LEARNING BRIEF: Strengthening the Relationship Between Schools and NGOs to Enable Successful After School Programmes

This Learning Brief has been produced by The Learning Trust, in partnership with the Western Cape Government, as a resource for the After School Programme community in the Western Cape (civil society, government and schools). It is the fifth in a series of Learning Briefs, each amplifying learning emerging from the Western Cape After School Community of Practice events held in 2016/7.

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 support the coordination of the After School sector in South Africa. It has been appointed as the Western Cape Government’s partner in facilitating this, by building a community of NGO stakeholders interested in collaborating to grow the sector in the Western Cape.

THE AFTER SCHOOL GAME CHANGER

The After School Game Changer initiative was launched by the Western Cape Government in 2015, to strengthen After School Programmes 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, a sense of belonging and positive role models, all of which the province aims to enable through its game changers. The target is 112 00 learners in regular and consistent programmes by 2019 (20% of learners in no- and low-fee schools). The Western Cape Government aims to achieve this by working with all the stakeholders in the sector either directly or via partnerships.
THE 2nd AS CoP MEETING 2017

The overarching theme for the 2017 CoP meetings, following the three held in 2016 as well as the After School (AS) Symposium in February 2017, has been to focus on the importance of key stakeholders (NGOs, schools, communities and government) working together better to develop a level of quality in the AS environment. The first AS Community of Practice (CoP) meeting of 2017 hoped to create a space in which NGOs and government could connect and share, with the aim of strengthening their relationship. The second CoP meeting, held on 3 August at the Isivivana Centre in Khayelitsha, connected 46 NGOs with school and district representatives with the aim of facilitating an open dialogue. An interactive space was created, one in which the connectivity, energy and positivity was palpable, with many first-time attendees adding a renewed sense of enthusiasm. Gaining a better understanding of the wants, needs and offerings available brings an improved overall awareness, ultimately leading to more successful AS spaces, and stronger, more productive relationships.

In her opening, Gabeba Gaidien, CoP facilitator on the day, used the inspirational story of South African athletic Olympic champion Wayde van Niekerk and his mother Odessa Swarts, to highlight the critical role a support system plays in helping a victor succeed: the level of achievement is only as good as the belief and encouragement behind it. When celebrating successes, it is important to acknowledge the people behind them, because without those key players, achievement is likely not to exist, much less be as sweet. This acted as a reminder to all present that without their nurturing, support and dedication, successes in the AS space wouldn’t be possible.

“A person can only lead when accepted as a leader and has only as much authority as granted by their subjects. All of the brilliant ideas in the world cannot save a leader’s kingdom if nobody is willing to listen.” – Brandon Saunders

There is great value in two-way listening, especially when it comes to forging and strengthening relationships between NGOs and schools. If a relationship is to succeed, all involved parties need to hone their listening abilities. A point that emerged following the first CoP session of 2017 was how important it is to create a safe space in which people feel comfortable enough to voice their opinions.

“NGOs and schools can learn from each other and it’s through discussion and listening that the best approaches can be taken to achieve optimal results.” - Gabeba Gaidien, Programme Manager at The Learning Trust

A PRINCIPAL’S PERSPECTIVE

A video clip featuring two principals, Mr Thenunis from De Rust Futura Akademie in Grabouw and Mrs Baker from Soneike High School in Kuilsrivier, helped to convey the voice of school leadership and its thoughts on the interactions between NGOs and schools.

The following questions were posed to both principals:
• Do you work with NGOs in running your school programme? If so, what makes this relationship work?
• What are examples of the types of challenges you face as a principal when it comes to AS Programmes?
• What advice can you give to NGOs working in or with schools, or those wishing to do so?

