

Western Cape Teacher Development Community of Practice MEETING HIGHLIGHTS 8 OCTOBER 2019

Meeting held at Africa A+ School, Western Cape



Setting the scene

Hassiena Marriott and Kauthar Jacobs, Project Managers at BRIDGE welcomed a diverse group of teachers, NGO's and civic organisations to the CoP, which was hosted by Africa A+ School on the 8th of October 2019. She said that the increase of violence in our schools has become a burning topic in the education sector and that traumatic experiences affect learners and teachers alike in our schools and this poses a significant barrier to learning. Judy Strickland from Hope House Counselling shared the work she does on Trauma Informed Schools.

**"I have learnt to look at the child in a different way with the understanding that every behaviour is the manifestation of an underlying issue."
[Cape Academy Teacher]**



Hope House: Trauma Informed Schools Training

Judy Strickland

Research that stretches back more than two decades has shown that trauma has a unique physiological effect on the developing brains of children. Dubbed the ACE (Adverse Childhood Experience) studies, it has been shown that the brains of children exposed to sustained and/or significant trauma develop differently, and with negative consequences, both short and long-term. What the ACE studies have concluded is that when someone experiences trauma, their brain goes into fight/flight or freeze mode. If this trauma is on-going in childhood, the cortical part of the brain is not able to develop properly. This has an impact on behaviour, as well as learning. The limbic and survival brain are engaged and on red alert but the thinking parts of the brain- the cortex and prefrontal cortex are disengaged to the detriment of being normal.



Judy shared the components of the 5 Session SACE accredited training which she conducts over a year-long period which takes educators on a journey to becoming trauma-informed. The questions that guided her presentation and discussion on the impact the training can have on the class and school were:

“What is trauma?”

“What does trauma behaviour in the classroom look like?”

“Why do we need to be trauma-informed?”

“What is trauma informed schools?”

Judy explained further that children who are traumatised by an event are unable to learn and studies have shown that one’s DNA is changed after trauma is experienced. This trauma can be passed down from generation to generation. At times the trauma might not have been experienced directly by the child but by the parents of the child, still the effects live within the child or adult teaching the child. The facilitator asked the participants to reflect on what triggers us as adults and then whether these would be different from triggers for children. We realised that children and adults have the same triggers.

To see Judy’s presentation please click [here](#).

Questions & Answers

CoP members had an opportunity to ask questions and share their thoughts around Judy’s presentation. Some key points from this process are captured below:

“A brain in pain cannot gain, a traumatised child cannot learn.”
[COSAT Teacher]

- We need to look at addressing the trauma experienced by teachers to encourage their relationship with learners
- Attendees recognised the importance of Trauma-Informed Schools Training at the Western Cape Education Department level
- It is important to heal our children to better our communities, if we don’t do that now we will see the negative result in 20 years
- Addressing trauma at schools plays an essential role in addressing the School-to -prison -pipeline theory
- Working with pre-service teachers allows for the invaluable opportunity to ensure all future teachers are trauma-informed
- Training the trainer to be trauma-informed could be a key component in addressing the cycle of trauma in our communities



2020 Western Cape Teacher Development CoP

Hassiena and Kauthar facilitated the CoP members through the last session of the day where they looked forward to 2020. Members were asked to work in small groups to come up with ideas on how we can leverage the resources in the room to further the Teacher Development CoP. Some of these thoughts and ideas are captured below:

- The consensus in the room was that teachers face many challenges in their plight to educate our future leaders; it is therefore imperative that teachers are upskilled, nurtured and developed to be the best the version of themselves so that they can be better teachers.
- The **theme for 2020** is “Caring for the Teachers”. There will be three CoP meetings in 2020 which will take place in February, May and August.

The CoP meetings will incorporate these ideas

- ComMUSICation- learning how to use music as a tool to communicate and engage learners
- Trauma-Informed School – Train the Trainer
- Wellness for Teachers

Meeting close

Closing comments stressed appreciation for people’s openness and honesty. The CoP was productive and reiterated that there is a need for the Teacher Development CoP in the Western Cape. We will focus on “teacher motivation and well-being” more in the future.

List of participants:

First name:	Surname:	First name:	Surname:
Arista	Bouwer	Mackie	Kleinschmidt
Brenda	Elshove	Melanie	Petersen
Cheryl	Harper	Nadeen	Moola
Cindy	Olivier	Nomfundo	Mbane
Dale	Choudree	Olwethu	Ndaba
Hassiena	Marriott	Peter	Barendse
Inba	Jungbahadu	Sammy	Ntumba
Judy	Strickland	Sophie	Vellacott
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