

Learn to Live

EDUCATIONAL & TECHNICAL SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMME

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Message from the Coordinator

Learn to Live is well-known for its excellent Numeracy and Literacy work in the school and the skills training workshops. The other part of our work and involvement with our youth of which we are very proud is our Life Skills program.

This is what makes us unique and distinguishes us from other schools. Our youth generally do not have a stable or supportive home environment. What young people in main stream education may take for granted, is missing in the formative years of our youth.

We have decided to make Life Skills the theme of the second edition of our newsletter. Although we do not have the space to go into all the specifics and detail, we trust that this will give you some insight into the wonderful work we do at Learn to Live.

May you all have a blessed Christmas season.

Christie Fritz
Coordinator

From the editor's desk

The young people at Learn to Live face many challenges:

- ✓ Drugs and alcohol
- ✓ Growing up in a violent society
- ✓ Risky sexual behaviour
- ✓ Exploitation and having their basic human rights violated
- ✓ Improper use of discretionary time
- ✓ Poverty
- ✓ Low literacy levels
- ✓ Lack of parental care
- ✓ Poor health
- ✓ Low self-esteem
- ✓ Crime and gangsterism
- ✓ Unemployment

Nelson Mandela said: "... if enough people were touched and imbued by the spirit of caring, it would in time change the whole landscape of how children are treated in this country." In response to these words and to address the challenges of our learners and trainees, the staff at Learn to Live includes Life Skills in their daily program. This is our attempt to provide our youth with tools to manage their lives and opportunities for personal growth and development.

Margaret Simons

Growing up in a violent society.

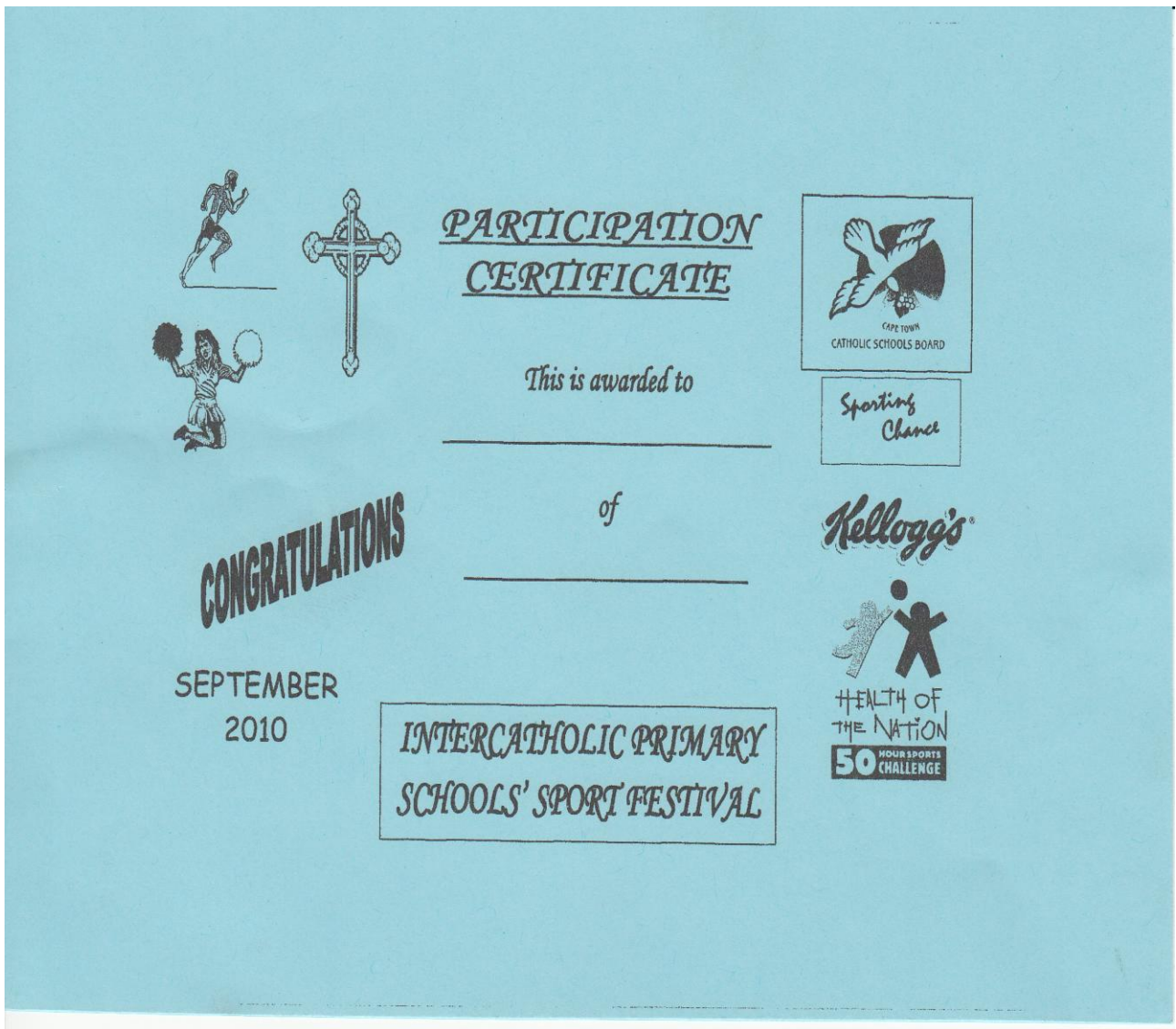
Many of our learners come from an environment of domestic violence, abuse, poverty, unemployment and have suffered neglect and rejection. They live their lives amidst dirty townships in overcrowded housing with no sanitation, hot water or electricity. They are frequently the children of large families whose parents work long hours and give them little time or attention. Many lost their parents to alcohol, drugs, domestic violence, violent crimes, gangsterism and AIDS. They see the world as an uncaring place. They get caught up in the cycle of violence and join gangs for financial support, for protection, to provide a sense of belonging and acceptance and for a sense of power.