The following points emerged:
• One of the main foundations for a successful school-NGO partnership is the NGO doing what the school needs as opposed to doing what it wants to do.
• Relevant assistance is key and this can be achieved through discussions with the principal and educators.
• In order to determine the above, it is vital that the NGO look closely at the context in which the school is found, as well as its content/makeup to determine the best way forward with a suitable programme.
• NGOs need to use their skills and resources to address the needs of learners within their specific context.
• Transport is a massive challenge as a result of the locations of schools, as is safety. Learners are often at risk when returning home from an AS Programme late in the day.
• Another challenge is getting educators involved in the programmes as they are required to stay after regular school hours.
• The more stakeholders who buy in to the AS Programme, the more likely teachers are to follow suit (a “buy-in concept”).
• Teachers need to see the AS space as an extended school day and the benefit of a programme to learners in terms of their overall performance.
FEEDBACK FROM THE MANYANO NETWORK’S SITE COORDINATOR CASE STUDY (IN PROGRESS)

Speaking to a number of the points raised by the principals in the video clip, Dr Bruce Damons, Director at the Centre of Community Schools at Nelson Mandela University, unpacked the Site Coordinator Model and how it is adding value to the Manyano Network’s AS space.

NOTE: Recognising the roles and responsibilities of teachers and administrators (see the Public Administration Measures section below), the site coordinator model seeks to support those schools which wish to run AS programmes but lack the resources to do so. This ‘coordination solution’ aims to make it easier for schools to leverage the helpful assistance of appropriate NGOs. The intention is that the NGO is guided and held accountable by the school in making an additional range of support available to learners, and that there is linkage between what happens in and out of school.

How is the Manyano Network implementing the Site Coordinator Model?
The Network is recruiting an unemployed community member and paying them a stipend to assist each school in coordinating AS and in-school Programmes that are operational on school premises. The Site Coordinators act as a critical extra resource to the school principal.

How did it come about?
Through ongoing interaction and engagement with the 14 schools, the need for an intermediary emerged. Principals in particular voiced their struggle with feeling overburdened with work and the challenge this posed when it came to supporting school programmes adequately. Centralising all programmes around one person who would then act as the link between the school and programmes and be a critical support agent to the school principal, was offered as a solution.

Have there been positive results to date?
The model creates a direct link between the community and the school with the Site Coordinator, bringing the voice of the community to the various programmes while providing a valuable additional resource to the principal. Principals report that this helps them facilitate the proper integration of the AS and in-school Programmes.

How can this kind of model add value to a school?
Although it is early days, the model is proving effective, particularly with helping school leadership to alleviate that “overloaded” feeling. When communities take charge of the process, it can open the space for the additional, complementary support principals and educators desperately need.

Ironically, many principals are apprehensive about introducing projects such as this one that can support and complement other academic projects because they fear feeling further overloaded.

Can this model help strengthen the relationship between school and NGO?
The Manyano Site Coordinator is essentially the “middle man” between the school and NGO and a critical resource to the principal, therefore facilitating more fluid lines of communication and coordination of activities. The Coordinator is helping the NGOs involved better understand the context (i.e. the community) in which the school is found by providing “insider information” that will enhance any programmes NGOs wish to introduce. Ultimately, the Site Coordinator would be an invaluable resource link between the school and NGO.

Parting words:
NGOs should not just walk into school spaces expecting them to adopt their programme. Conversations need to be had about the value a potential programme can have in supporting the teaching and learning within a school. By involving the school and community in the process beforehand, the NGO can better understand the best way a programme can be weaved into the daily operations of the school, thereby enhancing its effectiveness.
AN NGO’S PERSPECTIVE

Following the voices of the principals, a panel of two NGO representatives were interviewed on their experiences in working with schools. The value they bring to schools was highlighted, as well as some of the challenges they face and their advice to fellow NGOs.

AMANDLA DEVELOPMENT

Amandla Development is a Registered NPO working in the Philippi area. Amandla implements direct programmes in 12 schools running a Resource Access Programme through mentors linking learners in Philippi to available services, as well working through partners to break down barriers affecting the safe and sound progression of children in Philippi along their journey from “cradle to career”.

Speaker: Taona Tsopo, Programmes Manager

Many learners end up dropping out of school due to their circumstances which destroys their confidence. The value of Amandla’s programme lies in its ability to restore confidence by connecting learners, through relevant knowledge sessions, to the resources they need to complete their schooling.

