

Peer Coaching training conducted in 2007

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A Peer Coaching “train the trainer” session was conducted in April 2007. At this session, 11 peer coach trainers were trained. Each new trainer was asked to help recruit potential peer coaches from schools in his or her vicinity to commence training. Six clusters of peer coach training were started in this way in 2007 and other clusters are due to start in 2008.

Of the clusters that started this year, some are already on session 5, whilst others have only managed to complete the first three sessions. In the case of the Hilton cluster, poor attendance at session 2 and 3 resulted in the group being disbanded however it will be re-constituted with new members in 2008.

The schools involved in Peer Coaching and that stage that they are at are listed below:

Province	Cluster	Schools involved	Sessions held
Gauteng	Soweto	Letsibogo Secondary School Mokgome Secondary School Reasoma Secondary School Tsogang Primary Veritas Secondary School	Session 1 - 25 August 2007 Session 2 - 15 September 2007 Session 3 - 16 September 2007 Session 4 - 13 October 2007 Session 5 - 14 October 2007
Free State	Bloemfontein	Eunice Girls High Eunice Girls Primary St Bernards Pres Brand Primary St Michaels Lereko Secondary Willem Postma Primary	Session 1 - 18 August 2007 Session 2 - 7 September 2007 Session 3 - 8 September 2007 Session 4 - 26 October 2007 Session 5 - 27 October 2007
Kwa-Zulu Natal	Hilton	Esigodini Primary Hilton College Mpophomeni High Zamazulu Secondary	Session 1 - 25 August 2007
Kwa-Zulu Natal	Durban	Northlands Primary Inanda Seminary Mzwamandla High School Chelsea Drive Primary Greenwood Park Primary	Session 1 - 25 August 2007 Session 2 - 14 September 2007 Session 3 - 15 September 2007
Eastern Cape	East London	AW Barnes Primary Clarendon Prep School Clarendon Primary Clarendon High School Hudson Park High School Hudson Park Primary Nosizwe Senior Secondary Stirling High School Stirling Primary School	Session 1 - 18 August 2007 Session 2 - 1 September 2007 Session 3 - 2 September 2007 Session 4 - 6 October 2007 Session 5 - 7 October 2007

Western Cape	Cape Town	Crestway High School Harmony Primary School Square Hill Primary School Steenberg High School Zwaanswyk High School	Session 1 - 18 August 2007 Session 2 - 14 September 2007 Session 3 - 15 September 2007
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Detailed training reports are available at the following link <http://www.school.za/peercoach/index.htm>
Highlights of some of the sessions are described below:



Soweto Cluster

Training for the Soweto cluster was held at Letsibogo Girls School (one of the case-study schools) for the first three sessions, however as the Internet was very slow some computers could not access the communities website. Access to the Dell laptops from the African Schools Technology and Innovation Centre has made it possible to relocate subsequent training to a venue with better internet access.

This group has particularly enjoyed the “Classroom Strategies” workshop as it helped them to think of

different ways of integrating ICT into an assessment standards-based curriculum. They also enjoyed designing lessons that actively engage students, and promote critical thinking and problem solving skills.

According to the trainer:

“These activities provided them with different strategies and they have realized what they missing in their lesson if they don’t integrate ICT. Various website were used and they can’t wait to fully use the South African websites that are provided in this session.”

The enjoyment of the new peer coaches is evident in the following quotations:

“Co-operation between us & the facilitator is very good, I hope this will prevail until the end.”

“Overall the session was great with more hands on activities that help me to greatly understand and have clarity on most topics I wasn’t sure about.”

Bloemfontein Cluster

Whereas other groups may have lost members the Bloemfontein cluster added Gelukwaarts (a farm school) and Lereko Secondary School at their third session. Both these schools caught up quickly and have proven to be a valuable addition by diversifying the group.

The trainer reported that whilst at session 1 the group had “many (mostly negative) experiences to share with each other: from lack of school support, frustrations in the classroom, fear of how to integrate ICT into the classroom or not knowing how to approach the principal and staff members or even just doubting their roles as a peer coach.” By the second session the teachers “greeted each other as “old” friends with so many positive stories to share!”. Some schools are now allowing computers to be used for something other than computer skills and all principals have been informed of the coaching plans and have promised support.



