

## South African Extraordinary Schools Coalition Community of Practice

[Prestige College 16 October 2017]



### Setting the scene

The last South African Extraordinary Schools Coalition (SAESC) meeting for 2017 was held at Prestige College in Hammanskraal. The principal, Thana Pienaar, shared her experience as one of the newest members of the SAESC. Many other organisations have asked Prestige to join them, but Thana found that the values and vision of the SAESC and Prestige College were better aligned. Thana shared how helpful she found the SAESC peer review process. It allowed Prestige to see what they as a school are doing well, but also provided insights into what they could do to make their school even better. One of the suggestions that was implemented by Prestige was including 'Precise Praise' in their morning meetings.

**"These meetings are better than attending a training course." CoP member**

John Gilmour reminded the CoP that all members are equal partners and must share and use resources as much as possible. To access the resources, members need to visit the BRIDGE [knowledge hub](#) where meeting highlights, knowledge products and presentations are freely available. At the end of 2016, BRIDGE put together at [Tools for Teachers](#) resource pack that gives teachers easy access to knowledge products that they can use in their classrooms to enhance their teaching.



### Presentations

Anthony Selley informed the members of the Allan Gray Entrepreneurship Challenge – a competition that gamifies learning about entrepreneurship for high school learners from Grades 8 to 11 in South Africa. The game challenges are designed to engage participants to act and think like entrepreneurs and rewards those who finish among the top performers.

The South African education system forces us to teach to the test and we need to find ways to change that. Anthony suggested 3 ways that might encourage this:

- Personalised learning (software that helps you create a personalised learning plan) – At the Steve Jobs school, learners (with teacher support and outside mentors) set their own timetables. This places most of the accountability with learners.

- Technologies that allow real life opportunities to play out in the classroom such as Google play and Amazon which challenges learners to solve real life issues.
- High level systemic change for example assessment methods look into the UWC Mahindra Project (assessment methodology). Collaboration ought to be greater than competition. Anthony suggested that we look at the book Getting Smart authored by Tom Vander Ark. He writes about how digital learning is changing the world and 7 Keys to Education & Employment. He is CEO of Getting Smart, a learning design firm and a partner in Learn Capital, an education venture capital firm. Previously he served as the first Executive Director of Education for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

To see Anthony's presentation on self-directed learning, click [here](#).

James Malope, of the LEAP Science and Maths schools, told us about the Jakes Gerwell Fellowship programme. The programme identifies learners who are achieving in all areas in school and offers them funding in any subject area. Upon graduation, learners have to give 2 years of their time to teach.

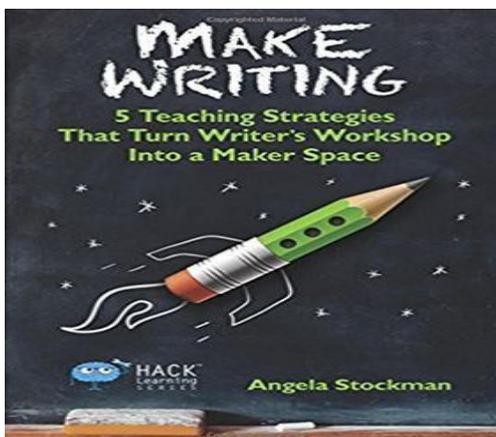
Peter de Lisle, from Inanda Seminary, told participants about the Spring Summit that was held in September at Inanda. He presented on project based learning, the steps of which are summarised as follows:

- The first part of the project is to throw out a challenge, for example 'if you were the minister of education, where would you start in changing SA education?'
- Step two is to collect data,
- after which the data would need to be processed, that is, find out what the data means before finally,
- presenting the information to tell others who matter about it.

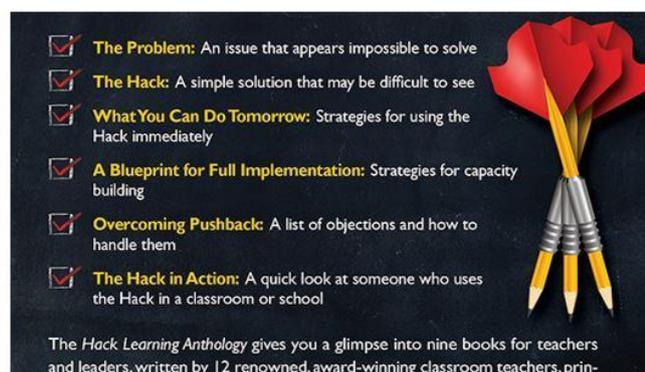
To see Peter's presentation on project based learning, click [here](#).

