

Leadership Excellence Award in After School Programming

Meeting Gold Award Winner Angus Duffett

Engaging Young Minds and Igniting Bright Futures

While many South Africans are waking up to the challenges facing underprivileged youth, one man is making a real difference. This man is Angus Duffett, principal of Silikamva High School in Hout Bay.

The majority of the 550 learners at Silikamva are from the Imizamo Yetho community, a township with an unemployment rate in excess of 32%. Mindful of the numerous challenges facing learners in their home environments, and in order to give them a wider range of opportunity than traditional schooling, Duffett and his school team have implemented an extensive After School Programme offering a variety of sporting, cultural and academic extra-curricular activities.

“As a school leader, I feel that it’s very important for our young children and teenagers to be involved in after school-activities. It means that they’re involved in something valuable and wholesome as opposed to being out there on the streets,” explains Duffett, who has seen first hand the influence of gangsterism and anti-social behaviour on young learners.

In addition the school’s existing After School Programme, Silikamva has also partnered with the Western Cape Government After School Game Changer and the Hout Bay Partnership to incentivise after school programmes as a means to decrease drop-out rates and address some of the socio-economic challenges faced by many pupils from low-income communities.

Instead of being exposed to drugs, violence, and gangsterism in the afternoons, young kids and teenagers are given not just alternative, but better, more appealing options for how they spend their

time. Instead of idly preaching for the youth to change their circumstances, Angus Duffett and his team work hands-on to first show them that there are other paths, and then allow them to choose a path that engages them personally.

“It has been our intention from the start to provide a wide range of activities so that each and every learner finds something which hooks them in,” says Duffett, who is actively involved in the running, promoting and ongoing development of the After School Programme.

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Duffett leads the school and the programme with a passionate belief that you can’t help but be inspired by. In his own words, the programme is “not to be seen as something separate from their overall education, but something that is part and parcel of a valuable education package.” With Mr Duffett leading the way, every single staff member is involved in the After School Programme.

THE AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMME

At its core, the After School Programme is a collection of activities that provide a basis for good values and healthy involvement, rather than the antisocial activities taking place off school grounds. Silikamva High School offers more than 30 after-school activities across a wide range of categories so that each and every student can find a place where they feel they belong.

Activities fall into the following pillars, as laid out by the Western Cape Government After School Game Changer team:

Academic Support

Access to tutoring, academic support and new subjects shows learners that with hard work, they can achieve any career they want, including career opportunities beyond the standard school curriculum.

Sport and Recreation

Active kids are happy kids. Aside from helping them be both happier and healthier, sport programmes open learners up to new opportunities and career paths they might not otherwise have considered.

Arts and Culture

From dance to drama to public speaking classes, pupils learn to express themselves and find their voice. They are exposed to inspiring performances and exhibitions and are given the opportunity to showcase their own creative skills, too.

Life Skills

From learning to grow their own food in the school garden to training shelter dogs, life skills programmes help young kids in difficult

environmental circumstances to find a positive grounding on which to build their futures.

The main goal of the After School Programme is to improve childhood and teen development, leading to less risk taking behaviour and better future outcomes for learners. This is done through fostering individual talents, interests and opportunities, and there are also offerings for learners in need of social intervention or academic support. As Dianne Morgan, Deputy Principal at Silikamva states: "Each child must be provided with the opportunity to develop themselves to their full potential."

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Impressionable teens are given a positive use for their free time. "High school learners would roam the streets after the academic day and get caught up in all kinds of anti-social behaviour from gangs, to drugs and crime," says Nathan Roberts, Founding Director of Ikasi Youth NPC and Everyday Heroes. The programme has since contributed to a noted drop in risk-taking behaviour and school dropouts. Grade 12 learner, Lindi Bacela expresses: "You guys gave us a chance to focus again on school instead of stressing about gangs." Learners have also become more engaged and report that they have better relationships with each other and their teachers.



STEPS TO SUCCESS

A project of this scope takes a great deal of planning and the involvement of many people. “It’s crucial that your whole school community is built into it. Initial success is dependent on the school community itself being committed to the idea that after-school programming and extramural activity is important,” explains Duffet.

In order to provide a range of high-quality, engaging programmes, Angus Duffet inspires – and also expects – all 21 staff members to be involved. In addition to their teaching roles, staff are required to provide after-school sessions. “Teachers give up two afternoons a week of their time so that we can offer a broad spectrum of sport, cultural and academic activities.” Duffett continues, “We also encourage teachers to present what they are passionate about because these role models are crucial to the success of the programme.”

