



# The Mamelodi Initiative



Winter 2012

## **The Challenge**

Nelson Mandela once said, “Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.” Unfortunately, dropout rates in Gauteng are extremely high, with only 40% of individuals age 20 and above in the province having passed Matric. Research shows that coloured and black learners are the most likely to drop out, while whites were the least likely,<sup>1</sup> making the issue of

dropouts even more urgent in the township communities. Increased dropout rates inherently means less job opportunities for our youth and leads to more reliance on governmental subsidies and higher crime rates in the community.

What research has found is that the drop-out rate dramatically increases from grades 10 to 12. Part of the reason for dropouts is an accumulation of a knowledge gap. The Annie E. Casey foundation and the Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University have both consistently pointed to summer learning loss as one of the major contributing factors to lack of success in school.<sup>2</sup> John Hopkins University has said that the summer learning loss for low-income or disadvantaged youth is at least double the summer learning loss of non-low income counterparts who traditionally have greater access to summer and holiday programming.<sup>3</sup>



Beyond competing against summer learning loss, many youth don't have the soft skills to succeed in secondary school. The report by the Department of Basic Education said that a “proportion of children starting Grade 9 [are] not in a position to finish secondary school,”<sup>4</sup> leading to a “high failure rate, repetition, and dropping out in grades 10 to 12.”<sup>5</sup>



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.citypress.co.za/SouthAfrica/News/School-drop-out-mystery-20100117>

<sup>2</sup> *Doesn't Every Child Deserve a Memorable Summer?*, Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University, 26 February 2008, 5 March 2008

<<http://www.summerlearning.org/media/researchandpublications/Memorable.Summer.Fact.Sheet.Final.2.26.08.pdf>>. ; *Doesn't Every Child Deserve a Memorable Summer?*, Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University, 26 February 2008, 5 March 2008  
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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.citypress.co.za/SouthAfrica/News/School-drop-out-mystery-20100117>



## **The Purpose**



The primary purpose of the Mamelodi Initiative Winter Program is to support the Mamelodi school system and Mamelodi community in giving our learners the skills necessary to succeed in school, careers, and life. Our vision is to see every child in Mamelodi achieve success in secondary school. The program aims to stifle holiday learning loss and provide essential skills to students so that they can

achieve what is expected of them at the secondary level and be prepared to continue to University. The Winter Program provides a safe space for students to “learn, grow, believe, and achieve.” Through the winter, students are exposed to strong role models, enriching workshops, stimulating activities, and essential academic skills. The program prioritizes building meaningful relationships with youth and endowing them with the understanding that they don’t have to be another statistic.

## **The Program**

The Mamelodi Initiative Winter Program is a three week holiday program, running Monday through Friday. The program ran from 9am – 2pm daily. An average of 218 youth (up from 154 in winter 2011) per day came for three weeks to the University of Pretoria, Mamelodi campus to engage in morning small groups, afternoon enrichment activities, and fun-filled opening and closing sessions.

Each day of program started and ended with an all-group session. Many mornings had powerful motivational speakers who talked about a variety of issues affecting high school students and people in general. This was also a time for general announcement, group games, and even singing. The afternoon session allowed for final announcements and our daily competition between our small groups (morning classrooms).



The small groups were essential to the success of the program. During small group time, a class of 6-12 learners and two teachers focused on maths and English. The most important part of small group came not with the curriculum, but with the relationships formed. Teachers and learners had ample time to bond, giving learners at least two strong role models to which they are able to ask questions.

The afternoons were set aside for enrichment workshops. Each learner participated in two workshops (the first workshop focused on individual accomplishments; the second

workshop focused on producing a collaborative performance). This year, we offered a total of fifteen workshops: eight individually focused workshops (rugby, soccer, netball, basketball, ultimate Frisbee, chess, arts and crafts, and community service and seven collaborative performance workshops (dance, drama, spoken word, beat box and rhythm, debate, singing, and photography). Each workshop was designed to provide an enriching experience to our students allowing them to explore new skills and gain new understandings of skills already possessed.



Finally, it is essential to discuss the unique caliber of the volunteers, comprised of local secondary school students, college students from around the world, and a host of individuals from South Africa and outside bringing expertise in education, business, ministry, and other areas. The program relies completely on volunteers. Co-teachers were predominantly current college students from either South Africa or the United States. The

program was designed so that each classroom would have one co-teacher from the United States (our volunteers from the United States were from a variety of top universities, including Harvard, MIT, and Duke) and one from South Africa (our volunteers from South Africa came from a variety of universities but predominantly from University of Pretoria).

The program has strong partnerships with the University of Pretoria, specifically with the School of Education and Engineering Department and Chi Alpha fellowship. There were more than thirty South African university volunteers and 10 local secondary school volunteers. In total, nearly half of the South African volunteer base was from Mamelodi, providing mentors to the youth from their own community. This set up encouraged cultural exchange and learning both in the classrooms and outside of them. In total, there were 60 volunteer co-teachers, 10 local secondary school volunteers, and 10 administrative adult volunteers (including two professional teachers).