Delayed implementation of the programme has been a challenge, with the solution being to create a panel (teachers, principal and NGO members) to ensure a comprehensive programme is created and then implemented on time, as the success of the programme depends on this.

Amandla believes that NGOs should allow the school and principal to lead the way when it comes to development of a programme. Ultimately the entry process is critical for buy-in by school leadership (prescribed programmes are likely not to be well received).

Visit: www.amandladevelopment.org

JUST GRACE

Just Grace is an NPC working with the Langa community to create innovative and sustainable solutions. It currently runs an After School Education Programme which works with all four high schools in Langa to provide tutoring, career guidance and mentorship.

Speaker: Grant Edmond, Director

Just Grace aims to identify the needs of learners and the best ways to serve those to ensure continued development. A holistic programme tailored to the needs of learners is designed to alleviate the challenges they experience. Resources such as tutoring, mentoring and career guidance are provided to help learners take responsibility for their own development. The ultimate goal is to create motivated, driven and passionate learners who let nothing stand in the way of their success.

“It can be hugely beneficial to observe other NGOs and how they’re being effective to see if any of the same approaches can be implemented by us.” -Grant Edmond, Just Grace Director

One of the challenges Just Grace encountered was full programme attendance by Grade 12 learners being disrupted by extra offerings presented by teachers. The solution here was to improve the lines of communication with teachers so that if for example, extra classes were going to be taking learners away from the programme, NGO members could then adapt in advance to ensure that learners didn’t miss out.
Lastly, measuring success is an important part of the process for both NGOs and schools. The NGO representatives were asked about the measuring tools in place. Their answers are summarised below:

- **Interviews** with learners used as information-gathering exercises;
- **Academic results** examined to measure success of tutoring;
- Looking at **how many learners** have gone on to **further their education** or have become **gainfully employed** following completion of the programme.

Members were then asked to reflect in groups what has worked for them in terms of their relationships with schools. The emphasis here was to focus on the **positives**.

**The following main points were noted across the board:**

- **Regular meetings/discussions** and **continuous communication** with the school and parents, i.e.: creating WhatsApp groups to keep all informed. This builds **trust** and belief in the power of the programme.
- **Monthly reporting** so that everyone is on the same page – **consistency and transparency** is key to success.
- Forming **meaningful partnerships** with other organisations in the area and **collaborating** with other NGOs.
- **Maintaining clear visibility** and a recognisable presence within schools and communities.
- **Linking** what happens **in school** with After School Programmes.
- Having a reliable contact or “**champion teacher**” helps to strengthen overall buy-in, a vital part of the process.
- Programmes need to **complement schools** in order to work effectively (needs analysis forms the foundation of a successful programme).
- A **willingness to adapt programmes** in line with the **needs** of a school, as well as its context.
- Having a **thorough understanding** of the school’s procedures and protocols.
- **Clear deliverables** from the onset.
- The presence of a **site coordinator** or “middle man”, preferably someone **from** the community.
- Ensuring staff have a **comprehensive understanding** of the programme and how it works (can be done through workshops).
- **Empowerment** of principal and teachers promotes **agency and ownership**.

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Just Grace advises that a **specific person** should manage the programme on behalf of the NGO – having a single point of reference for both NGO and the school allows for a **smoother-run** programme. Furthermore, a **huge burden is also removed** from school leadership when there is a specific person in charge and managing the project.

Visit: [www.justgrace.co.za](http://www.justgrace.co.za)  [www.facebook.com/justgraceducation](http://www.facebook.com/justgraceducation)  [www.linkedin.com/company/just-grace-education](http://www.linkedin.com/company/just-grace-education)

“The principal and staff are so overwhelmed by broader social issues that they don’t have energy or the capacity to manage the AS space. They need to find champions to engage in the AS arena and manage it so that learners and school leadership can both benefit.” – Comment from the floor following panel discussion

“It can be hugely beneficial to observe other NGOs and how they’re being effective to see if any of the same approaches can be implemented by us.”
A DISTRICT OFFICIAL’S PERSPECTIVE

Two senior district officials relayed their views and thoughts regarding the AS space, as well as touching on the key building blocks for a successful relationship between NGOs and schools.