Youth in my class believe that forming a gang is their best solution to protect them from other groups of boys/youth of other institutions and also the community at large, who sometimes discriminate against them and call them bergies / street kids. They become involved in illegal activities such as motor-vehicle theft and selling drugs. Some end up in juvenile detention centres.

As a sport facilitator I believe we can use sport to curb anti-social behaviour. It provides many opportunities for personal growth and development. Sporting activities provide a sense of belonging; they enable our youth to concentrate their energies; teach proper use of leisure time; foster a team spirit; develop social skills and how to interact with people; teach young people to set goals, live healthy lives, to handle pressure, face challenges, how rules work and how to play fair; promote self-confidence and increase feelings of self-worth; develop a sense of pride and accomplishment; provide an outlet for negative energy, tension and stress.

Sport also teaches healthy values like responsibility, respect, cooperation, unity, loyalty, team work, perseverance, fairness and compassion.

In September 2010 "Youth Unlimited" invited us to one of their tournaments. For 2 days our youth participated in soccer and touch rugby. Our learners enjoyed themselves, had lots of fun and displayed their talents. They were all rewarded with certificates of participation. After the tournament they showed their appreciation by making a project about the importance of these games. They were more confident, talked more positively about the future and showed more respect for each other's capabilities and energies.



Lungu Bakumeni
Sports Coach

Self-worth creates a happy classroom

Building up the learner's self-esteem is very important to me as a teacher. I find that as soon as learners start feeling good about themselves, their behaviour improves.

Abusive treatment, rejection, lack of love and care and poverty are some of the factors that contribute to the low self-esteem of our learners. The effects on them are usually bad behaviour, anger outbursts, depression and drug abuse. They are not interested in learning, have no ambition and have difficulty handling authority and discipline.

In my class I strive to create a comfortable and safe environment, where they get lots of individual attention, love, guidance and training in life skills. It is important to have firm rules in place. Learner must learn what appropriate behaviour is.