This group has enjoyed designing Peer Coaching brochures as these will back up their verbal explanations of Peer Coaching. They have also enjoyed the extra collaboration possibilities that blogging holds.



Hilton Cluster

Whilst the teachers who attended the first training session “seemed to be excited about making changes in their schools, and were keen to use Peer Coaching as a way to do that” disappointingly only one principal was present.

The trainer reported that “In general, the course went very well. The simulation is an effective way to get talking about planning – setting priorities, thinking of a strategy, etc. It led to much debate and useful discussion. So when it came to thinking about their own situations they were ready with

lots of ideas. It is quite exciting when people are so involved in discussions etc that they just don’t want to go to lunch!”

He did however also report that some trainees found all the readings quite tough to get through and as the blogging experience was new to most people that also took time to get sorted out. In conclusion though the trainer said that he “really enjoyed running this session, because it was so easy to get and maintain a high level of engagement”. It is hoped that the Hilton cluster can be resumed with a full complement of Peer Coaches in 2008.

Durban cluster

Peer Coaching got off to a good start in the Durban cluster with the “Why peer coaching?” session “unlocking a robust discussion between the coaches and the principals.” When the time management problem was mentioned management assured the coaches that if the coaches show that there was a need to decrease learner contact time and increase staff development time such request will be considered



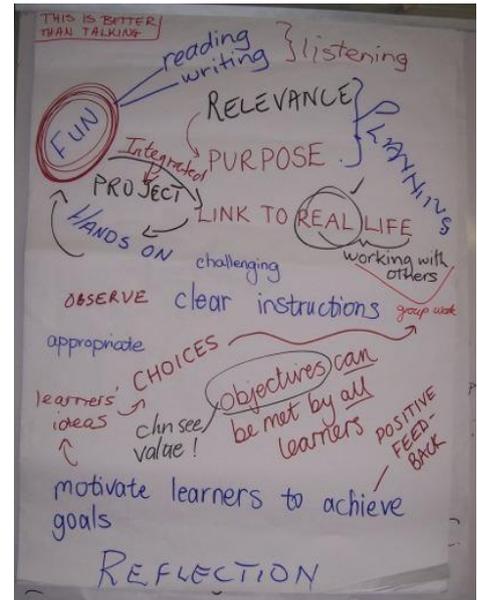
The trainer remarked that “the norms slot is a very useful tool and if used correctly modifies and structure common understanding amicable.” He also reported “The participants seemed to master the communication skills fairly easily and it was evident in how some got the insight into the questioning types of paraphrasing, clarifying and probing. The group session was really invigorating to listen to.”

Peer Coaches have also enjoyed creating their portfolios and accumulating a series of links that will be of help when dealing with a particular topic during coaching. It is hoped that by pointing teachers to “magnificent sites” that teachers will become hooked and will continue to use the internet to find resources. This activity definitely hooked the coaches who soon started filling their portfolio blogs with lists of useful sites.

East London Cluster

The East London cluster has eagerly embraced the Peer Coaching programme. In fact the facilitator reported that she had to stop one activity as it went on too long because “the teachers had so much to share!”. These teachers also rated the “Chalk Talk Protocol” (completed in session 3) where participants can write messages on a board, but can’t speak as one of the best activities completed so far.

The participants reported a range of support from their schools, from “very little or no support or understanding from the principal” all the way to peer coaches getting use of a laptop, a participating peer and a change in class and extra-mural time tables. The facilitator encouraged peer coaches to try and discuss the issues with their managers and commented that “The addition of the Peer Coaching web pages on the SchoolNet SA site is a brilliant idea. I have asked coaches to show this to their principals.”



In the afternoon of Session 1 the peer coaches use the Internet to participate in online collaboration and set up their own blogs Whilst the facilitator admits that “we are all new in the blogging” she added that “hopefully we now all have a better understanding using (the communities@schoolnet) site. It has great potential.”



Cape Town Cluster

Session two of the Peer Coaching programme involves preparing Peer Coaching plans and preparing to present these to principals and staff members. Although there are only nine peer coaches in the Cape Town group, the facilitator reported that they differ widely in terms of skills and the amount of leadership support that they receive at their schools. What is encouraging about the group is that they all reported that developing their own portfolios in order to gather and organise online resources for collaborating teachers and learning how to present these were extremely useful skills that they had learnt through the course.

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