

# The Western Cape After School Community of Practice

*A game changing initiative of the Western Cape Government  
in partnership with The Learning Trust*

## LEARNING BRIEF No.3: Understanding Quality in the After School Sector

December 2016





**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 third in a series of three Learning Briefs, each amplifying learning emerging from the Western Cape After School Community of Practice events in 2016.

*“I think we’ve got this amazing opportunity as we bring people together in this Community of Practice to really share our learning, share our purpose, reinforce each other. These are tough things we’re doing, we really need to support each other. I believe we’re building a movement for the After School sector that will involve government, civil society and donors.”*  
– Christine Downton, The Learning Trust

## 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, a sense of 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. It 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.



## THE THIRD AFTER SCHOOL COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE MEETING

The first two After School (AS) Community of Practice (CoP) meetings considered critical success factors and barriers to success for AS programming. The third CoP meeting, held at the Amy Biehl Foundation on 12 October 2016, took this further by providing an opportunity for civil society and government representatives to unpack and share their understanding of quality in AS programmes, and how to enable and maintain it.

The quality factor of AS programming emerged as a common thread in the first two CoP meetings. As highlighted in her introduction to this meeting by **Gabeba Gaidien** of The Learning Trust, acknowledged key factors of AS programme quality include:

- Learner-centred programming;
- Community and parent engagement and involvement;
- Prioritising partnership and sharing common values with schools;
- Accountability; and
- Clear programme values.

As a key determinant of creating an enabling environment and influencing successful learner outcomes, quality needs to be considered and incorporated into the following:

- Definitions of the AS social opportunity and challenge;
- Design of AS models;
- Implementation methodology; and
- Monitoring & evaluation methodology.

Then, some critical questions for AS programmes to ask are:

- What do we understand by quality?
- How do we measure it?
- How do we use it to engage funders?
- How do we engage learners and what does quality mean to them?

In both formal and informal AS processes (such as children organising their own games), the answer to the latter question may be about having fun. Equally, without understanding the rules of the game, teamwork, support systems and resources, the quality of children's experience would be much less.

In order to open up understanding of quality in the AS sector, a panel of four expert speakers, introduced by **Dylan Wray** from Shikaya, were invited to share different perspectives on AS quality, as stimulus for reflection and discussion throughout the meeting.



## THE CoP PANEL

**Siviwe Dlukwana** founded Ikamva Labantwana, a non-profit tutoring project working with primary school children in Crossroads, in 2012. Then a student at the University of the Western Cape, he was motivated by the need to prevent learners in his community from being lured into criminal activities and to support them to overcome challenges at school.

**Christine Downton** is founder and Chairperson of The Learning Trust. A philanthropist with a distinguished career in international banking, Christine honed her understanding of quality in education during 18 years as a board member of a large international funder.

**Zaid Philander** is Art Outreach Manager for the Butterfly Art Project. A designer and social entrepreneur, Zaid was chosen by the *Mail & Guardian* as one of its 200 young South Africans to follow in 2015.

**Nic Spaull** is one of South Africa's leading educational researchers, whose work focuses on education access and quality. Nic is a Research Fellow at Research on Socio-Economic Policy (ReSEP) at the University of Stellenbosch and earlier this year was awarded a fellowship by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

### 1. The view from academia

**Nic Spaull** offered four lessons on quality for the sector from a research perspective:

1. **Focus on the Foundation Phase:** More than 58% of learners are not able to read in any language by Grade 4 and, by Grade 9, 75% of children do not have basic skills in science and maths. With such poor outcomes in this extremely unequal schooling system, it is critical to start early.
2. **Integrate AS efforts into the classroom:** As the school system is where the majority of government time and money is allocated, this is an effective strategy and indicator of quality.
3. **Evaluate:** AS programmes need to be able to demonstrate that they are doing great work, particularly if wanting to scale their approach.
4. **Take note of the context:** While the "Fees Must Fall" discussion has highlighted the issue of affordable access to university, the data shows that only 12% of learners make it to university and only 6% achieve a qualification. With 80% of children attending dysfunctional schools, quality AS programmes can support



them to improve academic skills, soft skills, and access to opportunity.