Life skills are trained via informal intervention e.g. games, informal discussions, play-acting and craftwork. The learners learn to respect themselves and others, to affirm each other, to distinguish between right and wrong, to be more disciplined and to respect authority.

The teacher must regularly praise their learners to make them feel special. The outcome often is a calmer and a more co-operative learner.

A certain learner came to Learn to Live about four years ago. He was like a ticking time-bomb. He had so much pent-up anger. He had no maths, reading and spelling skills at all. Gradually, over the years his behaviour improved as well as his schoolwork, because of the positive effect of consistent and ongoing life-skills training.

His anger outbursts became less, he learned to interact with his peers, his teacher and the volunteers, became more communicative, smiled more and learned to apologise when he did something wrong. His confidence grew as his skills in reading, maths and spelling improved. Praise and compliments played a major role in lifting his self-esteem and consequently changing his behaviour.

Elaine Brinkhuis
Afrikaans Intake Class

Rights, Responsibilities and Respect

Learning to set healthy personal boundaries and respecting the boundaries of others are essential skills that every human being needs to realize their full potential. Everyone has to learn to communicate to others their right to live with self-respect and self-worth and acknowledge the same in others. Through personal boundaries we are able to protect ourselves from being manipulated, abused or violated by others. Without these boundaries it is difficult to enjoy healthy relationships.

Many of our young people experience unhealthy boundaries because of having been abused, neglected or rejected. They do not enjoy their basic rights, are unable to express their needs and feelings and suffer from low self-esteem.

Teaching children about their rights is one way of affirming their dignity. It is equally important to teach them that there is a responsibility connected to each right.

After a series of lessons the senior Afrikaans class came up with the following:

1. Name:
Use the person's name in a respectful way

2. Cared for by parents, family and caregivers:
Say thank you for their work with a thank you note/letter

3. FOOD AND SHELTER:
Help to cook the food; clean the house; help dish up at meal times.

4. Health Care:
Do not use drugs; eat healthily; respect your body.

5. Protected from neglect and abuse:
Help others who are being abused

6. Education:
Be at school every day; respect the teachers and everybody else.

7. Protected from exploitative labour:
Defend children; encourage each other to come to school every day.

8. Feel safe
Don't drink and drive; take care of our siblings; help elderly people.

Margaret Simons
Life Skills Facilitator

Bigger, Better, Brighter

South Africa faces a huge unemployment challenge. Many young people struggle to find work and get involved in illegal activities.

A large number of Trainees at Learn to Live come from poverty stricken households. Many older family members are unemployed. By becoming entrepreneurs our trainees can create work for themselves, assist in eradicating poverty, contribute to their family income and improve their personal circumstances. In our skills workshops they learn particular skills and gain experience by making quality products for our clients.

Recently many young women joined the leather craft workshop. They did not readily take to working with leather. I decided to introduce other crafts like beading, knitting and sewing. South Africa is well-known for its beading. Knitting is being survived as a craft all over the world. To date they have completed 700 beaded products like earrings and necklaces and 10 knitted scarves. My next step is to teach them embroidery, crochet and fabric painting.

In order for our trainees to become entrepreneurs they need to know much more than how to produce a product. They need to learn things like drawing up a business plan, pricing, marketing and advertising. For this I plan to start partnerships. I made contact with SA Breweries and Standard Bank who are willing to come and talk to our trainees about entrepreneurship and small business development. Other possibilities include Junior Achievement South Africa, the SA Youth Chamber of Commerce, the SA Institute for Entrepreneurship, the National Youth Development Agency, Usobumvu Youth Fund and the Red Door.

It will also help if we are able to find a funder who can provide a start-up kit for promising young entrepreneurs.

Elizabeth February
Leather Craft Trainer

Lack of parental care

Ticket for Life: Wanda Oleson

Bandage scraped knees. Kiss away fears.

Watch their heartbreak and dry their tears.

Teach them to know what's right and what's wrong.

Show them how to be gentle and when to be strong.

Tell them you love them, and then let it show.

