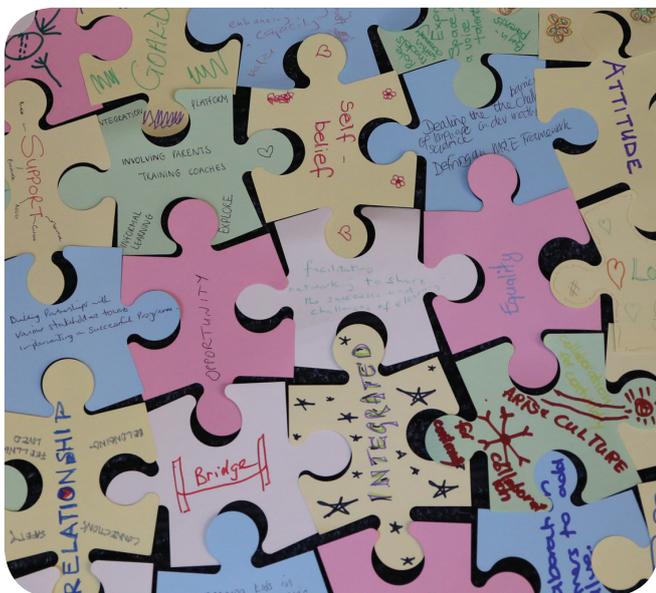**This Learning Brief is part of a series emerging from the After School Game Changer Symposium held on the 16th and 17th of February 2017.**

LEARNING BRIEF 2:
The five pillars of after school programmes

The aim of the After School Game Changer is to have 112 000 learners from poor schools in the Western Cape in quality after school programmes at least twice a week by 2019. After school programmes are conceptualised as being supported by five central pillars. These are academic, sport and recreation, eLearning, arts and culture, and life skills.

Collaboration and partnership are needed to offer a diverse combination of programmes under these pillars in order to address the needs of the whole child. There is a continuum between safety and belonging, self-esteem and confidence, academic performance, and being able to access technological and other opportunities.

ACADEMIC: NOT JUST *WHAT* IS TAUGHT BUT *HOW* IT IS TAUGHT

In partnership with schools, after school programmes need to address some of the deep systemic problems at the foundational levels of literacy and numeracy. There is a lot at stake because at the end of Grade 12, learners are measured on their academic performance.

Find different ways of doing academic support

Different ways of going about academic support need to be considered. It can't just be about giving learners more time doing maths or reading. Academic support needs to be thought about as restorative and developmental. Experienced practitioners emphasise the need for fun and joy in designing academic programmes. For all practitioners we should be thinking about *how* and not just *what* we teach.

Peer tutors can be role models

Several programmes get excellent results through using tutors. One example is Ikamva Youth. These tutors are "near peers", slightly older in years but still relevant for teens. They are role models in that they come from the same communities as the learners and they have proved it is possible to succeed. It is the relationship between learner and tutor that builds the social and emotional skills that learners need, not only to improve academics but to tackle challenges.

The Ikamva Youth (IY) after school academic programme has peer tutors for groups of five learners meeting four times a week. They achieve good results with an 89% matric pass rate. Surveys on IY alumni show that only 12% are not in further education or employment. And when they do reach employment, they have almost closed the racial income gap.

"Studies show that participation in quality after-school programs is a predictor of increased academic performance"

Teach skills for life

Often what learners learn in school is disconnected from the real skills and knowledge they need to survive. Thanda After School Education focuses on how academic skills can be used in real life. They also focus on issues that hinder learners' success in academics.

Build self-esteem

Self-esteem is a big foundational issue that stops learners achieving academically. Learners need to be empowered and shifted away from "a victim mentality." For example, at Thanda attention is given to validating learners' experiences and giving them value. Learners leave their programmes self-confident and with the belief that they are capable of solving problems. Dealing with trauma and abuse is also an important part of this work. Practitioners need to be trained to help learners on an emotional journey of healing.

Get systemic elements in place

In the academic realm the continuum between what is learned at school and what is learned after school is particularly important.

Have a continuum between school and after school

Principals and teachers must be involved in visioning and planning. ExpandedED, operating in New York City, have initiatives where teachers work alongside after school practitioners in planning for the curriculum.

Be sure of the dosage

In order to go to scale, we need to know what the minimum amount of time and quality is needed to give us the academic gains we are looking for. Research suggests this is a minimum of twice a week and ideally five or six hours per week or three times a week.

SPORTS AND RECREATION: INTENTIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL

After school programmes need to provide intentional sport and recreational programming with professional coaches so that learners can follow a path to gain mastery. Especially with sport and recreation there is the need to balance being competitive with the holistic development of the learner.

