



## OUR VISION

Sustainable **whole-school transformation**. Schools that offer a **quality, future-based early education**, and teachers who see themselves as **agents of change** in children's lives.

## OUR MISSION

To enable preschool to deliver a quality early education that prepares today's children to be tomorrow's citizens.

## OUR METHODS

We nurture an entrepreneurial mind-set, problem-solving, innovation, critical thinking, collaboration, communication and creativity.

- We enable collaboration and capacitation: mutual engagement and joyful learning that takes an asset-based approach and values indigenous knowledge and skills.
- We offer professional development and sustained mentoring that supports implementation, national curricula outcomes, and accredited ECD training initiatives.
- We partner with funders and stakeholders committed to meaningful, sustainable changes in education and society.

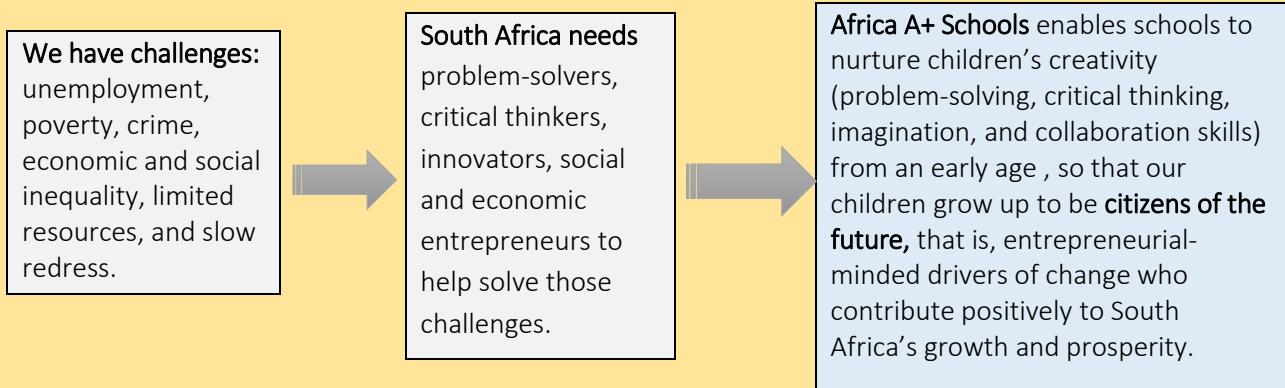
## WHY WE DO IT

- A quality preschool education offers the **best return on investment**<sup>1</sup>
- We **prepare children for the future**:
  - According to the World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs* report:
    - *'Proficiency in new technologies is only one part of the 2022 skills equation, however, as 'human' skills such as creativity, originality and initiative, critical thinking, persuasion and negotiation will likewise retain or increase their value, as will attention to detail, resilience, flexibility and complex problem-solving. Emotional intelligence, leadership and social influence as well as service orientation also see an outsized increase in demand relative to their current prominence*<sup>2</sup>
    - *An estimated 65% of children entering primary school today are likely to end up working in jobs that do not yet exist.'*

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.highscope.org/file/Research/PerryProject/specialsummary\\_rev2011\\_02\\_2.pdf](http://www.highscope.org/file/Research/PerryProject/specialsummary_rev2011_02_2.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Bolding added. Key findings of report p. ix. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Future\\_of\\_Jobs\\_2018.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2018.pdf)

- **Research** confirms that a creative arts-infused approach in schools<sup>3</sup> results in:
  - excellent academic results,
  - happier and more motivated teachers,
  - better attendance because children enjoy an arts-infused approach to learning,
  - fewer discipline problems.
- **Creativity** is now as important in education as literacy.<sup>4</sup>
- We address the **South African context**:



## WHO WE ARE

In 2014, Standard Bank, the Department of Economic Development & Tourism (DEDAT), the Craft + Design Institute (CDI), and Oklahoma A+ Schools, conceived Africa A+ Schools as a pilot project and an innovative educational initiative that could sustainably redress the South Africa context. Ten local arts and early childhood facilitators were recruited and mentored for three years by Oklahoma A+ Schools:



<sup>3</sup> <http://www.okaplus.org/okaresearch>

<sup>4</sup> Quote by Sir Ken Robinson [https://www.ted.com/talks/ken\\_robinson\\_says\\_schools\\_kill\\_creativity?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity?language=en)

During this mentorship, Africa A+ recruited and trained six Western Cape preschools over three years, and in 2019 we are still mentoring and supporting 60 preschool educators and principals. In 2018, Africa A+ graduated as a lifetime member of the international A+ Schools network.

Today, Africa A+ Schools is a registered NPO, headed by Dr Giulietta Harrison, with a head office in the Eastern Cape and a satellite office in the Western Cape. Africa A+ is currently partnering with the Kouga Wind Farm Community Development Trust and the Centre for Early Childhood Development on an ECD project in the Eastern Cape.

## HOW WE DO IT

**Africa A+ is not** a curriculum, a quick fix, a short-term solution, or a convenient cost-cutting ‘no one size fits all’ programme.

### **Africa A+ is:**

- A network of schools that uses an internationally recognised<sup>5</sup> educational methodology that enables each school to think, plan and teach more creatively regardless of the context in which the school finds itself. Africa A+ has adapted the A+ approach to the South African context.
- Sustainable:
  - Africa A+ offers each school a minimum of three years of professional development and implementation support, because changing mind-sets and behaviour takes time.
  - Africa A+ develops and leaves behind a team of community A+ trainers who can continue to support local schools.
  - Africa A+ works with the school in the context they find themselves because, when we are gone, the context remains.
  - Africa A+ enables schools to identify their unique needs and find ways to thrive despite the context.
- A whole school approach. Everyone is on board and involved – principals, teachers, classroom assistants, after care staff, administrators, service staff, parents, carers and community representatives.
- Africa A+ supports the aims and outcomes of national curricula, that is, Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) and the 0-4 years National Curriculum Framework (NCF).

