

After-school maths clubs add up to learning + fun

By DEBBIE STOTT

As part of our work in the South African Numeracy Chair (Sanc) Project at Rhodes University, we have introduced after-school mathematics clubs for Grade 2 to 4 learners across a range of schools.

Since our first pilot club in 2011 we have established or supported the establishment of 10 clubs across eight schools in Grahamstown and the surrounding areas.

Local and national interest in our clubs is growing rapidly and we have run various teacher workshops on how to start and run clubs.

NGOs and after-care centres are also interested in using our model for after school and extension programmes.

We have freely downloadable booklets and materials for starting clubs on our website to support anyone who wishes to start and run a club.

After-school mathematics clubs provide rich learning opportunities for both learners and facilitators as they are free from curriculum and daily classroom pressures (such as assessment, large classes and moving learners at the same pace).

Our research in clubs suggests that clubs are successful in enabling learning across mathematics with a focus on conceptual understanding, procedural fluency and positive maths attitudes.



Debbie Stott is the Maths Club co-ordinator and PhD Fellow at the South African Numeracy Chair Project

Learners are expected to be active and engaged

We use a lot of dice, card and other games in the clubs as these encourage interaction and having fun.

The clubs are supportive communities where learners are encouraged to make sense of their mathematics by talking, arguing, explaining and asking questions about mathematics. Learners work as individuals, in pairs and alongside club mentors.

There is very little 'whole group teaching'. We also emphasise building mathematical confidence and we believe that mistakes are opportunities to learn and grow our brains.

After-school clubs aim to help learners think about and enjoy mathematics.

The clubs are voluntary and take place during out-of-school time.

The learners are expected to be active and engaged and club rules may differ from in-school time rules.

Clubs seem to work best when there are smaller groups of learners — perhaps between 10 and 15 and a mix of levels. A club can focus on:

- Maths recovery/remediation
- Extending and challenging beyond potential
- Individualised attention
- Strengthening mathematical dispositions, confidence and trajectories

If you are interested in starting a club, please visit our website at <http://www.ru.ac.za/sanc/mathsclubs/startingyourclub/> or contact Debbie on d.stott@ru.ac.za / 046 603 7358.

Our website also has links to other useful articles and research that we base our club work on.

See <http://www.ru.ac.za/sanc/numeracyresources/otherresources/index.html> and <http://www.ru.ac.za/sanc/numeracyresources/mathslinks/index.html>.

Building independence with routines

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Try not to fall into the trap of doing things for your young child, as while you are helping now you may be harming their further development.

Accomplishing tasks on his/her own will have a positive impact on your child's self-esteem and sense of independence.

Another crucial element of the morning routine is that your child has a good breakfast before leaving home.

If your child is hungry they will not be able to concentrate in the classroom.

Establish a night-time routine

This will support your morning routine and prepare your child mentally for the following day.

Ask your child to help you lay out their uniform so that everything they need is ready in the morning and you are not running around chasing the lost sock or shouting about a missing jersey in the 'rush hour' before school.

Remember that young children (5 years to 8 years) need a minimum of 11 hours sleep per night to function at their best.

This means that if you want your child to be receptive and alert in the classroom and therefore succeed academically, it is vital that you have a set, respected bedtime (this does not mean they can't enjoy the odd late night on the weekend or during holidays).



Kelly Long is Programme Coordinator, Gadra Education

Establish a homework routine.

Good habits established and affirmed early in a child's education will lead to successful independent study later.

In the early years there is a reliance on parents to form these habits by setting strict homework routines.

If your child is doing homework at aftercare, check each day in their homework diary and ask one or two questions about the work.

This will demonstrate to your child how important you believe homework is even if you are unable to complete it with them.

It can be a challenge at first if your family is not one where routine has had a place before but habits will be formed within a maximum of three weeks and will have a positive impact on your child's ability to not only succeed, but also thrive and enjoy their school career.