South African Extraordinary Schools Coalition
Meeting Highlights 02 July 2020
Virtual meeting

WELCOME, INTRODUCTION & CHECK-IN

The SAESC held its first online meeting in July 2020 and in keeping up with the times, it has embraced the use of many virtual technologies: members checked in using Jamboards (an interactive whiteboard developed by Google) and Mentimeter, both of which are online collaborative tools. These tools are easy to use, easily accessible and can be used for a range of different purposes. The Coalition Meeting has always been a face to face engagement, which has fostered relationship building and these principles were kept alive through this virtual meeting.

After completing check-ins on Mentimeter and Jamboard, participants were sent into Zoom 'breakaway rooms' where they introduced themselves and spoke about their expectations of the Coalition meeting.

Example of a Jamboard

ZA LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

Anthony Selly introduced the group to the ZA Learning Collaborative. His colleague, Shakira while teaching overseas for a period, observed how the school was using technology to teach and shared this with a local WhatsApp group, this post went viral. Hampered by the limitations of group size on WhatsApp the group shifted over to another platform called Telegram, and grew exponentially, emphasizing the need for such easily accessible education platforms. This led to the establishment of their own platform called the ZA Learning Collaborative. Anthony explained that the ZA Learning Collaborative brings together like-minded individuals to share resources and knowledge in a collaborative way in the education space. It started when 12000+ teachers signed up on WhatsApp and Telegram, following lockdown. These groups have since been brought together into one place to gather resources and seek out support – using a tool called Mighty Networks which is much like Facebook only it is focused on the professional development of teachers and school leaders and the sharing of educational content. The benefit of having everything on

one platform is that there is amazing cross pollination. Anthony then demonstrated how one can access and navigate the platform and took participants through its interface showcasing the different groups that one can join. Click here to see the full presentation.

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PRECISE PRAISE & FEEDBACK

"It's great that there is an app for this so it is separated from the rest of your life as WhatsApp messages and groups can become overwhelming."

"Thank you. This is creative and innovative and having everything on one platform and simplifying technology for people."

"This is the best time to launch this as there are many ways that are used and this simplifies it and brings it into one unified platform."

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REFLECTION (CAFÉ STYLE)

The Reflection session which followed made use of the World Café rotation style to allow a few innovators to share what they were doing in the 'classroom' to ensure that teaching and learning is ongoing and sustained. The following four innovative activities were shared and demonstrated in break-away rooms:

- **WhatsApp for Teaching and Learning: (Hassiena Marriott & Nomfundo Sibeko)**
  WhatsApp can be used effectively as an online learning and teaching tool. WhatsApp has the following features that can be used for this, namely:
  - **Sharing of videos and documents.** This feature allows for sharing online before a lesson even begins. It ensures that everyone has an opportunity to view and engage with the content before a lesson actually begins.
  - **Chat/texting.** During the lesson this feature can be used to make comments, give feedback, respond to questions, give instructions, explain content, check for understanding and ask questions.
  - **Emojis.** Through the use of emojis, the host/teacher is able to check for understanding by asking for a 'thumbs up', to check for presence during the lesson and for praising the participants.
  - **Camera.** The camera feature can be used to produce evidence of activity of participants, to check if participants are on task as well as to share ideas for everyone else to comment on and ask questions.
  - **Voice recordings/voice notes.** This feature makes for faster communication than typing out an entire paragraph; it accommodates the auditory participants, can task participants on reading and even makes the lesson more authentic.

- **Google Classrooms (Nomxolisi Ncube)**
  Nomxolisi shared how LEAP 4 has been using Google Classroom during the lockdown in order to move forward with the curriculum and close all gaps that it might have created for both teachers and learners. She cited some of the following benefits of using Google Classroom:
  - A more integrated approach to teaching and learning
  - Easy to use
  - Efficient and effective communication with students
  - Central place to store and grade assignments
  - Keeps track of and organises student work
  - Learners are able to easily access the work, and work at their own pace
  - When learners have Wi-Fi access they are able to download the whole weeks assignments

  There are however some challenges to using Google Classroom and she listed the following:

  - The cost and availability of data prevents all learners from accessing Google Classroom and so it is only being used with Grade 12s at the moment
  - Learners are demotivated and panicked due to the pandemic
  - Adaptation to this way of teaching and learning is difficult
  - Electricity cuts in the community leaves students unable to access Google Classroom
  - Some students only have a cell phone and accessing Google Classroom on a phone is not ideal

  Teachers have welcomed the use of Google Classroom as a new and fascinating technology and like its collaborative and integrative approach. Learners find it easy to use in order to access and submit homework, and like the interactive approach where they can ask the teachers questions. Gmail also assists in reminding learners of assignment due dates. Learners do face challenges when there is load shedding as they are not able to submit their homework and they experience other data and device related issues. She says that overall, LEAP teachers and learners enjoy the platform and would like to use it more in future should they be able to overcome the challenges they have experienced so far.