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<sup>5</sup>Sir Ken Robinson: “There’s a great program in the Midwest called A+ Schools, which works with schools all across that region to enhance the curriculum to include creative approaches to teaching and learning.”  
<https://blog.ted.com/ted> and reddit 1/

Central to the A+ approach is a set of eight principles called the A+ Essentials:

<p><b>Arts</b></p> <p>Valued as essential to the learning process. Taught daily and included in planning.</p>	<p><b>Multiple Learning Pathways</b></p> <p>Provides opportunities for learning in a variety of ways because nobody is the same. Accommodates different learning styles and entry levels.</p>	<p><b>Experiential Learning</b></p> <p>Hands-on, real-world application of learning. A concrete, play-based, differentiated approach supporting development of innovative, critical thinking.</p>	<p><b>Collaboration</b></p> <p>Acknowledges and intentionally strengthens the role that parent, caregivers and communities play in children 's development.</p>
<p><b>Curriculum</b></p> <p>A+ is not a curriculum. The arts are integrated into the curriculum and learning programmes.</p>	<p><b>Enriched Assessment</b></p> <p>Evaluates achievement by allowing children to demonstrate mastery through multiple means.</p>	<p><b>Climate</b></p> <p>Teachers and children are respected, and the creative process is highly valued. There is a common vision.</p>	<p><b>Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Organises time, space, technology and resources to support transformative learning.</p>

## WHAT WE DO

Africa A+ contributes on two levels:

1. Africa A+ recruits, contracts, and **develops a team of local Africa A+ facilitators** who can continue to support the A+ preschools in their community once the initial project is completed. This team of early childhood practitioners and artists spend a minimum of three years being trained, mentored and supported by the Africa A+ team.
2. Africa A+ **enables preschool to deliver a quality early education that prepares today's children to be tomorrow's citizens.** Preschools apply to join the Africa A+ Schools network. Each member school is contracted for a minimum of three years to do the following:

<p><b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b> for the whole school</p>	<p>On-site A+ <b>IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT</b> for the whole school throughout the year</p>	<p><b>LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT and SUPPORT</b> for principals and school leaders</p>
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The first year begins with a five-day orientation programme for the whole school. From thereon, Africa A+ engages each school in specific activities based on their needs, entry level, context and the changes the staff would like to realise in their school. Here is an example of a typical year:

YEAR-1 IN THE LIFE OF AN AFRICA A+ SCHOOL	
January	Whole school: 5 days professional development: Orientation to A+
February	Whole school: needs assessment Leadership: needs assessment Research: data capturing
March	Whole school: Term 1 workshop (based on needs assessment) Leadership: Term 1 workshop (based on needs assessment)
April	Teachers and assistants: observation visits to model ECD sites
May	Whole school: Term 2 workshop (based on needs assessment) Leadership: Term 2 support meeting Teachers and assistants: observation visits to model ECD sites
June	Leadership: Term 2 workshop (based on needs assessment)
July	Whole school: 1 day professional development: follow up to orientation
August	Whole school: Term 3 workshop (based on needs assessment) Leadership: Term 3 workshop
September	Whole school: review of A+ implementation Leadership: Term 3 support meeting Teachers and assistants: observation visits to model ECD sites
October	Leadership: 1 day professional development
November	Research: data capturing

Africa A+ monitors and evaluates all its projects to understand and improve impact. Although Africa A+ works primarily with principals and teachers, the impact is directed at the children.

## WORDS AND THOUGHTS

The Africa A+ principals and teachers say the following about A+:

'For adults, a lot of us think we can't do things. Also, because of what we went through... If a person says you're stupid, you take on that you're stupid. If you're given the choice to try different things, make mistakes, that's how you grow, get more confident. Give kids free choice, they can see they can choose, accomplish something, become more independent.'		'Changed my thought pattern... I am more comfortable bringing music and movement and more excited to come to class. I am not so rigid, have opened up.'
'I see <b>growth in children</b> ; they become more free in their creativity, thinking and reasoning'	'It's okay for children to be different there are different ways (of learning and expression)	'... but I didn't learn this at college!  <b>Why isn't every school like A+?</b>
'A challenge is changing staff's understanding of what creativity is. It's difficult to break habits – it will be a three year process. You have to get people to look with different eyes...'		'It [A+] <b>challenged me to think, inspired me</b> not to be brought down by CAPS. It gave me more confidence as an educator'
It <b>opened a lot of thinking</b> – you have to think about essential questions, overarching questions, what is it that you want the child to learn. <b>It was profound in a sense.</b> It can work and it did work'	<b>I had to make a lot of changes...</b> It was just my perception and the fact that I closed myself off to learning. I saw it as a nuisance in all honesty. But <b>it was a learning curve</b> and it is ongoing'	I'm used to being told what to do. <b>I like the way I was taught to think critically and be creative.'</b>

## FINAL WORD...

*“...the world no longer rewards people just for what they know— search engines know everything—but for what they can do with what they know, how they behave in the world, and how they adapt. Because that is the main differentiator today, education is becoming more about creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration; about modern knowledge, including the capacity to recognize and exploit the potential of new technologies; and, last but not least, about the character qualities that help fulfilled people live and work together and build a sustainable humanity”*

Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills-OECD<sup>6</sup>:



## CONTACT

Video about us: <https://youtu.be/IWGaNrsnHXY>

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Branch number: 198765

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<sup>6</sup> The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is a unique forum where the governments of 34 democracies with market economies work with each other, as well as with more than 70 non-member economies to promote economic growth, prosperity, and sustainable development.