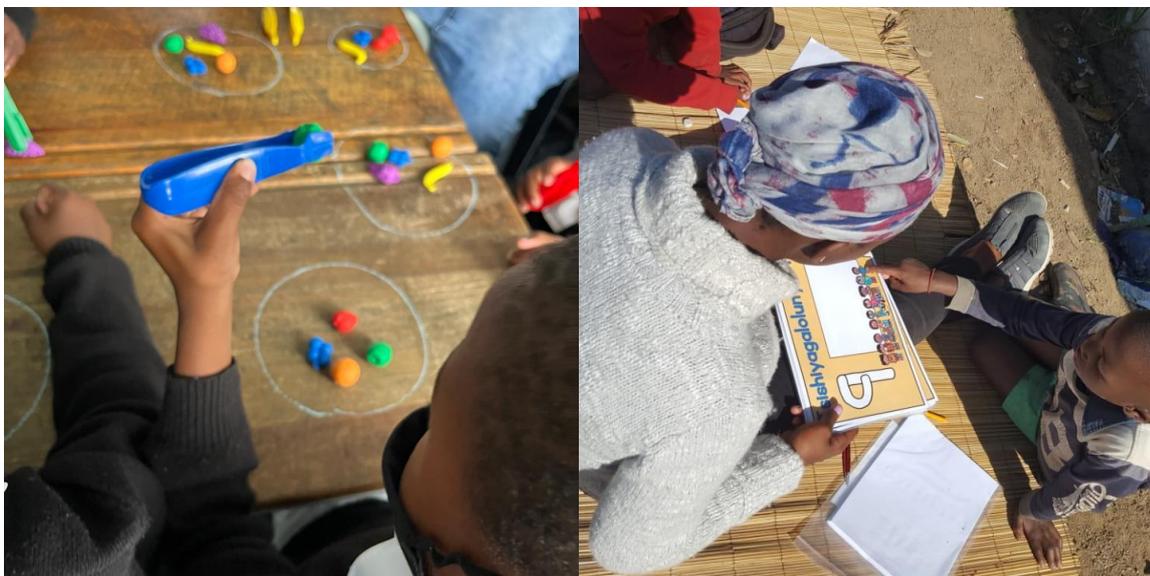
Table 1.2 provides a detailed look into the Catch-up data collected in 2021. A total of 1343 children in Grade R and Grade 1 across 7 Primary schools were screened and 284 children in pre-Grade R in 23 ECD centres.

The areas identified as the areas of children's development that were needing the most support at the start of the year were as follows:

- **Pre-Grade R:** Maths (counting), Patterns, Fine motor
- **Grade R:** Patterns, Fine Motor, Maths (counting)
- **Grade 1:** Patterns, Maths (counting), Gross motor

Teams took this information into the learning context and used it to support the development of the Catch-up programme. Puzzles were introduced across all 3 age divisions in various forms to support a wide variety of development areas, along with counting, patterns, language & literacy development, fine motor skills and gross motor development. Siyakwazi's Occupational Therapist (OT), Dani, also supported developing some pre-reading and pre-writing skills that could be used in the classroom.

Catch-up groups were conducted from April to November in schools and June to November in ECD centres. In each class, the children who had been identified as Red Flag were taken into small breakaway groups by the Siyasiza and supported with the programme.



Children who remain Red Flag after intervention

Significant indicators were that the % of children that caught up in Grade R and Grade 1 was much lower than in 2020 – **see Fig 1.1 page 3**. Without having comparative data the low catch-up rate for children in 2021 could largely be attributed to the school closure and adjusted learning practises due to the pandemic.

As we enter 2022 and a new school calendar year the number of children who remain at risk of falling behind even when participating in Siyakwazi's Catch-up programme in 2021 is high (125 children Pre-Grade R – Grade 1) This is the first time that the Catch-up rates for children has fallen below 90% in schools. A closer look at the results indicates that when children were rescreened with a levelled up version of the Red Flag screening tool, to measure their progress, on average only 66% of children in Grade R caught up and 80% of children in Grade 1 caught up, meaning that 34% and 20% remained at risk of falling behind¹.

¹ *It's important to mention that these % are indicative based on the number of children available for rescreening at the end of the year. Namely, 89% in Grade R and 98% in Grade 1

These Catch-up numbers are significantly and concerning lower than previous years as 100% of Grade 1 children caught up in 2020 and 92% of children caught up in Grade R (see Fig 1.1: % of Children Caught up in 2020 & 2021).

In ECD centres in pre-Grade R the numbers were slightly more promising with 78% of the children identified as Red Flag able to catch-up after only 6 months of intervention (Catch-up in ECD centres commenced in May 2021 and concluded in November 2021). Of the 23 ECD centres that were supported in 2021, 10 centres experienced a Catch-up rate of 100%, whilst another 4 ECD centres were above the 78% average Catch-up rate. 2021 was the first year which Siyakwazi ran a pre-Grade R Catch-up programme.