## 2. The view from the ground

The real experiences of AS programmes were exemplified by the Butterfly Arts Project and Ikamva Labantwana, introduced, respectively, by **Zaid Philander** and **Siviwe Dlukwana**. (See *Case Studies 1 and 2*.) As demonstrated by Zaid and Siviwe, some aspects of quality programming are universal, while others are unique to particular types of AS programmes. In a context where the education system is not working, AS opportunities provide space for children from poorer locations to tap into their potential, by providing key programmes that advance academic skills, creativity, life skills and resilience. The contributions highlighted the importance of developing metrics for quality, so that it can be measured.

## 3. The donor perspective

Unpacked by **Christine Downton**, key indicators of quality that donors look for and recognise, no matter what level the funding or scale of activities, include:

- **Purpose**.
- **Passion and commitment** of the people involved in the programme.
- **Flexibility**.
- A sense of **responsibility** for the beneficiaries.
- **A long view** – building something that will last.
- A quality of **respect** for beneficiaries, colleagues, other stakeholders.
- **Programme values** aligned with those of beneficiaries.

### CASE STUDY 1: IKAMVA LABANTWANA

Quality aspects of Ikamva Labantwana's work include a low tutor to learner ratio and insisting on attendance every day after school and at weekends. A tutoring guide has been developed, to assist tutors to zone into the challenges of learners, who otherwise receive no homework or support.

Baseline assessments are administered, to measure learners' knowledge and help focus on their particular challenges. To ensure further programme quality, everyone involved signs an expectation document, emphasising commitment and regular attendance. The project has high expectations for learners, motivating them to commit, believe, to be inspired and achieve significantly better results than the 30-40% norm in township schools: they are encouraged to understand that they are capable of achieving more than 65%, from primary school onwards. Relationships are built with high-performing high schools in Cape Town, to ensure that learners have opportunities ultimately to reach university and succeed in life. A measure of quality having been realised, is a high learner attendance rate (92%), as well as more than 25 learners having been placed successfully in impact high schools.



- **Research** - accessing research developed in South Africa to inform programme development and including research as part of ongoing implementation.
- **Reflection** – how is the programme working? How can we check it against what is happening in the world, to show our work is effective?
- Constant **monitoring, learning, evaluating** what we are doing.

All of the above factors will work only if AS programmers commit to being well informed about programme effectiveness and fidelity, and implementing it with the skills and competencies needed to turn passion into impact.

### CASE STUDY 2: BUTTERFLY ART PROJECT

The Butterfly Art Project works in eight communities in Vrygrond, teaching a South African arts-based curriculum during school hours and after hours. 450 learners a week are reached, with 220 on the AS programme. The project identified the quality challenge of teachers not being able to focus on individual children in a large classroom. It therefore works with groups of no more than 10 children at a time. It also has clear objectives: as well as offering learners opportunities to increase their artistic skills, the objectives include strengthening resilience and, most importantly, helping to develop effective citizens. As a critical aspect of quality, the project focuses on building a strong relationship with each child.

*“What makes a quality arts programme is being able to be really dynamic and adaptable in any situation.” – Zaid Philander*

*“Quality is about forming good relationships with teachers and ensuring that what we’re doing in the AS space aligns with what’s happening in the classroom and can help to fix classroom deficits.”*

*– Dylan Wray, Shikaya*

### Western Cape Safety Hotline for Schools and Programmes

A hotline is now available for schools and AS programmes to use to report safety issues. As it is currently open only during school hours, AS programmes are encouraged to use the service, to ensure that it is extended to after hours.

**0800 45 46 47**



## TOP TIPS FOR IMPROVING AS PROGRAMME QUALITY, EMERGING FROM THE CoP MEETING

- Build strong relationships between the AS space and school space: engage principals, teachers and premises staff.
  - Work with small groups of learners.
- Make the programme engaging and relevant and applicable for learners: link what happens in the AS space to what happens in the classroom.
- Emphasise commitment and high expectations as important values for children.
  - Show respect for beneficiaries.
    - Offer programmes for boys and girls equally, to ensure gender balance and inclusivity.
- Give learners useful techniques and support them to develop resilience.
- Collaborate with other organisations, programmes and stakeholders, to increase the variety of opportunities offered to learners.
  - Increase accessibility for learners, including making both the site and the journey to and from the site, accessible.
- Highlight the importance of, and improve safety at, the AS programme site.
- Train and incentivise practitioners regularly, support them to be adaptable to the implementing context.
  - Ensure legal and policy frameworks inform the programme and a child protection policy is implemented.
- Demonstrate passion and commitment, to donors and other stakeholders.
  - Implement and learn from a beneficiary feedback system.
  - Create a theory of change, to clarify what the programme aims to do, how and why.
- Review and reflect regularly on programme progress and, if necessary, revise.
  - Develop tools to measure quality, e.g. baseline tests, attendance registers.