As a new school, Silikamva was fortunate enough to take on staff members who shared the passion and vision of the After School Programme. “It’s very difficult if you’re fighting against a school culture... It’s important to try and get as many people to share the vision” states Mr Duffett. “Make it an expectation that your staff team are involved, make it an expectation that your management team find partners and additional resources.”

Learners too are encouraged to take part in at least two activities of their choice. It is the hope of the school that with so many activities on offer, there is at least one thing to interest, develop and engage every single child so that they’re making the decision to take part and follow the opportunities that interest them. As part of the incentive programme, a loyalty card has also been implemented to promote higher attendance and learners are rewarded for their increased involvement.

As leader of the school, Angus Duffet is also one of the leaders in the community. Through this, Silikamva finds further strength in collaboration. Partnerships with NGOs and local businesses have opened doors for independently funded programmes at no financial burden to the school and learners. As a MOD Centre, Silikamva is also provided with three sport, arts and culture coaches to further bolster the after school offering at the school.

As a collaboration site of the After School Game Changer project, Silikamva is committed to tracking learner attendance and the impacts of the After School Programme’s progress. This contributes to the larger Western Cape Government goal: to get 112 000 learners in low- and no-fee schools to take part in regular and consistent after-school programming by 2019.



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WE ARE THE FUTURE

Silikamva means “we are the future”, and their After School Programme is helping to make this a reality. The success of the programme is most evident when you hear the stories of individual learners such as Odwa and Stefano. “Both boys came to us in Grade 9 in our first year. They were both linked to gang activity, to the degree that one of them landed up in hospital. They were definitely on the cusp of being able to choose a life that was going to take them on the wrong track.”

The After School Programme offered both of these boys a better option, and both became involved in a number of extramural activities including football, the Green Club and Interact. Duffett continues: “They both matriculated last year (2016). Stephano was our Head Boy. Odwa was our Deputy Head Boy. Odwa is now spending a year in Germany on an exchange programme and Stephano is busy studying.”

“Instead of just dreaming to be a soccer player like I did before, I now know I am interested in business management and finance.” – Stephano Nkosi, 2016 Head Boy

As a school, Silikamva realises that high school learners who are dedicated to their programmes require the opportunity to showcase their mastery and to use the skills they have learned to increase their life opportunities. A Lalela Arts Student had the opportunity to travel to New York, and two Ubuntu4All participants will be doing a one year programme in Germany after matriculating. In Cape Town, learners have held art exhibitions at the One&Only, and have performed at Artscape, Theatre on the Bay, the Shakespeare Festival and at the Cape Town Carnival.

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BE THE ROLE MODEL

Strong, committed leadership of the school's principal lies at the heart of the programme's success. At the recent provincial ceremony for the National Teachers Awards, Duffett received Gold in the new category, Leadership Excellence in After School Programming, recognising his personal support for extended education in his own school environment. The award was presented by the Western Cape Government After School Game Changer team and their partner, The Learning Trust. As part of the award, Silikamva received R20 000 to go toward supporting the continued strengthening and success of their after school offering.

Despite their success, Duffett and his team believe that there is always room to improve. Regular student feedback is taken into account and efforts are continually made to find new partners. "We're not going to pretend that our After School Programme is perfect. It sometimes falls short of our desires. 60 - 70% of our learners are actively involved but we want to see 100%. We continue to make that a goal."

"Our space has meant that it's been challenging. We're still in a temporary school setup, we don't

have any sport field facilities or hall facilities. We haven't always been able to offer everything we've wanted to, but we make use of local community astroturf. We've used very small dirt patches of ground. This year we had 160 students taking part in athletics and we don't have any facilities on site for them to train. My message to the many under-resourced schools out there is that infrastructural resources don't have to limit you."

The future is bright for Silikamva and its learners. They're fortunate enough to be having a new school built and with the additional facilities and space are hoping to extend their programme even further so that every single child at the school finds something to be a part of. Silikamva sets a high standard for low-income schools to work toward, but it all starts with having a meaningful goal: to better the lives of the learners.

"We believe that every student should have the opportunity to discover and develop their own talents and potential. At Silikamva High School, we believe that our After School Programme is doing just that."

- Angus Duffett, Principal of Silikamva High School