## **The Goals**

The goals for the Mamelodi Initiative Winter Program focused on four areas: providing a safe and fun program, providing academic skills, providing enrichment activities, and providing individual and personal growth.

### *Programmatic*

- To create a safe and comfortable space for students to grow, learn, dream, and achieve
- To help youth have fun while learning
- To foster an environment where cultural exchange occurs



### *Academic Skills*

- To equip grade 7, 8, and 9 learners with basic tools necessary to succeed in school
- To review curricular expectations in math and English with learners to fill gaps from the previous semester

### *Enrichment Activities*

- To expose youth to new activities and experiences
- To engage youth in a culminating project to demonstrate new skills learned

### *Individuals*

- To provide positive role models for our youth
- To grant space for personal, emotional, and spiritual growth



### The Results

Throughout the program, we used several metrics to evaluate the success of the project. Our primary data collection methods were daily attendance, teaching hours, post-camp learner surveys, and pre- and post-assessments in both math and English. These metrics were meant to allow the Mamelodi Initiative to measure its progress towards reaching our goals (outlined above). Attendance is one indicator of overall satisfaction with the program. There were approximately 259 youth enrolled in the program, with an average of 218 youth per day (some learners missed a week due to family visits or other excused leaves of absence), giving us an **85% attendance rate** at a holiday program where students volunteer to attend.



Each learner received 26.25 hours of academic time and 22.5 hours of enrichment activities, for an effective total of **5,722.5 curriculum hours and 4,905 enrichment activity hours** delivered to Mamelodi youth this winter.

The pre- and post-tests in maths and English add further support to the curriculum hour input. In both maths and English, learners demonstrated

improvement on their post-assessments. **In maths, an average improvement of 8 percentage points (or one-half grade level of material)** was seen in learners. In English, **writing scores demonstrated a 12% increase** from their initial scores. As mentioned before, data shows that learners are expected to lose knowledge through holidays. However, we have not just stopped that loss, but shown increases in knowledge through our assessments.

Camper surveys provided exceptionally powerful data in our evaluation process. We received 200 learner responses (of the average 218 campers per day). Of the responses



received, **99.5% of campers responded they were excited to come, and 100% reported that they had a good time at camp. 100% of learners reported they felt safe at camp, and 99% said they learned something new.** Moreover **99.5% felt that their teachers were good role models, and 94% reported that they made new friends** at camp. An overwhelming **99.5% of learners said they would recommend the program** to friends. Statements made by learners in the open-ended questions were also overwhelmingly positive (see the thoughts from learners section) and further indicated satisfaction with the program.

The results inherently lack understanding of the long-term effect of the program on Mamelodi learners. The Mamelodi Initiative plans to track its students from Grade 8 through Matric year and beyond. Though this data collection will take time, the Mamelodi Initiative is confident that this program will make a long-term difference in the lives of our learners.

### Sustainability

The Mamelodi Initiative has built a sustainable volunteer-reliant model. Running its fourth successful holiday program, the Mamelodi Initiative has only continued to grow. We have seen learner numbers grow (from 100 learners in Jan 2011 to 259 learners June 2012 with more than 100 learners on the waitlist), our volunteer numbers grow (from approximately 20 to approximately 80), and our partnerships grow. We have several returning volunteers each year (this year we had 16 South African and 7 American volunteers returning for a second or greater time (some returning for their fourth program).



We have also strengthened our partnerships. Cru has committed to sending US volunteers every January and June-July to act as co-teachers in the holiday programming. Furthermore, the University of Pretoria has committed their support to the program through the use of university space on the Mamelodi campus free of charge and through their commitment of student volunteers. We have official partnerships with Chi Alpha, a student group on campus, and the Department of Education. The Mae Jemison Reading Room, a partnership between the University of Pretoria and the US Embassy, has been a pivotal partner in recruitment of kids and as a year-round resource for our learners to use for research and homework needs. Formal local school partnerships are the cornerstone of our success, as teachers and administrators are essential for effective recruitment of learners. Formal partnerships exist on both the primary and secondary level. All of these community partners are represented on the Mamelodi Initiative working group.

We have formalized a thirteen member steering committee comprised of past volunteers. This committee is charged with all planning aspects of the Jan 2013 project. The Mamelodi Initiative is committed to being part of the Mamelodi community as long as the community desires the program to exist.