Devan Govender, from Inanda Seminary, gave the group some helpful tips on how to get learners and teachers to read more:

- One way to get learners to review books is to have them write a letter to the author and offer constructive criticism on the book.
- Another is to encourage learners to write journal entries as though they were the characters in the books.



[www.hacklearningacademy.com](http://www.hacklearningacademy.com)



In addition, Coalition members were encouraged to recommend the names and authors of books they have found inspiring. A list of these are found at the end of the meeting highlights.



## Instructional practice

The sharing of innovative ideas has always been a big part of the coalition meetings and this meeting was no different. CoP members were invited into 3 classes to be part of a lesson.

Anké Jansen van Rensburg, Frieda de Bruyn and Ilse Van Aardt from Prestige College put teachers into groups and allowed them to be part of a learning session that demonstrated how brain breaks work. To find out more visit this website: <http://minds-in-bloom.com/20-three-minute-brain-breaks/>.

She also shared a little on some of the Kagan methods that are used at Prestige College. To learn more about this method visit:

[https://www.kaganonline.com/free\\_articles/research\\_and\\_rationale/330/The-Essential-5-A-Starting-Point-for-Kagan-Cooperative-Learning](https://www.kaganonline.com/free_articles/research_and_rationale/330/The-Essential-5-A-Starting-Point-for-Kagan-Cooperative-Learning)

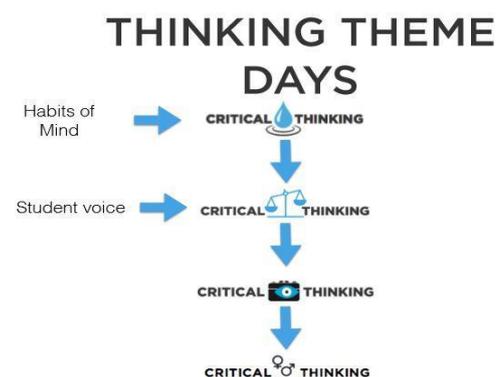
John Pym shared how he uses Siyavula Science to assign learners tasks and check their progress. Learners are able to repeat tasks until they know how to complete it accurately and this allows them to take responsibility for their own learning.

Lezelle Strydom, from Prestige College, shared some of her ideas on restorative discipline. She took the participants through a challenging exercise where they had to discuss their most challenging encounters with ill-discipline and find different ways to deal with them.

Grace Leggett, of Dominican Convent School, shared the school's strategy of increasing critical thinking in the school by introducing:

- Thinking strategies
- Thinking teams and
- Thinking days

One day per term is taken out and the curriculum is scrapped in order to hone in on critical thinking skills. Some examples of themes or topics included: how to solve the water crisis in SA? LGBT day (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender discussions) which encouraged learners to understand the constitution and question their core beliefs.



Grace used a few videos that helped to highlight the message of accepting others:

1. Heineken presents 'Worlds Apart' An Experiment. Can two strangers with opposing views prove that there's more that unites than divides us?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wYXw4K0A3g>
2. South Africa: Archbishop Condemns Anti-LGBT Violence  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YdSbvp1UUk>
3. "Take Me To Church" by Hozier <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVjiKRfKpPI>

To see Grace's presentation on thinking days click [here](#).



## To sum up

John Gilmour of the LEAP Science and Maths schools reminded CoP members that there is a steering committee for the SAESC and that anybody can volunteer to be a part of the committee. This has been a watershed year for the coalition with an emphasis on practice and sharing. We need to think of how we want to upscale and feed our great ideas into the South African education system.

### Suggested reading:

BOOK TITLE	AUTHOR
The Slight Edge	Jeff Olson
Soul Leadership	Deepak Chopra
Dreams, Hope and Betrayal	Mamphelle Ramphele
Pedagogy of the Oppressed	Paul Freire
20 Chickens in a Saddle	Robyn Scott
The Art of Possibility	Rosemund Stone Zander & Benjamin Zander
Shifting Paradigms- value based school leadership	Sasol Foundation
Work Rules	Laszlo Bock
Joy Inc. How we Built a Workplace People Love	Richard Sheridan