“The principal and government body need to work together in order for an NGO to operate successfully within the school environment.” - Redewan Larney

REDEWAN LARNEY - CHIEF EDUCATION SPECIALIST: DISTRICTS

Larney brings a strong background in all aspects of strategic and education management, policy development, interpretation and quality promotion in the education and training field. In his current role he is responsible for managing the quality of education and education institutions across Western Cape districts, as well as research, district business planning and strategy processes at the District level. He also plays a key role in providing communication and interface management services at District level. His past experience in various educational leadership positions allows him to bring a unique insight to his current role as Chief Education Specialist of Western Cape Districts.

The main points taken from Larney’s presentation are summarised below:

Effective Management
The success of every school depends on the way it is managed and governed. The need for the efficient management of schools has placed much more emphasis on the nature and quality of the work of the head as the leader of a team of professional educators. The principal therefore needs to gain a clear understanding of all the forces and factors which contribute towards the effective governance of the school.

School capacity challenges
Good principals and governors have clearly defined roles and display a level of cooperation. When it comes to governance, there are multiple dynamics at play within the school space (for example: principal-led governing bodies, chairperson-led governing bodies or teachers who want to dominate the governing body and are quick to withhold participation). It helps for NGOs to acknowledge these dynamics before entering the school space so that they can be dealt with effectively.

SA Schools Act
Main aims relevant to the AS sector are as follows:

- Provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners;
- Uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators; and
- Promote their acceptance of responsibility for the organisation, governance and funding of schools in partnership with the State.

Essentially the SA Schools Act maps out how a school should be managed and what the standard of education should be. This is helpful in acting as a guide for the AS space.

PAM (Public Administration Measures)
The PAM sets out the roles and responsibilities of teachers and principals. Understanding these roles is key to the success of ASP. In essence, teachers and principals are legally obliged to assist or organise extra-curricular activities, and to play an active role in promoting and running them. As an example: The aim of the job of a Departmental Head, among other things, as stipulated in the PAM, is “to organise relevant/related extra-curricular activities...”, while the Deputy Principal is responsible for assisting “the principal to play an active role in promoting extra and co-curricular activities in school...”

The role of the teacher is defined by the PAM as such:

- To assist the departmental head to identify aspects which require special attention and to assist in addressing them;
- To cater for the educational and general welfare of all learners in his/her care;
- To assist the principal in overseeing learner counselling and guidance, careers, discipline and the general welfare of all learners;
- To collaborate with educators of other schools in organising and conducting extra and co-curricular activities; and
- To maintain contact with sporting, social, cultural and community organisations.
Is there an existing guide to deal with incidents in the After School Space?

According to the Circular 0046/2013 Guidelines on Management of School Excursions*, school activities can be divided into three categories:

- **Category 1 activities**: Standard curricular and co-curricular activities;
- **Category 2 activities**: Parallel, but voluntary, enrichment activities; and
- **Category 3 activities**: Tours, camps and excursions

Because excursions fall within the context of the definition of a “school activity”, the same standard of conduct that is required by the school's code of conduct, as well as the obligation to report learner or educator misconduct or child abuse, applies equally and throughout any tour, camp or excursion, in the same manner as it would in the school context. **Essentially, the same rules and processes that are applied to the regular school space and activities, can also be applied to the AS space.**

According to Section 16A of SASA*, one of the main roles of the principal is the implementation of all the educational programmes and curriculum activities. **By inference, this would extend to the AS space too.**

**In conclusion:** NGOs face a number of challenges in the school space (including negation of their authority, cultural alienation, withholding of reports and more), but through building a strong relationship with the circuit manager as well as the principal, many issues can be overcome. **Collaboration and cooperation involving all parties is key to the success of an AS Programme.**

*These documents are available in full from the WCED.

