arepp: Theatre for Life
presents

Spick & Span

28 June 2016

Mac Monkey in a hand-washing adventure

in partnership with UNICEF and the Department of Basic Education
arepp: Theatre for Life has just completed a 3-year Applied Theatre puppet show project, which performed to over 130,000 Grade R to 3 learners in 5 provinces around South Africa.

In partnership with UNICEF and the Department of Basic Education arepp: Theatre for Life produced and performed a puppet show presentation aimed at developing Life-skills and Self-efficacy in relation to Basic Health & Hygiene, Germs, Sickness, Nutrition and Tuberculosis amongst Foundation Phase (Grade R to 3) learners.

The 3-year project began in April 2013 and concluded in March 2016, with our teams travelling to the deeply rural parts of South Africa. The show was performed in isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sepedi and Afrikaans in KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape respectively.

The target schools nominated by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) for this project were rural and severely under resourced Primary Schools. Approximately 90% of all learners performed to were exempt from paying school fees, and 30% were known by the schools’ administration to be Orphans or Vulnerable Children (OVC’s).

At the conclusion of the project, arepp: Theatre for Life performed 976 shows in 438 schools to 137,057 learners.
“Performed in the real-life context and home language of the audience, the productions are specifically designed to be performed as a Life Orientation lesson in the schools’ daily schedule and to complement and support the outcomes of the national Life Orientation curriculum statements.”

**Applied Theatre**

Using a rights-based approach, each of the arepp:Theatre for Life shows is specifically designed for the targeted age group to foster identification and emotional recognition. The shows incorporate the current music, the sayings and the ‘attitude’ of that age group, and address the audience on their level, in their home language, with stories from their context.

Each performance is followed by a facilitated peer discussion in an open and non-judgemental forum, which encourages problem solving and contextualising of the issues presented.

The focus is on choices, problem solving and self image. The intention is to enhance and encourage the development of the audience’s knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to enable them to make sound, informed and honest decisions about themselves and their relationships; for the present and in the long term.

The productions take a rights-based approach, and are specifically designed to develop the audiences’ self image, responsibility, and decision-making and problem-solving skills in relation to the show’s themes, while simultaneously exposing them to the thrill, excitement and enjoyment of a theatre show. They fully support, enhance and compliment the Life Skills/Orientation Curriculum, and have the endorsement of the Departments of Basic Education, Health, and Social Development.
No Monkey Business: Spick & Span

Show Synopsis

Aimed at Grade’s R to 3, No Monkey Business: Spick & Span deals with basic health and hygiene, germs, sickness, nutrition and Tuberculosis.

It's Banana Burgers for lunch, Mac Monkey’s favourite favourite! He is so excited that he hurries to make sure he gets the biggest one, while his best friend, Vanda Vulture, dutifully washes her hands first, slowing her down. Sure enough, Mac gets the biggest Banana Burger, but in so doing he's not entirely truthful when Thandi brings up the question of hand washing.

Later, Mac starts to cough and sneeze, but he is afraid to tell Thandi because he's scared that it's because he didn't wash his hands and that, as punishment, Thandi will take him to the horrible clinic! He tries to hide away but Vanda, still smarting over his earlier dishonesty, tells on him. Thandi takes Mac to Nurse Hippo who, with the assistance of Germy Germ and the audience, explains to Mac how and why people become ill, what germs are, what a coughing germ like TB is, how to wash hands and cough properly so as to not catch or spread germs, and how to look after himself in the future... But unfortunately not before Mac gives both Thandi and Vanda his cold.

The show incorporates the basic symptoms of Tuberculosis, how to recognise them, and how to protect against them, along with other illnesses. Basic health and illness are put into context and explained, along with the notions of adherence to medicine regimens, and most importantly how to cough and wash hands properly to protect oneself and others from spreading germs. Attention is given to promoting a healthy, balanced lifestyle as a means to combat illnesses, along with personal health and hygiene.
The Learners thoroughly enjoyed the puppet show, rating the presentation 95%. They demonstrated an excellent understanding of basic germ theory, prevention, treatment, and healthy living. In their evaluations, almost all the Learners said that they enjoyed the puppets and singing along to the songs. They also enjoyed the lessons presented, particularly the scenes at the clinic with Nurse Hippo, as well as learning about healthy living.

When describing what they didn't enjoy about the show, almost every learner mentioned that they didn't like it when Mac Monkey ate the Banana Burger without washing his hands. They then suggested Mac go to the clinic when got sick. The learners seemed to understand the notion that they need to be responsible in maintaining their health and that do their utmost not to make their friends sick if they have fallen ill.

When asked, “What did you learn?” Learners consistently, correctly and articulately identified the main themes and messages in the play. They were very clear and consistent in showing how they should wash their hands, demonstrating that they need to wash all over, in-between their fingers, the back of their hands, as well as under their nails. They would often substantiate this by saying that germs were everywhere and can make them sick.
“Many learners come from disadvantaged backgrounds at our school, a background where personal hygiene is not important. The show has really taught our kids a lot regarding hygiene. With constant reminders from the teachers, learners actually remember the hygiene rules and do them at home. School books are cleaner now, because learners are aware of the importance of washing hands”
- Educator
Tour 2, 2013

The Educator feedback throughout the project has been consistently positive, complimentary and appreciative. The Educators were engaged in their reporting on the impact of the presentations and gave the Evaluation Forms thorough and considered reflection.

The Educators felt that the Learners were easily able to engage with the concepts presented, and that the informal and relaxed learning environment allowed the them to understand the show’s themes in greater detail. The Educators recognised that, in addition to promoting good health and hygiene, the presentation developed a range of life-skills, such as problem-solving and ideas of personal responsibility.

Educators reported that the Learners were completely captivated by the story, puppets, and singing, describing the show as age-appropriate and well suited to the developmental phase of the Learners. They detailed that the medium of Applied Theatre assisted the learners in understanding the topics dealt with.

The Educators specifically mentioned how the presentations positively impacted the Learners in relation to social and personal responsibility. They felt strongly that the presentation fostered confidence, skills and opportunity for Learners to share information about health and hygiene with their peers and communities.

“The show was 100% presented. All the learners were fully engaged and also involved. The learners listened attentively. All questions were relevant and appropriate to their age group. The show is curriculum based its also promote healthy living”
- Educator
Tour 3, 2016
“The theme relates to life skills and life orientation curriculum taught at school. It was a well presented play and knowledgeable to all... This will have a positive, long-term impact in their daily living. Learners will take responsibility and accountability towards themselves, peers and all stakeholders. Learners will have ability to make correct decisions and solve problems that may encounter. Educators as well have learnt skills to cascade information to their level of understanding”

- Educator
Tour 3, 2015

“The show was so interesting, learners enjoyed a lot. We wish as teachers if they can keep coming and do their presentation at least once in a semester”

- Educator
Tour 3, 2016

The Educators reported a significant increase in the Learners' ability to communicate effectively and problem-solve in relation to the show's themes. They also indicated that the presentations assisted their Life-skills lessons by making the information and learning practical. Focus was also placed on the long-term impact of the presentations.

The Educators recognised the value that the presentations added to their teaching and often requested that the shows return to their schools on a regular basis.
arepp: Theatre for Life is immensely proud of the quality and impact of the No Monkey Business Spick & Span project, performed 976 shows in 438 schools to 137,057 learners. We would like to thank our amazing teams and production staff for making this programme a success!

arepp: Theatre for Life would also like to thank UNICEF as well as the Department of Basic Education for their generous support in making this project and work of the organisation possible.