### Next Steps

The Mamelodi Initiative sees three major next steps in the development of this program. First, the Mamelodi Initiative hopes to continue to grow deep relationships with local schools and to foster relationships with local and provincial government officials to ensure the program is truly supporting the needs of the schools. A major step forward in this area comes with the formation of the Mamelodi Initiative working group, a group composed of a variety of community partners from the US Embassy, the University of Pretoria, and the community at large. Second, the Mamelodi Initiative plans to strategically expand to include up to grade 10 by 2013. Each year, the program will add a new 8<sup>th</sup> grade class while continue to support the rising grades. During this expansion, the program hopes to continually track the progress of its students. Finally, in the coming year a stronger emphasis will be placed on resource development to ensure continued funding for this important effort. This will largely be taken on by the new steering committee.



**Mamelodi Initiative Winter Program, Budget June – July, 2012**

**Income:**

Anonymous Donation	R40 000,00
Cru	R9 037,00

**TOTAL Income:** **R49 037,00**

**Expenses:**

Supplies:

Classroom Supplies	R8 304,95	
Workshop Supplies	R613,70	
Supplies, Other	<u>R2 046,50</u>	
TOTAL Supplies		R10 965,15

Food:

Program Lunch (250 learners; 60 volunteers)	<u>R32 174,15</u>	
TOTAL Food:		R32 174,15

Transportation:

Taxi and Petrol Expenses, Volunteers	<u>R5 897,70</u>	
TOTAL Transportation:		R5 897,70

**TOTAL Expenses** **R49 037,00**

In-Kind Resources:

Classroom Space	In-Kind (University of Pretoria, Mamelodi Campus)
Printing, Copying, Space	In-Kind (Mae Jemison Reading Room)

***NB: the US Dollar to RSA Rand conversion is 1:8. All values above are denoted in Rand***





## Thoughts from Learners

### WHEN ASKED TO NAME ONE THING THEY LEARNED, LEARNERS RESPONDED

To solve for x and so much more

I learned about **RESPECTING** my teacher and **EVERYBODY** around me.

I learned that we are one people but different cultures, and we should love each other.

How to express my feelings and understand math better

*I have learned math; the algebra one is cool. I can't wait for school; I want them to teach us algebra as well!*

Never, ever take other people for granted

How to make maths fun!!

I learned how to be myself

**CONFIDENCE**

*I learned lots of things like sports and other things that I haven't learned at school. I am so happy to be here, and I am not happy because this program is going to end.*

*Not to lose hope*

### WHEN ASKED WHAT THEY WOULD CHANGE ABOUT PROGRAM, LEARNERS RESPONDED:

**I would extend time so that it can be long and very exciting**

I wish the program could be my school forever

*I would convince my friends and family to come next year*

The program was good. I wish it would be a Saturday school as well.

**Come here every time when we close schools**

**WHEN ASKED TO TELL US ONE GREAT THING ABOUT PROGRAM, LEARNERS RESPONDED:**

*In this program, we eat and write class tests and we play and don't fight each other. We respect one another!*

We were able to **show our talents**

*We get to understand things that we didn't, and that education is important as it is the key to your future.*

**The teachers are very kind towards the learners**

**YOU GET TO MEET NEW PEOPLE, HAVE FUN, AND LEARN.**

**The lunch of course is delicious**

They know how to teach; they understand

We were playing and learning at the same time.

*There is love, joy, and peace*

**We achieve a lot.**

It teaches us the most important things in life

**WHEN ASKED TO SHARE A FAVORITE PART ABOUT WORKSHOP, LEARNERS RESPONDED:**

*[Spoken Word] It taught me how to be confident when making a speech in front of people.*

**[Debate] I have learned not to be shy**

**[Drama] I got to get out in front of people**

**[Photography] I got to explore the different parts of our community and communicate with other people.**

**[Singing] We created our own song in the singing workshop!**

**[Soccer and Debate] they helped me gain confidence in myself.**

**[Service] It was good making friends with the children at the SOS Children's Village**

**[Ultimate Frisbee] It is very fun to learn a new sport that you never played**



## **THANK YOU!!**

*We would like to extend a special thank you to all of the partners that made this winter program possible, most notably:*

**The University of Pretoria, Mamelodi Campus**

**Edwin Smith, Director of University of Pretoria Mamelodi Campus**

**Gernia van Niekerk, University of Pretoria Community Engagement Director**

**Hanlie Dippenaar, Lecturer for Community Engagement in Education, UP**

**Martina Jordaan, Professor for Community Engagement in Engineering, UP**

**Cru (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ)**

**Chi Alpha – University of Pretoria**

**Our Partner Secondary Schools:**

**Gatang, Lehlabile, Solomon Mahlangu Freedom School, and Tsako-Thabo**

**The Mae Jemison Reading Room and Staff**

**The Embassy of the United States of America in South Africa**

**Cru Staff: Todd and Tara Humphreys**

**Anonymous Donors**

**Dana Mahan, Missions Outreach Director of Willows Methodist Church**

**All of our AMAZING Volunteers!**