**GOING FORWARD: THREE YEAR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

- As of 2019 there will be a three year plan with an annual update designed to fit in with the new SGB cycle. The plan for 2018 will thus be the last time the narrative will apply to one year only.
- For the three year cycle of 2018 – 2020, the general narrative will be transferred (electronically) from one year to the next but available/open for refresh. The carry-over will apply to the plan only.
IMPORTANT DATES: Schools are required to send in their School Improvement Plans for review and approval in line with the following dates:

• Schools draft SIP and sign off – 30 September 2017
• Schools conclude 2018 SIPs – 14 February 2018
• 2018 SIP sign-off: Circuit managers and principals – 28 February 2018

NGOs are encouraged to engage the schools that they work with to commit to After School as a priority area in these improvement plans.

SECOND REPRESENTATIVE

RUSCHDA O’SHEA – PRINCIPAL OF TAFELSIG HIGH, MITCHELLS PLAIN

O’Shea began teaching in 1995 and has held various positions across Western Cape schools, including Head of Department at Fezeka High School (Gugulethu) and Deputy Principal of Crystal High (Hanover Park). She was appointed principal of Tafelsig High in 2010 and has been seconded to the Metro South Education District to coordinate the After School Game Changer. In June 2016, O’Shea obtained her Post Graduate Diploma in Management Practice from UCT.

“I am a firm believer that school is not only about languages, science and maths, but it’s about offering learners various opportunities to find their talents and passions. Ultimately it’s about making our learners well rounded individuals who will become productive citizens.” -Ruschda O’Shea

In her introduction, O’Shea spoke about how on her first day as principal at Tafelsig High, she watched as learners simply walked past the gates of the school instead of heading inside. She realised that if things were going to improve, changes were going to have to be made, changes that would encourage learners to attend school.

She believes it all stands with the principal. It is up to the principal to be the “champion” and to inspire others within the school environment. However, this is easier said than done. The nature of the communities in which so many schools are operating, coupled with school leadership feeling tired and bogged down, makes it tough to find the eagerness and enthusiasm required to help learners excel and make the school space a prosperous one. However, finding that strength and passion to inspire others is paramount.

TURNING THINGS AROUND

In 2010 the pass rate at Tafelsig High was 52% with only three sport codes. By 2016, the pass rate had increased to 93.6%, the sport codes to 10 and various life skill programmes were successfully in place.

Her focus then shifted to how schools and NGOs can improve their relationship. Three main points emerged:

• **Discussion leads to quality programmes:** NGOs should not come with a prescribed programme but rather a willingness to listen to the school and principal and their needs. The school has to identify with the programme and this can really only be achieved once the NGO fully understands the makeup of the school and its needs – this is achieved through clear communication.

• **Come prepared:** An excellent way to build trust right off the bat is to outline what your NGO can offer, where you have worked before and how you succeeded in the past. A school is more likely to embrace you if you have a proven track record of success.

• **Embrace those in the community:** Offer the right support to the staff and school in the form of a community volunteer. Not only will they bring necessary knowledge of the community, but they can also help alleviate a lot of the pressure felt by staff by taking a portion of their workload off their plate.

“**There are gems in the community. I encourage NGOs to find them and work with them to assist in schools. It’s in this way that AS Programmes can be most effective.”** -O’Shea

O’Shea’s parting advice to NGOs is to speak up more and make themselves known. So many schools are not aware of the valuable resources available or where they can be found. By NGOs creating more awareness and making themselves more visible, more schools can start to benefit from the support and expertise of relevant NGOs.
POINTS MADE DURING THE Q&A SESSION FOLLOWING THE PRESENTATIONS:

Jacqui Boulle, Chief Director/Programme Manager of the provincial After School Game Changer, explained that the role of the AS Game Changer is to act as an “umbrella” that sits above the AS space. The AS Game Changer essentially provides a crucial network for the educational environment. Its value is fivefold:

- Through careful mapping and information sharing, it looks to ensure all stakeholders know what is going on within the space;
- Developing a set of norms and standards that help determine what a quality AS Programme looks like;
- Upskilling of practitioners in an attempt to create a more professionalised sector;
- Assisting with data and systems to monitor the impact of programmes; and
- To spot the gaps and birth new initiatives to help fill them.