Reasons for children not being able to catch-up

Low attendance

Although the data in schools remains a concern, reasons for the low Catch-up rate could largely be attributed to poor attendance. Over and above the week on, week off or alternating days schooling system that was brought about by the pandemic. Children in Grade R were reported to remain at home on school days if an older sibling was not available to accompany them to school. News 24 reported that 1.3 years school time has been lost during the pandemic and it will be a steep road for learners to attain their educational outcomes.² Whilst Siyakwazi has been involved in distributing learning packs and supporting home visits with Catch-up children, unless these children receive dedicated supervisory time, they will often prefer to play with their friends instead of learning. With 350 Red Flag children identified in schools at the start of the year, Siyakwazi were hard pressed with resources (human resources and time) to ensure that the children receive adequate home-based support.

² News 24 online (Jan 2022) at https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/south-african-children-have-lost-13-years-of-schooling-due-to-covid-19-20220203?utm_source=24.com&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=_3781+_34758979+_68370_&utm_term=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.news24.com%2Fnews24%2Fsouthafrica%2Fnews%2Fsouth-african-children-have-lost-13-years-of-schooling-due-to-covid-19-20220203

Full time attendance showing more positive outcomes for Catch-up children

Expanding on the above, one of the new schools to receive support through the School Readiness programme (listed under School G in the Appendices) was also a school whose Catch-up rates were amongst some of the highest in 2021. 100% of children in Grade 1 caught up, with 83% of those in Grade R caught up. The pre-Primary school also had 100% catch-up for the pre-Grade R class. These are important stats to note because the school was one of the only schools which remained on daily attendance for all classes throughout 2021, due to its small size.



Learning from the data- A way forward

The importance of ECD Catch-up

Due to a consistently high number of children identified at risk of falling behind in Grade R over the years (compared to children in Grade 1), the hope is that with an improved Catch-up programme in pre-Grade R, children will be more confident and school ready by the time they start their first year of school. This forms part of the principle early intervention and prevention of children developing learning barriers as they progress through their schooling career.

Tailor making and adjusting Catch-up intervention programmes

Targeting specific learning areas that appear to be weaker and needing more support for certain groups of children assists children in specific areas of their development. Amongst others, patterns, counting, crossing the midline and fine motor development have been ear marked as weaker areas. These interventions are also carried through to the ECD practitioners and teachers to support holistic development activities for all

"My biggest highlight has been to see the improvement with the learners who are supported by Siyakwazi. I loved learning about different ways to help children write on straight lines as well as supporting their cognitive development. I enjoyed the workshop with the OT at the school, there was lots of new things to learn. I feel that I can easily identify children with disabilities and support them in the classroom."

Teacher at local Primary School

children in their care. Assisting skills in teachers is a way to support further prevention of children falling behind within classes.

Attendance increase

As far as possible, for Schools to encourage full time attendance. Involving parents in understanding attendance as critical in their child's educational progress may also support improved attendance rates.

Involving the parent/guardian and teacher

Using strategies that support parent involvement in the home, including providing relevant resources for stimulation may add to the child's learning and assist catching up more effectively.

In the same way, supporting teachers understanding of specific activities around developmental areas may support all children in classes to develop and learn and receive the foundation to support optimal learning in their future schooling career.

The need for ECD/School Referral system

When a Catch-up child continues to not progress, a system of referral needs to be followed to assist involvement from ECD practitioners, teachers and parents. This system will enable a child who may have an undiagnosed disability to access the support he or she needs to accelerate his or her development.

Prevention through working with parents and their young babies

A silver lining for Siyakwazi's School Readiness model and sustainable solution towards prevention of children presenting as at risk of falling behind (Red Flag children), is the expansion of Siyakwazi's Early Learning (0-2) programme in the homes. This is a simple 12-month programme and supports parents bi-monthly with understanding more about the learning and development potential of their young babies. In its second year in 2021, Siyakwazi have noticed a significant increase in the number of parents who have an improved awareness about their child's capacity for learning from an early age as well as the role they (the parent) play in their child's development