- **Google Tools for PD (Devan Govender)**
  Devan shared on using Google slides as a reflection tool in the classroom and what this can help to achieve:
  1. **Blended learning**. Teachers and students can work collaboratively through the use of these slides. Devan then demonstrated the use of thin slides technique and how to set up a google slide deck. A timer can be placed on each participant

and at the end every individual has an add on call randomiser. This allows for 100% participation as well as collaboration and sharing.

2. **Easy facilitation**. Facilitators can set up slides for participants to put their names on. They could then be given a time limit (3-4 minutes) to complete an activity and then through the use of Google Slides Randomizer every participant could speak to their slide for 15 seconds.

3. **Pedagogy.** Through the use of Google slides, 100% participation is ensured and participants are given the power to share and use their voices. This type of activity could also lead to deep discussions. It allows students to creatively respond to questions in the classroom, contributing to increased engagement.

- **Pre-recorded lessons versus live teaching (Noloyiso Lange)**

Noloyiso shared how she has been teaching her learners online during the lockdown, and says that these methods have allowed her to cover more content over less time. She has used the following three techniques:

- **A pre-recorded lesson**. This is done using the laptop camera to record the lesson and then taking questions for discussion afterwards. The advantage here is that the video can allow for the learners to take notes and have a feedback session at the end. It also allows for time to troubleshoot (in the case of connectivity problems etc.) while other learners are learning. The recording can be done ahead of time and done as many times as needed in order to include missed content.
- **Adding audio to a PowerPoint presentation.** A voice clip can be done for each slide and then the presentation should be uploaded either onto Google Classroom or onto YouTube. The benefit of YouTube is that it is easier and cheaper for people to stream the video than to download it. On YouTube one is able to see the amount of views and determine if all learners have watched the video or not.
- **Using Screencastify** which records whatever screen is being displayed on the recorders side. Once recording is stopped the video is automatically uploaded onto the Google Drive.

Noloyiso says that these methods have allowed her to cover more content over less time. Learners also don't miss out on the lesson due to connection issues. The lesson can be downloaded when a learner has access. Here is the link the Nolo's full presentation.

YOUNG LEADERS FORUM

Judy Tate

We are all currently facing a disruption unlike anything that we have ever seen and this is putting new pressure on all of us in terms of our social infrastructure, schools and communities. Despite the challenges we need to continue to work through this global disruption by working together and remaining connected. This leaves us with the question of how do we find people that will understand disruptive situations and be flexible, adaptive and able to adjust plans that are needed for this disruptive time. These types of people are generally called leaders because they step up and step out.

Prompted by this introduction and the next series of questions, participants were able to express the following thoughts and ideas about leadership in disruptive times, on the Jamboards below:
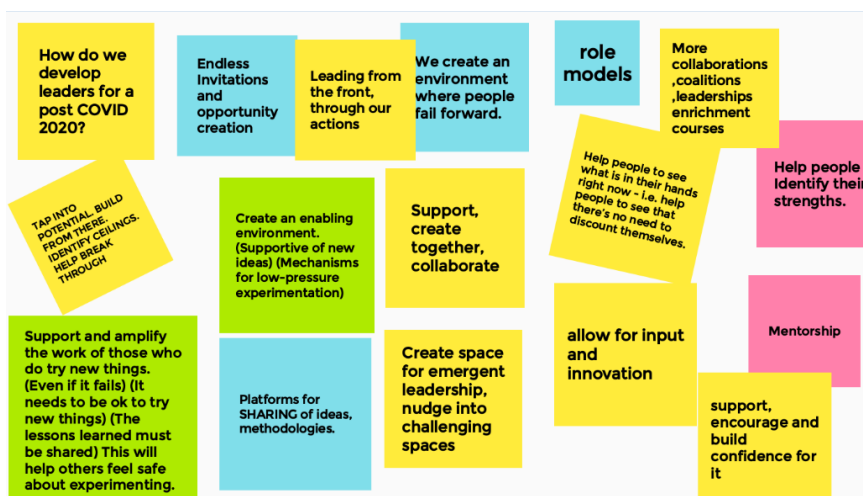
What characteristics do we need to be a leader in a post Covid-19 2020?

How do we become a leader in a post Covid-19 2020?

How do we develop leaders for a post Covid-19 2020?

Judy summed up the Jamboard reflection session with the following thought: Some people appear to naturally have the qualities of a leader and specifically a post Covid-19 leader but these are skills that can be developed. The Coalition has therefore developed a programme to address this need. The programme is called **The Extraordinary Leaders Development Programme** from The South African Extraordinary Schools Coalition. A product of the Coalition administered by GTI and Khanyisa and supported by BRIDGE.

