

Term 1 2025 Newsletter

Dear Bridges Community,

Term 1 has been an inspiring start to the year, with our outdoor education camps continuing to provide life-changing experiences for young learners. Seeing children from under-resourced communities grow in confidence, resilience, and leadership through outdoor learning reaffirms our mission. Thank you to our dedicated team, partners, and supporters for making this work possible—we look forward to another year of impact and transformation!

Warm regards,
The Bridges Team

Certificates Of Completion

Our visiting Grade 7 learners all completed the final camp in their full three-year Bridges Outdoor Education Programme. To celebrate this milestone, each learner was awarded a Certificate of Achievement, marking their incredible journey with us.

This is not only a proud moment for them but also a significant milestone for us as an organisation. These learners joined Bridges in Grade 5, and over the past three years, we've had the privilege of watching them grow—developing valuable life skills, confidence, and resilience.

We are SO proud of them and know that this experience has left a lasting impact on their young lives!



CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

this certificate is proudly presented to :

SKYLAH JAKOBS

in recognition of completing the Outdoor Education Programme
Annual Grade 5-7 Camps at Bridges Retreat Centre

and special recognition of completing the Outdoor Education
Programme LEADERSHIP Training for
Grade 7 Prefects January 2025

S. Meyer
Shernel Meyer
OEP Manager



S. Mdzanga
Siyabonga Mdzanga
Team Leader

Camp Coaches:
Em, JP, Anita, AJ, Icy & Naye



“Dear Bridges Coaches, thank you for an unforgettable camp experience. Your dedication, patience and enthusiasm made every day an adventure, I appreciate all that you did to help me learn and improve. I love you endlessly forever and hold you dear to my heart.”

-Grade 7 learner from Wes-Eind Primary School



Back To School



During camp, our Grade 7 learners created beautiful and creative vision boards, expressing their future dreams and career aspirations. These boards serve as a powerful reminder of the lessons they've learned at camp and the goals they are determined to carry forward throughout the year.

We were thrilled to hear from Elnor Primary School that their learners' camp posters have been displayed in the classroom as a year-round source of inspiration! Seeing the impact of camp extend beyond Bridges and into the school community is truly heartwarming.

Team Swap

This term, we introduced "Team Swap"—a fun and meaningful way to strengthen relationships between our Campus staff (cleaners and cooks) and our Education Programme staff.

Each team member had the opportunity to step into the shoes of their colleagues, gaining firsthand insight into their roles and daily responsibilities. This initiative has not only fostered greater understanding and appreciation between teams that work closely together but has also built a strong sense of camaraderie—all while having lots of FUN!

We love seeing our Bridges team grow stronger together!



Snake Bite & First Aid Training

In our commitment to safety and continuous learning, several team members recently completed First Aid and Snake Bite Training.

- In January, Anita (coach) and Colen (maintenance) completed their First Aid certification.
- In February, Siya (coach) and Trifena (administrator) also earned their First Aid qualifications.
- Colen went a step further, completing a specialised Snake Bite Course to enhance our team's preparedness.

We're proud to see our team upskilling, ensuring that our visiting learners are always in safe and capable hands!

Principal Appreciation Lunch Feedback

We kicked off the year with our annual Principal Appreciation Lunch in January, where we had the opportunity to hear directly from Partner School Principals and School Management about the impact of the Bridges Education Programme.

Here's some of the valuable feedback they shared:



"When the learners first arrived in grade 5, they were like rough diamonds, and if you look back you can see how the children have developed over this time. We would like to applaud you as the children really look up to you. Many of these kids do not have the love and support that you give these kids. Thank you that you are playing a major role in their lives."

-Mr Mark Agulhas, Principal Elnor Primary



We see the growth among our learners. You guys are helping us, by teaching them how to manage themselves."

- Ms Megan Isaacs, Educator, Joostenberg Primary



"The first camp that our learners came on, they were in awe. The opportunity is such that we cannot thank you enough. They go back to school with so many stories- they will not get another opportunity to get out and be away for one night. It is such a highlight for them."

-Ms Natasha Pather, Principal Alpine Primary



"What I have learnt and seen in children here and at school is that their self-awareness has improved. They are more aware of themselves and of other children and they respect other people and themselves more."

- Mr Julius, Grade 7 Educator, Simondium Primary



"What stood out for me was the teamwork that I can now take back to the class, where I can say, can you remember when you were at camp and you worked as a team. Throughout the year I speak of the camp, and they have experienced it and every week we speak about the camp and encourage them to pass to go on the camp, especially the Grade 4's. They ask about the camps."

-Ms Heidi Johannes, Educator, Alpha Primary



"What I have seen, is the comradery between the staff and the learners, has strengthened. I have seen the respect that the learners now have because they know the teachers, and that value has been added and instilled. The respect that the learners now show is good. And that has impacted our school community a lot. I could see progressively that there is a build up from each camp to the next, starting with Grade 5. Our group of prefects have brought leadership and servanthood into the school."