Design a programme to build mastery

There is the thinking that it takes 10 000 hours of practice to achieve mastery in a particular skill. The age at which programmes start is therefore important. The earlier a learner begins, the closer they can come to mastery. Ideally, learners should be exposed from pre-primary school and have a clear path through school sport and after school programmes, to club sport and all the way up to professional level sport.

Have measurable outcomes for specific time periods

Curriculum design of sport programmes is very important. Clear measurable outcomes of what is to be achieved in specific time frames needs to be identified. These should be written down with a clear strategy in place for getting there.

Consider exposure to different activities vs specific focus

There is a careful balance between demand-based programming and exposure to different sports learners may not know about. This needs to be carefully thought through especially in consideration that world champions come from focused long-term training in one sport.

Consider the holistic development of the player

The sport that the learner is engaged with must also add to their holistic development. Athletes need to know their game as well as get the life skills that come from sport. These include being able to manage failure and play as a team. Where schools focus on the development of the left brain, sports and recreation can help develop the right brain.

Professionalise practitioners

There are lots of advantages to near-peer mentors. One of the weaknesses is that often they don't have the experience or qualifications to support their work. We need to take up this challenge and provide them with training. The After School Game Changer is working on an 18 month training programme for practitioners which will begin to upskill the staff and contribute towards the sector being recognised as a career option.

Coaches should be qualified

This comes at crucial moment with pressure from the industry for all sport coaches to be licensed and registered. This is especially the case if coaches are focused on building mastery and assisting learners to become professional sport people. The Coaching Association of South Africa (CASA) is one of the only institutions to support coaching in South Africa and is meant to play a regulatory role.

Practitioners should be supervised

Practitioners also need appropriate supervision and structure. There need to be established ways for good knowledge transfer amongst practitioners.

Practitioners should have leadership and social skills

The technical aspects of coaching are just one aspect. For quality programming there needs to be sufficient leadership on the ground. People often talk about the need for material resources and equipment but really at the crux of a quality successful sport and recreation programme are inspired coaches who can connect with learners.

eLEARNING: GET STARTED AND KEEP LEARNING

After school programmes are in a unique space to experiment with the different ways technology can support learning and catalyse the learning space. This is critical because without access to new technologies, learners will be unable to build digital skills and will be left behind.

Hold a vision for learning in the next revolution

While still in the "digital revolution," in our time we are also experiencing what is called "the fourth industrial revolution." This is where a range of new technologies blur the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres.

Be in touch with the possibilities of technology

Technology allows us to have teaching and learning transactions which take place unconstrained by space, time, and material conditions. No matter who it is, or where they come from, if they can access eLearning through technology they should be able to soar.

Focus on solving specific problems and evaluate as you go

It is important that technology is not just used for the sake of technology. Technology needs to help to solve specific problems experienced by schools and learners.

Engage all stakeholders at all levels

Engagement with all stakeholders at all levels needs to happen in using technology to solve particular problems. In some cases there are big infrastructural challenges and many teachers are themselves left behind. Teachers need to be aligned to technology in a meaningful way so that it enhances their delivery and passion for a subject and is integrated into their classroom practice.

Keep moving through the learning cycle

Introducing and/or refreshing technological projects into school systems is a process that can be challenging. Mistakes have been made, and many more will be made in order to make progress in eLearning. Programmes can be intentional about ongoing learning with ongoing monitoring, real time feedback and evaluation in place.

How to get started and with what

There is the full continuum of just having technology available to learners without support, all the way to where technology is aligned with the curriculum and teachers are fully on board. Know that wherever you are on the continuum it is still going to be beneficial to learners.

Use tech to build foundational skills

Tracey Butchart of SchoolNet South Africa has described their success in using specific apps at the foundation phase to meet the criteria of the CAPS curriculum. The programme involved extensive teacher development to use the technology.

Record lessons with simple tech like cell phones

Gafieza Ismail, an English Teacher at Spine Road High School, Mitchell's Plain has used eLearning to improve results. She says one way to start is to have the teachers record the lessons as they teach using simple tech like their cell phones. This has multiple benefits in helping the teacher improve delivery, having a resource for learners once the lesson is over, and stimulating recall with colour, audio and video.

Use social media

Social media can provide a space for learners to collaborate and allow teachers to access them outside the class room. Blogs, for example, can build confidence and self-expression.

Look up on the internet

Looking up things on the internet is a form of research and encourages learners to engage with material.

Develop digital office skills

Teaching basic office skills after school is also a good place to start in computer literacy and the improvement of presentation skills.