This is a leadership programme and the objective is to build a community of Coalition leaders through a meaningful and individualised programme that is personal and provides professional development. The benefits of participating in the programme will include:

- Development of self (high EQ, growth mind set and adaptability etc.)
- Becoming a skilled agent of change (responding quickly, taking constructive criticism and being future-driven)
- Professional development (its personal as well as professional in order to grow)
- Peer-to-peer support (being able to interact with peers in order to understand better)
- Pathways to promotion (previously based on age and years of experience. Nowadays, this is about the process and a much shorter process)
- CPTD Points (these are necessary in order to check that we are keeping up professionally)

This will be a nine month course, and will be offered to all emerging leaders in the Coalition and in Coalition schools. The course will be part time and consist of three components.

1. **Coursework** component (research, assessment and mentoring by an

experienced leader)

2. **Residency** (visit an action research site spending eight days being mentored

3. **Reporting** (a mini dissertation and presenting the findings/learnings)

*Work is currently underway towards having this course SAQA accredited if there is enough interest and uptake.

Click here to see the full presentation of this programme.

SNAPSHOT OF A SINGLE GOOD IDEA

In this session, four volunteers were called upon to give a snapshot of a single good idea which they have either discovered or developed, which can be used and taken forward either in class or within the community.

Hassiena Marriott explained that in her women's group a man sat in the centre of a circle of women and each one in turn expressed how he had inspired them as a leader (social distancing protocols were observed). Each of the women looked at him and told them how they felt about him and how he has impacted their lives and celebrated him and the role he has played in their lives. This type of gender affirmation could be done in schools with children as a way of boosting confidence and self-esteem.

Khayakazi Mbunyuza spoke about GTI's Mandela Day Campaign. As they cannot have a physical event – LEAP Maths and Science Schools in partnership with GTI, Rhodes Food Group and the Hyprop Foundation has launched a food mosaic campaign asking people to donate R67 which will supply 5 cans of food to feed students. The cans will be bought online and used to build up the picture of Nelson Mandela. There will be a social development day where the cans are donated by the LEAP schools. There will be an online concert with Jarrad Ricketts on the 18th of July for those that donate as a way of showing thanks. Click here to read more about this initiative.

Peter de Lisle spoke about tracking online engagement. There is a long list of zero-rated websites that Peter has put together, which can be found on this link. Peter's concern about online learning is what the students are actually doing while on Zoom calls and other virtual platforms. For example someone could be playing TV games while on a Zoom call and the teacher would not be the wiser. He recommended some of the following ways in which to track the learners' online engagement:

- On **WhatsApp** groups one is able to see if individuals in the group have

received and/or read a message
- On **Google Classroom** one can check if users have been active and when they were last active
- In **Google Accounts** one can check the activity via connected devices

Charles Marriott

The Naledi Programme has had to digitalise due to the lockdown and this has been piloted in the last month. The programme consists of nine sessions focusing on a single skill in each session. This has proven to be cost effective and can reach many across the country. This also encourages agency and allows them to feel empowered to share more.

UNDERSTANDING IXL

James Malope

IXL is a popular subscription-based learning site. It is an immersive learning experience that provides comprehensive, curriculum-aligned maths and English content for preschool to grade 12. It is fun for learners and does not use much bandwidth and so it is low cost. IXL can also be used anywhere and keeps teachers up to date on what learners are doing. It provides a detailed report on what each student is doing and allows for interaction. The content on IXL is broken up into grades and then topics. The efforts per school can be seen as well as the efforts from students.

UNDERSTANDING THE ADOLECENTS USE OF TECH (INCLUDING TIK TOK)

Craig Johnson

During Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown we have had to embrace technology in the form of Zoom and Google Classroom etc. Some teachers don't really know what to do and say that there is a lack of connection and engagement from their learners but teachers can learn from their students as to what to do. What are people doing in terms of informal teaching?

Social media and Twitter are not used as much by the younger generations (Gen-Z) – their platforms of choice are TikTok and Instagram. TikTok has over a billion users which it has gained in roughly 18 months. Craig discovered a TikTok tutor and shared a [video] on a 16 year old student that has used the platform for SAT prep – he is not doing anything out of the ordinary, just teaching his followers. The feedback he received is positive and people are

saying that they are learning. This is an example of a space outside classrooms where students can learn.

Another example is a Primary School teacher reading to children over zoom – her roommate would then jump into the video feed and demonstrate what was happening in the book she was reading.

In South Africa, despite our problem with the cost and access to data, some teachers are getting on with it. Here we see how a teacher in Cape Town on the Cape flats uses activities such as dancing and singing with learners, making learning fun instead of heavily curriculum based. Here is a link to the video.

Through these examples we can see that it is possible to still engage with learners during Covid-19. We just need to think of other ways and use the technology and social media apps available to us, as they are well understood and used by many young learners.

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