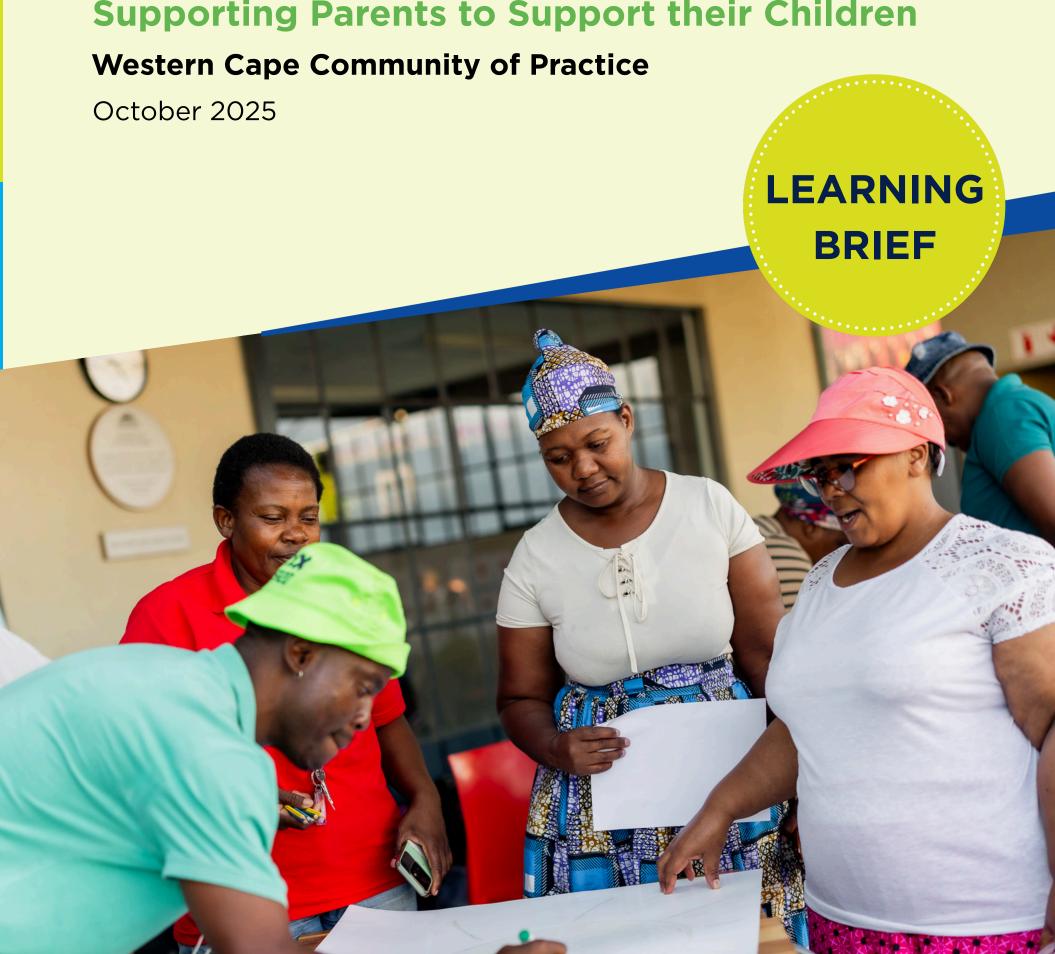


PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT **IN ASPS**

Supporting Parents to Support their Children



"How can we intervene to help this learner improve behaviour and not be expelled from school?"

"What role can we play in informing parents of their rights and responsibilities?"

"My child wants to go to the mall with me, what do I do?"

These are the types of questions that parents and After School many Programmes (ASPs) are sitting with. This learning brief captures the insights strategies gathered from the Western Cape Community of Practice (CoP), held in September, 2025, on how ASPs and parents can work together to create an ecosystem of support for learners. These gatherings are invaluable thev foster learning peer collaboratively solve common problems.

The message is clear: the involvement of parents and caregivers in ASPs is crucial to improving learning outcomes. When parents are engaged, children are more likely to maintain good school attendance, achieve academically, develop social-emotional skills, and thrive! However, attaining consistent parental engagement is often a challenge due to issues like communication, socio-economic barriers and parental capacity.