## THE VIEW FROM PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

**Jacqui Boulle**, programme manager of the provincial After School Game Changer, introduced the Western Cape MOD Audit Tool as a framework for measuring AS programme quality.

The Western Cape Government has been auditing all AS activities it supports directly, including MOD centres, AS centres, and activities in the Departments of Education, Social Development and Cultural Affairs. An audit tool has been developed to measure quality, built around five pillars of quality AS programming:

1. **Intentional programme design** focused on building learner confidence, skills and mastery.
2. **Sound programme management** with systems to support programming and monitor delivery and impact.
3. **Quality staff** with the requisite training and skills.
4. Physically and psychologically **safe and supportive environments**.
5. **Family, school and community engagement** in programmes.

Implementation of the audit tool has resulted in an understanding that quality AS programmes:

- **Nurture higher aspirations and capacity** while promoting healthy lifestyles;
- Require **regular and consistent participation** at least twice a week (five hours contact time per week);
- Afford learners a **choice of activities** and include homework support;
- Ensure interventions are **inclusive and responsive to learner needs**, with a specific focus on gender equality; and
- Feature **collaboration** with other organisations and programming.

As the AS Game Changer aims to achieve recognition of AS programming as a professional sector, characterised by common standards, it invites all AS organisations to use the audit tool to measure and reflect on the quality of their programmes. The audit is seen as a process and it is hoped that AS organisations will help enrich the tool further by adding input, with a view to it becoming a collectively owned, evolving resource for quality assurance and improvement.

**To access the quality audit tool, contact Jacqui Boulle at:**  
[jacqueline.boulle@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:jacqueline.boulle@westerncape.gov.za).

***“Quality is a layered and complex topic.”***  
***– Gabeba Gaidien, The Learning Trust***





## FORTHCOMING RESOURCES

The Learning Trust and the Western Cape Government are in the process of developing a tool kit for AS programmes, comprising resources intended to inform and improve AS programme quality.

The purpose of the tool kit is to professionalise AS services and to provide clarity about legislation for AS organisations and practitioners, especially relating to child protection. It will be available by the end of 2017. The AS team is currently working on three initial outputs:

- **After School Practitioner Code of Conduct (Guide)**
- **Learner Code of Conduct**
- **A course on collaboration and partnerships in the After School sector** (*developed in association with the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business*)

Introduced at the CoP meeting by the consultant materials developer, Jo Monson, the documents and course are intended to be highly accessible and inspiring resources. As the first step to ensuring that they are developed through a consultative process, CoP participants were asked to review and comment on the draft Code of Conduct and the Practitioner Guide framework. One useful recommendation resulting from this, was that codes of conduct for both learners and practitioners should be developed as templates, providing an opportunity to build a sense of ownership and buy-in by all learners and practitioners through workshopping and customisation.

**If you would be interested in joining an editorial reference group for the Practitioner Guide and Code of Conduct, please contact Gabeba at The Learning Trust.**

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## THE AFTER SCHOOL COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

**The After School Community of Practice** was launched in Salt River on 30 March 2016, by **The Learning Trust**, in partnership with the **Western Cape Provincial Government After School Game Changer**. CoP events 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 CoP** aims 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.

## THANK YOU!

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

Action Volunteers Africa, African Legend, Afrika Tikkun, Amandla Edufootball, Amy Biehl Foundation, Beautiful Gate, Boys & Girls Clubs of SA, Butterfly Art Project, Click Foundation, DCAS: MOD, Dream Factory Foundation, DSU, Fundza Literacy Trust, Hoops 4 Hope, Ikamva Labantwana, IkamvaYouth, Iliso Care Society, Just Grace, Light of Live Theatre, Masifunde Learner Development, MOSAIC, Oasis Reach For Your Dreams, Olico, ORTSA Cape, Pebbles Project, Purple Circle Coaching, South African Education Project, Siyakhathala, The Learning Trust, The Social Project, The Sozo Foundation, Vision Afrika, Vulisango, Western Cape After School Game Changer.

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).