

Learning Gains through Play Project

Western Cape school visits

3-4 February 2016

Learning Gains through Play project team members Janet Thomson, Hlengiwe Mfeka, Tracey Butchart (project evaluator) and Rodney Nissen (WCED) visited two project schools on Wednesday and Thursday from the 3rd – 4th of February 2016.

Temperance Town Primary

The new principal of Temperance Town Primary, Mrs Zaibaunesa Windvogel welcomed us into her office, and we had a chat about the project and how she is adapting. She indicated that grade R teachers were not comfortable with the project visit at the beginning of the year as they were still settling in with their grade R learners. This helped us to realize that the teachers did not understand the purpose of these visits which were meant to give them support where necessary, not a form of inspection. We then requested a staff meeting during break, to clarify that misunderstanding. The meeting helped to make teachers feel sufficiently at ease so that we were able to visit all the project teachers including grade R.

Class Visits

1. Grade 1 with Mrs Jesmina Waries

Small groups worked with the teacher on the teacher tablet, used the Magic Marker app to write and spell their names. Remaining learners had a number of worksheets for writing, cutting and pasting and colouring.

Learners were given instructions for three different activities – the activities had to follow a particular order, but instructions for all three were given at the start. We were very impressed to see the learners managing their own time and at their own pace and correctly completing these in the order specified!

A Maths lesson followed with a game of ordering numbers – a wonderful learning experience and learners were very enthusiastic as they jostled into position, girls competing with the boys. Simple number bonds, adding and subtracting with plastic rings on a rod also encouraged learner participation. At the end of the lesson Tracey showed Mrs Waries an App that was relevant to this topic that could compliment what she taught in the lesson. A video of the lesson is available on the SchoolNet You Tube Channel here https://youtu.be/QP5xSv_OEAQ



2. Grade R with Mrs Amanda Hughes



After a tea break, Tracey and Hlengi visited Mrs Hughes Grade R class. There was a fabulous arrangement of 6 learning stations – each with all that was required already prepared – very organized and hugely stimulating for the learners! Six learning stations involving – painting, cutting & pasting, rolling clay, colouring

in, letter matching and a workbook activity. The teacher tablet was used to introduce the learning session with a song and dancing. Unfortunately, the tablet had a few problems, but the learners visibly enjoyed singing and dancing while the tablet was working.

3. Grade R with Mrs Alfarita October

There was a full-class game at the start to recognize written names which was a wonderful activity. Then the learners moved to 6 learning stations that were all set up. The teacher went around to each group to explain what to do. The learners were very well-behaved!



4. Grade R with Mrs Marianne Benjamin

The children were sitting together on chairs about to watch a video when we arrived.

Mrs Benjamin started the video and told the children to concentrate as she would be asking questions about it afterwards. The teacher asked us some questions and then asked the learners some questions about the rhyme - the children performed again. We were amazed at how well-behaved the children were to sit still in silence for long periods.



5. Grade 1 with Mrs Bianca Beyer



A group of 8 learners used the tablets on rotation - rest of the class had plenty of crayons and kept busy and beautifully silent with music playing while teacher worked with each group of 8. One outstanding thing noted about Bianca's teaching is that she never gives the children information for free – every gem is framed in a question that they have to think about for themselves – a born teacher but with a massive amount of pedagogical knowledge underpinning her every question.

Grade 1 with Mrs Ella Klaasen

A limitation of the number of tablets dictated teaching of the class in two equal groups – one half using tablets and the other half using worksheets (colouring in and or working with shapes). The learners used the tablets carefully and with familiarity and without any hesitation or disruption. The energy was fantastic! All questions asked and answered energetically and for the most part by the whole class in unison.

Somerset West Methodist Primary



The Western Cape Provincial Education Department had ordered all schools to sing the National Anthem in the morning of the 4th Feb 2016.

We received a warm welcome from the principal, Trevor. We had a long chat in his office about the Learning Gains project implementation and the specific gains that the school had experienced. They hoped to replicate the project in the senior grades in years to come. The Samsung-donated massive flat-screen television was not yet mounted because of the required space and the need to use the TV with the Xbox. Discussions with the governing body to finalize this issue are in progress.

Class Visits

1. Grade 1 with Mrs Adele Driessen



The teacher gave out reminders about how to treat the tablets at the start of the lesson – these ideas were volunteered by learners in response to questions rather than the teacher stating the ‘rules’. The teacher tablet was used to introduce the lesson. Learners used tablets to play ‘Fix My House’. Tablets were collected before a pen and paper maths

exercise. The use of pen and paper and tablets was integrated seamlessly. Great care has been taken in planning this lesson. We love the way Adele allows children to call out without any loss of her classroom control – the children were enjoying the lesson, they were completely engaged and enthusiastic.

2. Grade 1 with Mrs Glenda Pietersen



The teacher told a story about a hen baking a cake then used her tablet to demonstrate ‘Cupcake Maker’ – lots of learner input through the process. The class was split into two groups with half of the class colouring a picture of a cake and cutting out candles to match their age to stick on their cake. The other group

used tablets with the Cupcake Maker app. The teacher is wonderful story-teller – she really made the story come alive! There was a great variety of activities – listening, speaking, colouring, cutting, pasting and using the tablets. It was all tied together in a wonderful way to provide an expansive experience of cake baking!

3. Grade 1 with Mrs Ellhaam Isaacs

The teacher tablet was used to introduce a new letter sound, using a Letterland app called ‘Annie Apple’. Learner tablets were used to practice writing the lowercase letter ‘a’. The teacher had bought the Letterland apps that she needed to use in her classroom out of her personal money.

The class was split into two groups due to the lack of sufficient tablets. One group (half the class) of learners sat at their desks and each coloured in a photocopied worksheet page of words using the letter ‘a’ while the other half used the Letterland app on the tablets. Children in the group without learner tablets were so keen to join the tablet group.

Mrs Isaacs has a beautifully gentle, caring manner and is very patient with learner demands.

Conclusion

The Grade R and Grade 1 teachers in both schools are on board, with the latest methods of integrating learning technologies into their teaching. The comments that the technology is helping with discipline issues was made again. All teachers continue to be very positive about the project. In turn, the teachers themselves are highly organised and are clearly putting extra effort into their teaching, their classroom resources and their learning environments. It was inspiring and a pleasure to spend time with these dedicated teachers and their learners. We left schools positive that the project will be sustained even after it has ended in March 2017.

Hlengiwe Mfeka, Janet Thomson and Tracey Butchart

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