

Physical education boost

Nationwide programme brought to New Brighton schools improves fitness – and maths

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IMPROVED physical activity, learning and discipline and are some of the spin-offs of a nationwide schools programme called Move-It, Moving Matters. The initiative is being run at 120 public schools in South Africa and focuses on interventions to address the lack of physical education.

The programme, in which teachers are trained to coach pupils, was developed by Iconage Holdings in response to research which indicated more than half of South Africa's pupils were moderately active and about 1% sedentary.

It has been introduced to seven schools in Nelson Mandela Bay's New Brighton township, and at five of these schools the programme is sponsored by tyre manufacturing company Continental SA. At one of the beneficiary schools, Ben Sinuka Primary, a significant change in pupils' physical activity has been seen since they started the programme last year.

Ben Sinuka Primary teacher Nomakhwezi Mstzi said the programme had helped both teachers and pupils since its introduction.

"It encourages physical activity and discipline in the learners, and helps us identify children who require more attention in terms of physical and skills development," she said.

"With so many other distractions, our children simply aren't nearly as active as they should be, so we can ensure they receive regular and focused physical exercise that makes them healthier and improves their overall learning ability."

Teacher Lungelwa Maninjwa, who was trained to coordinate the programme at Ben Sinuka Primary, said the programme had helped pupils in many educational areas.

"Not only are they getting physically active, they are also learning things that help them in other learning areas, like diagonal throwing, which helps them understand diagonals better when dealing with them in maths classes," she said.

"We do things like basic ball skills – batting and throwing balls and so on. This programme is also a fun way to get them to enjoy exercise and boosts their morale, as they look forward to using the

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FUN MATTERS: Pupils at Ben Sinuka Primary School in New Brighton do physical exercises as part of the Move-It, Moving Matters programme under the guidance of Grade 5 teacher Lungelwa Maninjwa
Picture: EUGENE COETZEE

equipment provided during the classes."

The programme was launched by former University of the Witwatersrand physical education head Dr Claire Nicholson in 2009, during the hype building up to the 2010 Fifa World Cup, and was punted as a legacy project of the global tournament.

Equipment and especially developed teacher and pupil manuals that provide a step-by-step guide to training sessions are given to schools.

Teachers implementing the programme undergo regular training and each pupil registered in the programme is regularly assessed to track progress.

Nicholson said although legislation on schools required every pupil to have 90 minutes of physical activity a week, many teachers were not qualified to teach physical education as the subject was removed from the curriculum in 1999.

"Since then children have been motorically com-

promised, and teachers remain under-prepared and under-resourced to enable their learners to develop these critical life skills, and particularly in the underprivileged schools in our country," she said.

In the Eastern Cape, the project has partnered with the department of human movement sciences at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, which has established a field team under the direction of senior lecturer Dr Cheryl Walter.