What's Holding Us Back?

Approximately 18.8% of South African children live with neither biological parent; it may be that they live with grandparents, relatives, or another type of care arrangement. Comparatively, 45.5% of children live with just their mothers and only 4.3% with only their fathers. As a result, ASPs frequently work with learners and families facing diverse psychosocial and economic pressures and often dealing with learners' various social and behavioural issues.

We know that parental involvement can have a huge impact on learners' progress and their overall success, yet in many ASPs parents are not engaged or even aware of the ASP that their children attend.



When we invite the parents, and they don't attend, it affects the child's confidence and their mental well-being."

KEY CHALLENGES:

Communication and engagement:

Communication with parents is infrequent and non-reciprocal, often leading to low attendance at meetings, unrealistic expectations of one another, and misunderstandings around the ASPs offering and its value-add beyond an aftercare service.

Socio-economic and structural barriers: Poverty, unemployment, and reliance on grants are often paired with substance use, domestic violence, or single-parent homes make it difficult for many parents to support their children to participate in ASPs. The reality is that when transport money competes with buying food, attending an ASP event becomes a challenge.

Parental skills and capacity: Alongside these structural challenges, parents are not always able to spend quality time with their children or recognise their developmental needs, and many lack confidence in their parenting skills and rely on the parenting styles they themselves experienced.

Lilitha Madikizela from
Life Choices noted that,
they themselves don't
know what is required of
them [as parents] as they
weren't role modelled
this.

It is important to note that many parents deeply desire the best for their children. These challenges should not be seen as blaming parents, but rather as an acknowledgement of the contextual factors that limit their ability to participate more fully.

SO HOW CAN ASPS HELP?

Shared Strategies: Addressing Challenges Together



Clear & Consistent Communication:

- Conduct an entry interview with learners and their parents to establish rapport.
- Have genuine conversations with parents about their challenges.
- Conduct home visits to reconnect with families when learners disengage, and to hear directly from parents about what their needs are.
- Maintain consistent contact through the same staff member to build trust and familiarity.
- Share regular academic and behavioural updates so parents can better support their children.
- Use multi-media communication (letters, WhatsApp, calls, social media, community mobilisation) to reach parents in different ways.
- Invite parents to "connect days" rather than formal "meetings.".



Form Partnerships

- Strengthen links with families by partnering with schools and teachers as trusted liaisons.
- Expand reach and credibility through collaboration with churches, community organisations, and the police.
- Place child safeguarding at the centre by reporting abuses, identifying risks, and educating parents on their rights and responsibilities.

Involve & Engage Parents

- Celebrate learners with graduations and prizegiving events that encourage parent participation.
- Create small acts for involvement through asking for small contributions (i.e., fundraisers, transport support, training sessions, reading clubs).

Once parents see the value of the lessons, they will come back"





LESSONS FROM LIFE CHOICES

Life Choices runs an effective Family Affairs Programme, contributing its expertise on parental skills and engagement to the wider community.

The Family Affairs programme recognises that families are the pillars of community, and their wellbeing is directly connected to the wellbeing of the child. Therefore, when the family structure is fragmented children are affected.

Recognising this, the Family Affairs Programme helps parents obtain the appropriate parenting skills that contribute to their children's healthy development. ASPs also play a vital supportive role in learners' development and therefore ASPs must work together **with** parents as part of this ecosystem.

4 practical strategies for ASPs to support parents

- Offer incentives for participation.

 Parents can be motivated to attend events more frequently when the attendance is measured with a point system directly linked to incentives.
- Inform parents about the available resources they have access to e.g. WCED provides learners with counselling support.

- Hold forum discussions, parent fun days, and workshops that educate on topics such as developmental stages and the hierarchy of needs associated with each phase.
- Utilise social development organisations and agencies that offer social workers and counselling services to support children and their families during ASP events

The combination of these strategies provides a holistic approach to parent involvement that balances trust-building, connection, and practical support. ASPs can strengthen parental involvement in their programmes by helping parents understand their important and unique role, equipping them with practical skills, fostering strong relationships, building bridges to the programme, and empowering them.



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