ARTS AND CULTURE: SHOW VALUE IN AND AFTER SCHOOL

The after school pillar of arts and culture carries a diverse spectrum of activities which learners need exposure to. With this exposure learners develop their creativity, learn to express themselves and their culture, and find new ways of seeing and imagining. Music, dance, drama and the visual arts all offer opportunities for this. A further benefit is that often the arts provide a platform for building social cohesion and dialogue. Note that these benefits come in addition to gaining mastery of a particular skill.

Increase the value of arts and culture

A big challenge with the pillar of arts and culture is that it is not sufficiently valued by schools, by learners, and especially by parents. Some things that have worked to increase the value of arts and culture are:

Role models

Role models from the community who have succeeded in a particular art can inspire community members as to what is possible.

Status

Prizes and trophies can be status symbols for learners in their communities. Finding ways to offer learners professional opportunities can also help increase the value of arts activities.

Quantifiable skills

A curriculum where learners get credits recognised in the industry can help stakeholders to see that there is a path for learners who participate.

Resourced environment

Environments where there are exhibitions, equipment and regular productions create a culture of engaging with the arts.

Create pathways from ECD to high school

There are real concerns around the time arts and culture takes from the curriculum but in fact, learners are supposed to be doing creative arts.

Yvette Hardie from Assitej talks about the Kick Starter project which is both an in- and after- school programme. The programme empowers teachers and facilitators to offer after school activities and works with them over two years to make schools cultural hubs. The result is that many teachers are interested in creative arts and use it in their other subjects. They have also found school attendance and attendance at after school programmes improved.

LIFE SKILLS: START WITH POSITIVE BELIEFS AND BELONGING

Practitioners from the pillars of academic support, sport and recreation, arts and culture and e-Learning all emphasise that in addition to improved academic results and the benefits of mastery of a particular sport or art, participation ultimately builds life skills. Life skills are also linked to improved academic performance. After school programmes need to unpack what life skills actually are, how they get measured and then be intentional about including them in programme designs.

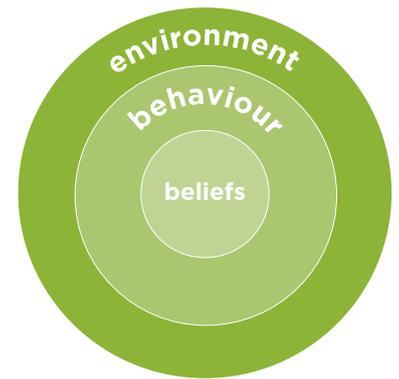## How to know someone has life skills

Practitioners identified some of the following as indicating that a learner has life skills:

- The learner is aware of their strengths and development areas and accepts himself or herself as enough

- The learner has an internal locus of control and is able to make use of the opportunities available

- The learner recognises that he or she is an agent who can contribute to society and that success is not "just having a nice car"

- The learner has the confidence and skills to navigate their life and particular circumstances

Hold positive beliefs about self

Charnre de Mink of Action Volunteers Africa talks about belief as an important starting point for learning life skills. Many learners grow up traumatised, stuck in survival mode, making it difficult for them to engage with the learning offered to them in after school programmes.

For example, a learner who may have been neglected by his parents develops defensive behaviour around this and the belief that "I am not good enough". Such is the power of belief that the learner who holds it, looks for evidence to prove it is true and behaves in ways that affirm the very same belief. It is difficult to be a success while holding negative beliefs about the self. The real work of life skills is therefore in the space of belief. Life skills programmes need to help learners let go of limiting beliefs, change their behaviour and only then will their environment start to shift.

Create safety, belonging and love

Academic learning happens in the sophisticated neo-cortex of our brain. Gavin Keller, principal of Sun Valley, emphasises however that the neo-cortex can only be engaged when the emotional brain is also engaged. For the emotional brain to engage, a feeling of safety and belonging is needed. This means after school programmes, particularly those offering life skills, need to first and foremost be places of safety, belonging and love for learners. This has implications for life skills practitioners who should stay constant within programmes.

Support life skills practitioners to have their own journey

Many life skills practitioners come from the same environments as the learners they are working with. Many of them are themselves just out of grade 12, they have never had a job and they need to gain the life skills just as much as learners do. It is important that after school programmes find ways to protect and care for these practitioners and hold a space for them to go on their own journey.

Conclusion

Organisations offering after school programmes need to consider all five of the pillars in the design of their programmes. Programmes should also be designed with clear pathways from early childhood right through to professional level so that learners can gain mastery.

Developing life skills as part of academic, sports, e-Learning and arts and culture is an important benefit, and programmes should be intentional and find ways to measure this. For all programmes, of key value for learners is the experience of coming to a place of safety, consistency and belonging. Also, for all programmes the leadership role of the practitioner is critical in yielding the benefits of after school programmes for learners.