

SOCIAL INNOVATIONS EDUBYTE 7 2020, INTERMEDIATE PHASE AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMES DEVELOPING INDEPENDENCE

Independent evaluations have found that learners at PEP Academy – an afternoon programme for Grade 4-5 learners - improved academically. But as importantly, learners developed confidence, independence and a positive attitude to learning.

Let's look more closely at independence: 75% of alumni have said that that thanks to the afternoon classes, they are now better equipped to learn on their own.

Zikhona: "I improved my marks and I started helping others in maths and in English in the afternoon classes and at school."

Thando: "The classes built my self-esteem. I learned that maths is not a difficult subject and now I find it easy." She told us that she learned to solve mathematical problems independently.

Why is independence an important part of learning?

What kind of learners are in your class? Take a sample of learners and for each of them, tick the blocks that best describe each one of them. A learner will benefit enormously at school and after school if the teacher encourages him to become more independent and to take responsibility for his learning journey.

DEPENDENT		INDEPENDENT	
Relies heavily on the teacher		Can start exercises and work on her own	
Unaware of strengths and weaknesses		Knows strengths and weaknesses	
Sees classroom work in isolation of the real world		Connects what she learns in class with the real world	
Thinks the teacher is wholly responsible for her learning		Takes responsibility for her own learning and is aware of different learning strategies	
Will only work when incentives/rewards/grades are offered		Is motivated by his own progress at school	
Does not reflect on how well he is learning		Reflects on how well he is learning and his progress at school	

There are many ways that a teacher can encourage independence. Here are three:

1. Self and peer assessment: As far as possible, give learners responsibility for their own assessment and their own progress. Guide learners through assessing their own work after each learning task or exercise. Or ask a pair of learners to mark and assess each other, so giving the child the opportunity of being a teacher. If a child assesses his own work, he will best understand where he is succeeding and what he still needs to learn. If he does this on his way to a goal which is clear to him, you are helping that child build his independence.

For example, before a child hands in an exercise, the teacher could encourage her to check it carefully alone, or with a friend, using a checklist such as this one. This will encourage self and peer editing.

1. Did you check your spelling carefully? Use a dictionary for words you are unsure about.	<u>Y/N</u>
2. Did you use a capital letter at the beginning of each sentence?	<u>Y/N</u>
3. Did you put a full stop at the end of each sentence?	<u>Y/N</u>
4. Are your sentences clear and easy to read?	<u>Y/N</u>
5. Do you have the heading and date on the first page?	<u>Y/N</u>
6. Is your handwriting neat?	<u>Y/N</u>
7. Did you finish everything you were asked to do?	<u>Y/N</u>

2. Working in groups: Encourage learners to work in groups. Teachers tend to put learners in pairs, **but groups of three are often better** – particularly if you put one of your “star” learners in each group of three. This allows learners to teach each other and to learn from their peers rather than always relying on the teacher. This builds both confidence and independence. As the teacher is the overall facilitator of group work, think about how you will help groups work together by providing some scaffolding and guidance – think about:

- Does the exercise need to include group work? Can the task be broken down into meaningful, equitable parts that you can guide the learners through?
- Break down the work for students ahead of time. So, if they are working in groups of three, break down the tasks for them to it is clear to each learner what her role is. Over time, let the learners take responsibility for breaking down the tasks themselves.

3. Create an “anchor” area in your classroom with fun activities for learners who have finished their work early. This can be a poster or a box with activities to choose from. This is not more of the same work, but rather activities that are fun – so learners will be motivated to finish their work, check it using the self assessment tips above, and spend time doing something fun as a reward. Here are some examples of anchor corners.

I finished my classwork, what should I do now?

First, check your work! Then, grab your ANCHOR ACTIVITIES notebook

Anchor Activities

Spelling / Word Study

- Create newspaper headlines using your words
- Create an advertisement for a product using your words
- Create a crossword puzzle or word search using your words
- Write a poem with your words
- Write rhyming words and find the definitions in the dictionary

Reading & Writing

- Write a book or movie review
- Write a letter to the author of a book you've enjoyed
- Design illustrations to go with a favorite chapter book
- Compare & Contrast two books by the same author or from the same genre
- Rewrite the ending of a book you've read
- Create a script from a book you've read

Social Studies

- Choose an important person from history and write them a letter
- Compare & Contrast two events that took place at different times in history
- Draw a map of a place we've studied or a place you've traveled to. Create a travel brochure
- Use an atlas to write about 5 places you would love to visit. Why are these your top choices?

Math

- Create word problem stories
- Play #100 words game
A=16 B=24 ... Z=264
- Complete or create a Sudoku puzzle
- Complete a brain teaser

Remember, you can always journal about today's lesson or activity,

or complete a worksheet