That's the easiest part of helping them grow.

There needs to be discipline, but don't over do it.

Praise and encouragement strengthens their spirit.

Show them respect for their feelings and thoughts.

They should know they're important, self-worth can't be bought.

Show them some patience and always be kind.

Developing minds make mistakes time to time.

Teach them to be the best they can be.

When they're happy within,

WHAT A RIDE LIFE CAN BE!

The above poem aptly describes what many of our learners have to go without.

Children without parental care find themselves at a higher risk of discrimination, inadequate care, abuse and exploitation, and their well-being is often insufficiently monitored.

The Constitution of our country gives children younger than 18 special rights:

- ✓ The right to family care or other care if the child is removed from the family
- ✓ The right to food, shelter and health care
- ✓ The right not to be abused or neglected
- ✓ The right not to be forced to work or be given work which is not suitable for a child.

In many households both parents are employed full-time. Some of our children grow up with elderly grandparents. In some households older siblings take the place of the parent while others have been placed in children's homes. This means that many children spend their after school hours on their own. This often results in a lack of parental control which can have significant effects on the child – both positive and negative.

Children who lack parental control often experience academic problems. They may also be more

likely to engage in other risky behaviour such as alcohol and drug abuse. These children are especially vulnerable in society. On the other hand there are people who have made it through life successfully while growing up without parents.

At Learn to Live educators often take on the role of parent. In my Life Skills program I address many of the problems that arise from lack of parental care. Many of our children often forget the core values such as respect, responsibility, honesty, trust and care. It is important to remind them so that we are able to build our relationships on these values. In my lessons I use newspaper articles, inspiring stories or learner behaviour to teach values and to get learners involved in role plays and group discussions.

One of my learners struggles to read. His literacy levels are extremely low. He recently received a silver medal in our skate boarding competition. During an individual session with him we used a skate board to teach certain words. The words were laid out on the floor. He had to imagine that he was skating towards each word. He was only allowed to continue to the next word if he recognized the previous one. His confidence on the skate board helped him to achieve in another area which previously was a big challenge to him.

Jacoba Kleinsmith
Senior Afrikaans Teacher

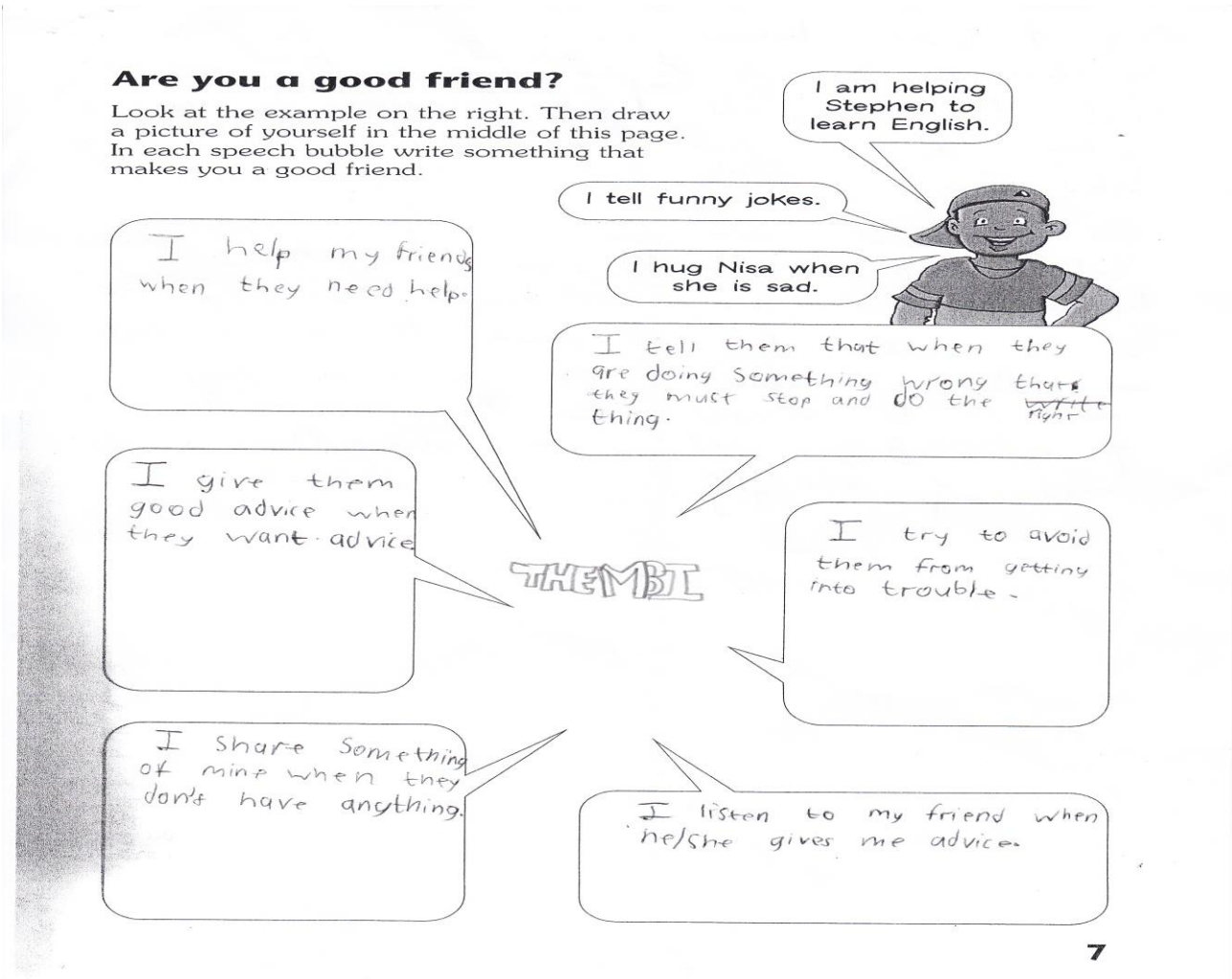
Drug abuse and peer pressure

Many of our learners use drugs. For the boys in my class it is easy to obtain these drugs on their way to school. At school they become aggressive and regular fights occur. In the classroom they fall asleep, do not pay attention and little learning takes place.

In one of my lessons we used role play to get the boys to start talking about drugs. After a general discussion it became clear that peer pressure is a major force behind their drug abuse. During adolescence it is important for young people to be accepted by their peers. This raises their self-worth and gives them a sense of belonging.

One of the things that young people can do is to be a good friend. Each learner completed a list of things that they can do to be a good friend:

Are you a good friend?
Look at the example on the right. Then draw a picture of yourself in the middle of this page. In each speech bubble write something that makes you a good friend.



I help my friends when they need help.

I tell funny jokes.

I hug Nisa when she is sad.

I tell them that when they are doing something wrong that they must stop and do the right thing.

I give them good advice when they want advice.

I try to avoid them from getting into trouble.

I share something of mine when they don't have anything.

I listen to my friend when he/she gives me advice.

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We also completed a questionnaire which learners used to find out if they are good friends to their peers:

1. *“Can you name your friend’s favourite activities?”*

She plays netball and loves to spend time with her friends.

2. *“When your friend is sick do you check on her/him?”*

I worry about my friend when she is sick and I will visit her.

3. *“When your friend needs support does she/he turn to you?”*

When my friend asks for advice I sit down and talk to her.

4. *“Do you know if your friend likes to be with others or on her own when she is sick?”*

When I visited her she told me that she likes to have people with her when she does not feel well.

5. *“When your friend is faced with important decisions does she/he discuss them with you?”*

We trust each other and we often talk about our problems.

The words from the song “Lean on Me” teach us the importance of a good friend:

“Lean on me, when you’re not strong

And I’ll be your friend

I’ll help you carry on

For it won’t be long

‘Til I’m gonna need

Somebody to lean on...”

Nkosazana Ntanjana

Senior Xhosa teacher