“School staff are over extended so it’s the perfect place in which NGOs can establish themselves and cultivate a meaningful relationship. This can only help with overall performance of both learners and staff.” - Jacqui Boulle

“What is the best way to engage someone (i.e. a principal) who is disengaged?”

Larney explained how discussing the leadership of a school can be a difficult subject but it’s important for an NGO to speak to other NGOs who have previously worked at the school and if none, to get in touch with the WCED District Office beforehand to find out more about the challenges a specific school faces. Ultimately the success of the AS space depends greatly on the attitude of the principal and the structures in place, so it helps to go in there armed with knowledge from the get-go. The reality is that sometimes an NGO will get to a point where it has to acknowledge the fact that it’s wasting its time and perhaps the time isn’t right for that particular school.

O’Shea advised to go in there with the right approach: show that you understand that the principal is extremely busy and suggest another person (one who is enthusiastic) spearhead the AS Programme together with the NGO. Show your intention to support them and provide them with the space they need to stand back and look at the bigger picture.

“The attitude of a principal has a ripple effect on staff and the greater the community - a passionate leader will inspire others. However, in the current school climate, many principals are disillusioned and this is where NGOs can prove to be a great support.” - O’Shea

In closing, a challenge was extended to all: take the energy and enthusiasm of this CoP session and use it to continue the dialogue within the community.

MAIN TAKEAWAY POINTS FROM THE CoP FOR IMPROVING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NGOs AND SCHOOLS:

- NGOs need to approach schools in the right way and remember to look at the community as a whole.
- AS Programmes need to embody the context (community) in which a school is found.
- NGOs need to work with WCED through its Districts.
- NGOs need to be clear from the start what they can offer a school and how they can support both staff and learners.
- The role unemployed (young) community members (Site Coordinator) can play within the educational space can be crucial to the success of an AS Programme.
- NGOs need to talk more to one another and share knowledge, challenges and experiences.
- NGOs can greatly empower school leadership by providing much-needed support.
**UPDATE ON THE EDU COLLABORATE PORTAL**
This sharing platform is almost up and running, and once it is, it will hopefully prove to be an invaluable resource for NGOs and schools. The goal is for it to be as user-friendly as possible and for it to be the foremost centre of engagement/information sharing from which all parties benefit. It will map a diverse range of NGOs and all their relevant details, such as where they are based, the schools they’re operating in, what they offer and more.
An easy-to-use search function will make it simple to find the required information. NGOs will be responsible for inputting and maintaining their information, which will have to be kept up-to-date for the portal to be fully effective.

**UPDATE ON PEER REVIEW PILOT 2017**
The journey began with the following question:
Could a peer review or learning process be useful for the After School sector and what could it look like?
The ASGC and TLT have partnered together to develop a process and tool with the aim of providing a way for NGOs to review and strengthen their programs in the light of developing standards of quality and shared learnings in the sector. This process is further hoped to highlight overall innovation in the sector as well as areas where capacity building efforts can be focused.
The first two pilots saw implementation with one organisation first with a panel of peers, and then with a group of facilitators. The third round saw a focus group of six NGOs giving feedback on the tool and process.
WHAT NOW? The tool is currently being re-worked to simplify and take into account contextual nuances. The capacity support and needs assessments provided in the sector are also being mapped.
All feedback is most welcome and if you’re keen to participate in a peer review contact debbie@thelearningtrust.org

THANK YOU FOR PARTNERING WITH US!
A very big thank you to the following people for participating in and contributing to the COP:
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Mrs Baker – Principal at Soneike High School, Kuilsrivier
Mr Abrahams - Principal at Phoenix Secondary School
Ms Little - Principal at Vista High School
Dr Bruce Damons - Director at the Centre of Community Schools
Taona Tsopo – Programmes Manager at Amandla Development
Grant Edmond – Director at Just Grace
Redewan Larney – Chief Education Specialist: Districts
Ruschda O’Shea – Principal of Tafelsig High, Mitchells Plain
Jacqui Boulle – Chief Director/ Programme Manager of the provincial After School Game Changer
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We are grateful to all the representatives of the following organisations who participated in the second After School Community of Practice meeting of 2017: