

# The Western Cape After School Community of Practice

*A game changing initiative of the Western Cape Premier's Office  
in partnership with The Learning Trust*

## LEARNING BRIEF No.1: Critical Success Factors for After School Programmes

June 2016





**This Learning Brief** has been produced by The Learning Trust, in partnership with the Premier's Office of the Western Cape, as a resource for the After School programme community in the Western Cape (civil society, government and schools). It is the first in a series of four Learning Briefs, each amplifying learning emerging from the Western Cape After School Community of Practice events in 2016.

## THE AFTER SCHOOL GAME CHANGER

**The After School Game Changer** initiative was launched by the Western Cape Government in 2015, to strengthen after school services and the outcomes of the sector for disadvantaged and disengaged youth. The goal is:

**Western Cape learners' regular and sustained participation in after-school activities which contributes towards positive youth development and improves school outcomes.**

The After School space was selected as one of the province's key priorities – or game changers – as it provides safe and supervised spaces, holistic education, belonging and positive role models, all of which the province aims to enable through its six game changing initiatives.

## THE LEARNING TRUST

**The Learning Trust** is a non-profit, conduit funding organisation that seeks to extend and improve learning opportunities for young South Africans growing up in conditions of poverty and exclusion, by funding and building the capacity of outstanding, emerging grassroots education initiatives. The Learning Trust works alongside local partners to strengthen governance and improve quality and impact. With a portfolio of more than 60 grantee partners, many of which offer After School programmes, The Learning Trust seeks to champion the coordination of the After School sector in South Africa and has been appointed as the Western Cape Government's partner in facilitating this, by building a community of stakeholders interested in collaborating to grow and support the most exciting After School interventions in South Africa.



## INTRODUCING THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The **After School (AS) Community of Practice (CoP)** was launched in Salt River on 30 March 2016, at the new home of iKamva Youth, by **The Learning Trust**, in partnership with the **Western Cape Provincial Government Game Changer**. It was the first of four planned CoP events in 2016, which will be supported by a pending online facility.

The objective of the CoP is to strengthen the outcomes of the sector through strategic collaboration models that are able to take best practice methodologies and programmes to scale. This objective feeds into the provincial government's larger strategic framework for the AS sector.

The **aim of the CoP** is to create space for:

- 1) **Showcasing** best practice models and potential for collaboration models;
- 2) **Sharing and learning** about successes and setbacks of models, to strengthen programmes;
- 3) **Advocacy** to showcase the potential of the sector for formal partnership with local and provincial government authorities and collaborations with civil society; and
- 4) **Collaboration** in content and information that will leverage the quality of programmes and also create opportunities for partnerships and collaboration in the sector.

## THE FIRST COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE MEETING

**Providing an opportunity to unpack and share critical success factors for AS programmes, to inform good practice and encourage enhanced collaboration, was the focus of the CoP launch.**

The meeting was opened by **Charles Ainslie**, Director of The Learning Trust, who acknowledged the rich, diverse AS programme experience and knowledge at the meeting. He spoke of the human capital in the AS sector, the many skilful people who know what it takes to make change, "with a sense of purpose and conviction". The CoP is intended to provide an opportunity for the AS community to work together, to deepen and find new ways to strengthen this sector. Charles asked, how can we legitimise the AS space? How can we strengthen and advance it to a level where we can begin to leverage additional resources and advocate for more support? We need to work out innovative ways of creating additional support, to understand each other's ideas and points of view. The CoP includes representatives of non-profits and government – key partners in the AS space. Together, it is vital to map our way forward, build strong collaborations and identify the critical ingredients of success to ensure the greatest impact for AS programmes.



**A panel of four key speakers, chaired by Christine Downton, Chair of The Learning Trust, gave their responses to the question of what they saw as the critical success factors for AS programmes. Below the panellists are introduced, with their top three success factors.**

**Eugene Daniels** is an education activist and former teacher and district director of Cape Town's Metropole South Education District. After three decades in formal education, he left the latter role to join the civil society education sector, championing a focus on education as a pathway from cradle to career and into citizenship. Having played lead roles in several high-profile initiatives since 2012, Eugene is currently involved in the School Turnaround Foundation, which promotes an innovative new strategy for school improvement in South Africa.

### **1. Learner-centred programming**

Always teach the individual learner, not the subject. When you teach the learner, you teach the subject better. Many AS programmes are not learner centred, but it is crucial to build a trust relationship.

### **2. A movement built with a clear identity and purpose**

Any programme where people are grouped has a positive impact: it makes them feel they belong and are part of a bigger system. Raised by his grandparents, Eugene spoke of how he needed to feel part of something, so, at the age of 5, joined the largest youth organisation in South Africa, the Scouts, with its strong code of conduct and clear sense of being a movement.

### **3. A continuous pathway of learning for learners**

Make sure that your programme does not exist in a vacuum, but either includes progressive programming, working towards a clear goal, or links with other programmes to provide a pathway for learners.

## **CASE STUDY 1: GO FOR GOLD'S PATHWAY OF LEARNING**

**Eugene Daniels** used the example of Go for Gold, which offers AS programmes to Grades 11 and 12 learners. In phase 1, learners focus on maths, science, life skills and IT skills. In phase 2, they work in the construction industry for a year. In phase 3, they study.

The final phase is to be provided with a job.

*"When someone knows there's an employer and career pathway linked to their strengths, they automatically get enormous motivation and throughput."*



**Bruce Damons** has worked in the formal education sector for 25 years, for 16 years of which he was principal of an acclaimed, award-winning government primary school in Port Elizabeth and founder of the Manyano Schools Network. Bruce understands more than many the importance of collaboration in education. He pioneered the concept of a Skills School, turning the 80% unemployment rate in his school's locality to the advantage of both the school and community, by creating a vibrant community volunteer programme in the school, which offered skills development for unemployed individuals and led to increased safety and support for the school in the community. Bruce is passionate about lifelong learning and collaborative school development in partnership with parents and the broader community. In 2005, he was awarded the Batho Pele award (from the Eastern Cape Premier's Office) and in 2008 was winner of the National Teacher Award for Excellence in Primary School Leadership. In 2016, he joined the education faculty at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University as a lecturer, while also pursuing a PhD to define a theoretical model for understanding and supporting the work of community volunteers in community schools.

### **1. Know the community**

Before you walk into the school space, do you know who the community is? Who does this space actually belong to? Is it government, the community, churches, gangs? It is important that you make an effort to know who all the stakeholders are before entering the space and to know the community.

### **2. Consider who owns the programme**

Conceptualising an AS programme must involve considering the ownership of the programme. Leadership and staff being overloaded are big challenges in schools, so it is important to work out feasible strategies to enable ownership of a programme to be transferred to the school. A process of collaboration is necessary to understand what kind of programme will best suit the school's context and thus be able to belong to the school. A critical element of AS programming is how to integrate such programmes into the bigger programme of schooling.

### **3. Value and enable real human connection**

How do you tap into the fantastic knowledge in the community with an AS programme? How do you walk into the school and community space with your programme and acknowledge the people who are supposed to be collaboratively engaged with you in it? You must focus on values: love, respect and trust, as well as understanding and empathy for the significant challenges in so many South African schools. If you want your programme to be successful, it cannot be generic. You must work with the school. Bruce urged the AS community to "operate within the tension and stop trying to fix the tension". Giving the example of the 45 community volunteers adding value daily in his former school, he emphasised that engagement must be humanising: "you must touch souls".



**Rethabile Mashale-Sonibare** is a social entrepreneur and girls' education activist, passionate about girlhood, education and excellence. Previously a programme manager at The Learning Trust, she is founder and director of the Thope Foundation, providing AS support for primary school girls in Khayelitsha, where she grew up. Thope focuses on science, technology, engineering and maths, as well as personal development and mentorship, with the aim of creating a pathway into scientific professions for black girls from impoverished areas. After studying social work, then gaining a Masters in Social Policy and Management from the University of Cape Town, Rethabile is currently undertaking a PhD looking at the management tasks performed by volunteers on management committees of non-profit organisations.

She is a 2015 Mandela Washington Fellow under President Barack Obama's Young African Leadership Initiative.

## CASE STUDY 2: IKAMVA LABANTWANA BETHU'S LEARNING

**Rethabile Mashale-Sonibare** highlighted an AS programme in Crossroads which spoke to her three critical success factors. Halfway through its first year of implementation, the primary school in which iKamva Labantwana Bethu operated its programme was subject to political leadership changes. The programme was not known by either the school faculty or the local community and was ejected from the school. A year later, having learned the lessons of involving the community (not just parents, but people who are affected by, or have the potential to affect, a programme), working with young people in context, and gathering data, the programme was able to re-enter and work successfully with the school. The programme set its own quality standards and has stuck to them: as a motivational factor for the both the programme and children, learners must perform at 60% or more in maths and English to stay on the programme.

### 1. Community engagement

It is vital to understand the dynamics of the community in which you work, as a system that supports young people and that will have an influence on your programme. An AS programme's target group must be seen as a child or young person in context.

### 2. An ethical approach, mindful of community

Many organisations assume they are ethical because they follow the first principle of community development: "do no harm". But often AS programmes work with young people out of context, designing programmes and implementing them with neither consultation nor any understanding of the needs of the local population. Being ethical means taking into consideration people's rights, autonomy and agency.

### 3. A data-driven approach

It is important to prove the success of an intervention by gathering relevant data and using it. Data should support your programme and how you learn as an organisation. It should be used to hold the programme accountable to its stakeholders – the school, community, government, funders.



## CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS EMERGING FROM THE CoP MEETING

*“You have to love first – to bring any programme into the school, you have to first believe that your programme will change things and that you will change. We’re touching souls.” – Bruce Damons*

The CoP process finished with a group exercise, in which delegates worked collaboratively to unpack their thinking on critical factors for vibrant and successful AS programmes and then to prioritise them. These were then shared with the meeting during a final discussion facilitated by Dylan Wray, an entrepreneurial education specialist and co-founder of Education Week. The rich variety of success factors aired throughout the CoP meeting are summarised here.

### Learner-centred programmes

- Develop a clear pathway of learning for learners with a clear focus area and boundaries.
- Build a movement with a clear identity and sense of purpose – ensure young people feel they’re part of something bigger.
- Understand the needs of the target group and that the target is a young person in a particular context.
- Believe in the potential of every child and show learners that they matter.
- Prioritise personal development, healing and growth in participants to acknowledge and help them get in touch with their desire to aspire to something great and the self-belief to motivate them to take action.

### Community involvement and engagement

- Understand the dynamics of the community as a system that supports young people and recognise that every context is different.

- Get to know and understand the community before starting the programme.
- A community-oriented approach, with staff and volunteers based in the area in decision-making roles and involved from the beginning.
- Recognise existing agency, learning from and incorporating it.

### Schools as partners

- Understand who the school space belongs to.
- Make sure your programme is a value add for the school, not a drain.
- Ensure your programme aligns with what is happening in the school.
- Work on integration of the programme into the bigger programme of schooling.
- Build an open and trusting relationship with the school and commit for the long term.

### Values and relationships

- Value-driven implementation: respect, trust, love and belief.
- Take an ethical approach, featuring consultation, taking into



consideration people's rights, autonomy and agency.

- Fearlessness, understanding and empathy in the face of numerous community challenges.
- Operate within the tension, rather than trying to fix the tension.
- Value and enable real human connection.

### Quality and accountability

- Be data driven: prove the success of your intervention by *gathering* and *using* relevant data and using it to keep stakeholders informed and motivated.
- Set performance targets (e.g. for learners) and stick to them.
- Define relevant quality standards and hold yourselves accountable to those standards through ongoing self-assessment, reviewing intended outcomes against activities.
- Continuous learning and adaptation – using failures as well

### COOKING IN YOUR KITCHEN

The idea of coming into someone's house, to cook in their kitchen, emerged as a popular analogy for how we should bring AS programmes into schools and communities. We have to assume that there is already something to eat in the house – what can we contribute to create a feast? When we come into someone's kitchen, that kitchen belongs to them. We bring something, but that person already has something. What can we add? But, for sustainability, it is important to note that the recipe must stay in the house.

as successes as opportunities to learn and improve.

- Be accountable to your beneficiaries.

### Collaboration and partnerships

- Understand the different stakeholders and role players that you should cooperate with and through.
- Coordinate with other organisations working in the school and community.
- Engage with all stakeholders – parents, school and different community bodies that influence what young people do with their time.
- Co-create the programme with stakeholders, building real relationships, fostering real ownership, real buy-in.

### Effective programming

- Understand what services are on offer in the area and avoid duplication.
- Offer something different and motivating for young people, beyond their daily experience.
- Incorporate psychosocial support.
- Passionate, adequately-skilled and supported staff.

### Sustainability

- Focus on sustainability from programme conception.
- Build a culture that creates space for agility and flexibility.
- Understand how your programme functions as part of a system involving learners, the school and the community.
- Value broad ownership of the programme.
- Build demand and be demand driven – motivating stakeholders to want what you're offering.

## A PERSONAL STORY OF AFTER SCHOOL SUCCESS

**Gabeba Gaidien of The Learning Trust gave a motivational presentation about the impact of after school programmes on her life, highlighting what she saw as critical success factors, from a beneficiary's perspective.**

*"What we are talking about today, to me, represents the package of opportunities that unearthed my potential, as a learner in a marginalised context, and discovered the gold possessed by every child - where knowledge meets imagination and magic happens.*

*Throughout my high school career, many beautiful humans reminded me that I am bigger and bolder than my physical limitations and showed me that the world is filled with opportunities and good, caring people that I could trust. I can't remember the names of all the programmes - I can hardly remember many of the activities. But I do remember the people who sat with me and said, 'I see you. You matter'.*

*This is what changed my life.*

*The after school space is crucial - not because children can learn to play soccer or how to debate a topic - but because, for so many children who are confined to the context of their limited reality, filled with fear and anxiety and frustration, this is the space where you get to show them the beautiful possibility that lives in this world and how much of that beauty lives within them. It is the space where we nurture humanity and the most essential of all outputs and outcomes is the basic human connection. There will be no literacy, numeracy or leadership skills without human connection."*

## THANK YOU!

**We are grateful to all the representatives of the following organisations who participated in the first After School Community of Practice:**

Action Volunteers Africa, Afrika Tikkun, Amandla Edufootball, Amy Biehl Foundation, Beautiful Gate, BoxGirls SA, Click Foundation, Dream Factory Foundation, Educape Trust, Emaqabini Educational Academy, Fundza Literacy Trust, Great Commission United, Greenshoots, iKamva Labantwana, iKamva Youth, Just Grace, Life Choices, Mosaic, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Olico, PASCAP Trust, Siyakathala Orphan Support, The Amy Biehl Foundation, The Learning Trust, The Sozo Foundation, Thope Foundation, Vision Afrika, VPUU NPC, Waves for Change, Western Cape After School Game Changer, Western Cape Government Delivery Support Unit, Western Cape Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport (MOD Programme).

If you would like to find out about joining the CoP, please contact Gabeba at The Learning Trust. Tel: 021 709 0420, email: [gabeba@thelearningtrust.org](mailto:gabeba@thelearningtrust.org).



*“How do we as organisations collaborate and have space so we can share the bad stuff, so we can learn? The Game Changer should be something that rocks the system, shakes it up!” – Dylan Wray*

## THE VIEW FROM PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

**Jacqui Boulle**, programme manager of the provincial After School Game Changer, introduced government’s views on critical factors in AS programmes and gave an update on government progress with the Game Changer.

*“The problem identified by government in the Western Cape is that we have poorly educated, disengaged youth, who are unsafe, at high risk of destructive behaviour and ill prepared for life. Addressing that requires a multi-pronged strategy – our vision is responsible and empowered working young adults. How do we move from the problem to the vision?”*

Jacqui spoke of the province's new youth strategy, in which a number of key interventions have been identified, from parenting to employment. The AS space was highlighted as a thread running through and holistically addressing many of the principles the strategy tries to address. Government appreciates that AS programmes provide safe, supervised spaces, offering sport, recreation, arts and culture and academic support, as well as developing a love of learning and sense of belonging, delivered by positive adult role models. AS programmes light the fire of passion and direction that so many young people lack and create a new, positive sense of belonging, away from gangs.

While at least R200mill is spent annually on AS programmes by government and donors, there is little evidence of impact in terms of reduced drop-out rates and improved school outcomes. The AS Game Changer aims to work with civil society to align programming and move towards a common set of goals, thus giving Western Cape learners regular and sustained participation in AS activities that contribute towards positive outcomes. Three critical success factors for AS programmes, from the government perspective, are:

- **Self-assessment** – an audit process for government AS projects will be complete by the end of 2016 and AS sites will be required to meet norms and standards.
- **Partnerships and collaboration** – government wants to learn what works, then absorb and scale it. Different types of collaboration are being practised, interdepartmentally, between the province and City of Cape Town and the province and NGOs. Each collaboration is being piloted, to see what works.
- **Minimum dosage** – to impact learners' lives effectively, twice a week should be the minimum attendance at AS programmes. The province will pilot an AS learner passport, for learners to receive stamps and incentives for regular attendance.



## KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN STARTING AN AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMME

### Understanding the community context

- Do we know who the community is before we walk in?
- What mechanisms do we have in place to understand who the community is and what the context is for our programme?
- How does our programme fit into that specific context?
- Who are the key stakeholders in the community?
- What is their mandate and how do they work?
- What do they consider as strategic contextual challenges and opportunities?
- What do they consider as their strengths and challenges?
- Where and how do they need complementary services?
- What is the change they wish to see in their world?
- How do we tap in to the knowledge in the community?

### Understanding the school context

- Who does the school actually belong to?
- How do we make sure that any programme we bring into the school forms part of a collaborative process?
- How do we integrate our programme into the bigger programme of schooling?
- How do we sell the programme to the school?

- How can we motivate overloaded teachers to work with our programme?

### Leading with values

- What are the values of our programme?
- Do we value and enable real human connection?
- Who owns the programme?

### Collaboration

- Who are the different stakeholders and role players that we should be cooperating with and through and in collaboration with?
- What does it really mean to collaborate?
- How do we walk into a space with our programme and acknowledge the people who are supposed to be collaboratively engaged with us in it?
- How can we best coordinate and implement our programme in a coordinated way?

### Practical matters

- How can we most optimally use the variety of spaces available for our programme – schools, community centres, informal environments?
- How do we begin to put staff in the AS space?
- How do we learn from our failures?

*If we're already in a school, running a programme, how do we have a conversation about making sure our programme aligns with what the school is doing?*





## USEFUL ONLINE RESOURCES

To help you learn more about the critical success factors of AS programmes for NGOs and government, here is a short list of free resources that can be accessed online.

1. Rhodes University hosts a South African Numeracy Chair Project, one of the aims of which is to improve the maths performance of primary school learners via after school maths clubs. A useful leaflet about starting such a club can be found here:  
<http://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/sanc/documents/B&W%20-%20How%20to%20start%20a%20club.pdf>
2. The DG Murray Trust's series of learning briefs includes this focus on effective rural AS programmes, with learning equally relevant to urban or peri-urban settings:  
<http://www.dgmt-community.co.za/organisations/anna-foundation/learning-briefs/effective-afterschool-programs-farming-communities>
3. The Wallace Foundation Knowledge Center includes a variety of useful publications presented as a free online resource for the AS space:  
<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/afterschool/Pages/default.aspx>
4. Daniel Browne. 2015. *Growing Together, Learning Together. What Cities have Discovered about Building Afterschool Systems*. New York: The Wallace Foundation:  
<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Pages/Growing-Together-Learning-Together.aspx>
5. ExpandedSchools (previously The After School Corp) has a wealth of resources and practical guidance on collaboration and effective organisation in the AS and expanded school day space:  
<http://expandedschools.org>
6. The California After School Network has a website full of resources for AS programmes and information about relevant issues, including a series of webinars:  
<http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/>
7. A summary from Harvard University of 10 years of evaluation studies to assess the educational potential of AS programmes and identified promising practices:  
<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/08/02/secrets-successful-afterschool-programs>
8. Priscilla M.D. Little, Christopher Wimer, Heather B. Weiss, Harvard Family Research Project. *After School Programs in the 21st Century: Their Potential and What it Takes to Achieve It*. Cambridge: Harvard Family Research Project:  
<http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/afterschool->



[programs-in-the-21st-century-their-potential-and-what-it-takes-to-achieve-it](#)

9. An online professional development workshop on Afterschool Programs - From Vision to Reality, provided by the award-winning Education Department of US public broadcaster, WNET:  
<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/afterschool/>
10. From the American AS advocacy organisation, the Afterschool Alliance:  
[http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Deeper\\_Dive\\_into\\_Afterschool.pdf](http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Deeper_Dive_into_Afterschool.pdf)
11. A rich source of research on the impact on cognitive skills of coaching parents:  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/22/opinion/sunday/to-help-kids-thrive-coach-their-parents.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/22/opinion/sunday/to-help-kids-thrive-coach-their-parents.html?_r=1)
12. Elev8 community schools, an initiative of The Atlantic Philanthropies in the USA, have a strong focus on "out-of-school time". An evaluation of the way this contributes to learners' school experiences can be downloaded from this web page:  
<https://www.researchforaction.org/publications/out-of-school-time-in-elev8-community-schools-a-first-look-at-participation-and-its-unique-contribution-to-students-experiences-in-school/>

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