Appendix A: An in-depth view at the Red Flag data collected

Name of School	No. of Grade R screened	No. of Red Flag	No. of SS children at school	No. of SS children screened red flag	No. of No's 4-6	No. of No's 7-9	% of Red Flag	No. of Grade R screened	% of red flag children rescreened	No. of Red Flag	No. of No's 4-6	No. of No's 7-9	% of Red Flag	no. of children screened caught up	% of children screened caught up
School A	54	15	0	0	12	3	27.78%	14	93.33%	2	2	0	14.29%	12	85.71%
School B	104	27	0	0	26	1	25.96%	26	96.30%	4	4	0	15.38%	22	84.62%
School C	129	58	1	1	50	8	44.96%	52	89.66%	27	26	1	51.92%	25	48.08%
School D	63	12	0	0	12	0	19.05%	12	100.00%	5	5	0	41.67%	7	58.33%
School E	114	44	3	3	35	9	38.60%	34	77.27%	15	14	1	44.12%	19	55.88%
School F	101	44	0	0	41	3	43.56%	40	90.91%	10	9	1	25.00%	30	75.00%
School G	46	14	1	1	12	2	30.43%	12	85.71%	2	2	0	16.67%	10	83.33%
Total	611	214	5				35.02%	190	88.79%	65			34.21%	125	65.79%
Name of School	No. of Grade 1 Screened	No. of Red Flag	No. of SS children at school	No. of SS children screened red flag	No. of No's 4-6	No. of No's 7-9	% of Red Flag	No. of Grade 1 screened	% of red flag children rescreened	No. of Red Flag	No. of No's 4-6	No. of No's 7-9	% of Red Flag	no. of children screened caught up	% of children screened caught up
School A	66	8	1	1	8	0	12.12%	8	100.00%	4	4	0	50.00%	4	50.00%
School B	123	15	2	1	15	0	12.20%	15	100.00%	1	1	0	6.67%	14	93.33%
School C	172	56	4	4	51	4	32.56%	52	92.86%	9	9	0	17.31%	43	82.69%
School D	85	14	4	3	13	1	16.47%	14	100.00%	8	8	1	57.14%	6	42.86%
School E	126	13	2	1	12	1	10.32%	14	107.69%	2	1	1	14.29%	12	85.71%
School F	119	20	0	0	18	2	16.81%	20	100.00%	3	2	1	15.00%	17	85.00%
School G	41	10	0	0	9	1	24.39%	10	100.00%	0	0	0	0.00%	10	100.00%
Total	732	136	13		126	9	18.58%	133	97.79%	27	25	3	20.30%	106	79.70%

Name of ECD Centre	No. of Pre Grade R	No. of Pre Grade R Screened	No. of Red Flag	No. of No's 4-6	No. of No's 7-9	% of Red Flag	No. of Pre Grade R Screened	No. of Red Flag	No. of No's 4-6	No. of No's 7-9	% of Red Flag	no. of children Caught up	% of children caught up
ECD Centre 1	20	19	7	7	0	36.84%	7	0	0	0	0.00%	7	100.00%
ECD Centre 2	15	13	7	7	0	53.85%	7	3	2	1	42.86%	4	57.14%
ECD Centre 3	24	20	4	4	0	20.00%	4	0	0	0	0.00%	4	100.00%
ECD Centre 4	5	4	2	1	1	50.00%	2	1	1	0	50.00%	1	50.00%
ECD Centre 5	5	5	1	0	1	20.00%	2	1	1	0	50.00%	1	50.00%
ECD Centre 6	5	5	2	2	0	40.00%	2	1	1	0	50.00%	1	50.00%
ECD Centre 7	20	20	6	6	0	30.00%	5	3	2	1	60.00%	2	40.00%
ECD Centre 8	51	43	29	29	0	67.44%	23	9	9	0	39.13%	14	60.87%
ECD Centre 9	28	19	14	14	0	73.68%	14	1	1	0	7.14%	13	92.86%
ECD Centre 10	9	6	5	4	1	83.33%	5	0	0	0	0.00%	5	100.00%
ECD Centre 11	8	7	2	2	0	28.57%	2	0	0	0	0.00%	2	100.00%
ECD Centre 12	11	11	8	8	0	72.73%	6	1	1	0	16.67%	5	83.33%
ECD Centre 13	37	29	21	20	1	72.41%	21	2	2	0	9.52%	19	90.48%
ECD Centre 14	25	16	10	8	2	62.50%	7	3	2	1	42.86%	4	57.14%
ECD Centre 15	5	5	4	4	0	80.00%	4	0	0	0	0.00%	4	100.00%
ECD Centre 16	25	17	8	7	1	47.06%	7	5	5	0	71.43%	2	28.57%
ECD Centre 17	29	24	18	18	0	75.00%	13	0	0	0	0.00%	13	100.00%
ECD Centre 18	3	2	1	1	0	50.00%	1	0	0	0	0.00%	1	100.00%
ECD Centre 19	1	1	1	1	0	100.00%	1	0	0	0	0.00%	1	100.00%
ECD Centre 20	9	9	7	6	1	77.78%	7	0	0	0	0.00%	7	100.00%
ECD Centre 21	6	6	3	3	0	50.00%	3	2	2	0	66.67%	1	33.33%
ECD Centre 22	3	3	2	2	0	66.67%	2	0	0	0	0.00%	2	100.00%
ECD Centre 23	14	14	5	4	1	35.71%	5	1	1	0	20.00%	4	80.00%
Total		284	162	154	8	57.04%	150	33	30	3	22.00%	117	78.00%