Term 1 Camp Overviews

CAMP #1 - 28-30 Jan

Prefect Camp

Grade 12 Camp
#Learners: 89 | #Educators: 9 | #Volunteers: 2

We started off the year with our Prefect Camp, bringing together Grade 7 prefects from our partner schools. The camp focused on developing their leadership skills, allowing them to reflect on their leadership styles, bond as a team, and plan how they would positively impact their schools in the coming term. These young leaders returned to their schools inspired and ready to lead by example!



CAMP #2 | 11-13 Feb |

Simondium Primary School, Paarl

Grade 7 Camp
#Learners: 71 | #Educators: 9 | #Volunteers: 3

Our Simondium Grade 7 learners returned for their final camp of the Bridges Education Programme, and what a journey it has been! Over the last three years, they have grown tremendously. This camp focused on self-management, with a workshop on "SMART Steps to Healthy Habits." Highlights included an early morning hike, a creative fashion show featuring designs made from recycled materials, and a visit from our photographer that sparked much excitement.

S.M.A.R.T. Self-Management

- Stay Organized: Plan your time and stay on track.
- Manage Emotions: Handle your feelings with calmness.
- Act Wisely: Think before you make decisions.
- Responsibility: Get things done.
- Take Care of Yourself: Rest and relax.



CAMP #3 18-22 Feb

Wes-Eind Primary School, Franschoek

Grade 7 Camp

#Learners: 68 | #Educators: 3 | #Volunteers: 3

This was a great camp from start to end. The learnings from the prefect camp were implemented, and the educators could see how positively the learners responded. The prefects actually lead two of the activities- A frame and raft building! They did such a great job, demonstrating their growth in leadership already this year. We also saw some really shy learners step forward in this area too. So much growth to celebrate!



CAMP #4 25-27 Feb

Elnor Primary School, Elsiesriver

Grade 7 Camp

#Learners: 72 | #Educators: 7 | #Volunteers: 2

The day before camp, a gang-related shooting occurred outside Elnor Primary. This is a sobering reminder of the challenging context many of our young visitors face. We were

grateful to provide them with a peaceful, safe space at Bridges, offering a time of decompression and fun.

During the camp, learners participated in raft building on Day 2, which strengthened teamwork and spirit as they crafted a raft strong enough to carry their teachers across the pool. Educators also reflected on the positive impact our coaches have, providing structure, love, and attention that many learners don't receive at home.



CAMP #5 4-6 Mar

Joostenberg Primary School, Joostenberg Vlake

Grade 7 Camp
#Learners: 52 | #Educators: 2

The highlight of this camp was witnessing the prefects step up as true leaders. They led by example, inspiring their peers to demonstrate teamwork, support each other in activities, and take responsibility for their space, by helping to clean up after activities. Educators were so impressed by the impact on the learners that they expressed interest in experiencing the programme themselves!





CAMP #6 11-13 Mar

Bonga Primary School, Gugulethu

Grade 7 Camp

#Learners: 68 | #Educators: 2 | #Volunteers: 3

The Bonga learners arrived at Bridges singing, a joyful reflection of their anticipation. Building on their Grade 5 and 6 camp experiences in self-awareness and social awareness, they showed great progress. Their creativity shone through in energetic team war cries, and they gained valuable insights during the workshop on healthy self-leadership.



CAMP #7 & #8 25-27 Mar

Riverlands and Chatsworth Primary Schools, Malmesbury

Grade 7 Camp

#Learners: 92 | #Educators: 3 | #Volunteers: 3

Educators expressed that they were able to connect with their learners on a deeper level beyond the classroom setting and participated in the camp activities with enthusiasm. Learners thoroughly enjoyed creating vision boards, which they proudly took back to their school.

The workshop on the first day effectively integrated the LEAD (model developed by NPO Ezra) concepts with the SMART habits. Learners worked in teams, and it was encouraging to see them remembering and applying these concepts during the various camp activities throughout the programme.



Educator Feedback

At the end of each camp, our team holds a debrief session with the Educators, to get their feedback from camp. Here's what they had to say this term:



“Not many of the boys have a positive role model that they can look up to, but on camp, they look up to Papa JP. Our kids are not coming to the camp to relax, we can see that there its growth and we can see them in a new light. I will do whatever it takes, I will hold fundraisers so that these leaners go on this camp!”

- Ms Natasha Hansen, Gr 7 Educator,
Joostenberg Primary

“They live in a community where there is constant gang violence. The children stress all the time. They go to sleep at night wondering if there will be fighting, and who will be shot. Here on camp they are away from that stress and can experience just being children, being carefree and enjoying themselves.”

- Grade 7 Educator, Elnor Primary



“What I love about camp, as a teacher, I can bond with my learners. I also love seeing how some of the children who are shy at

“When the boys call you Papa, there is a reason for that. Many of the boys do not have someone to call Papa, and here on

school blossom into leaders on camp- so different from school, because the camp experience is so different from the classroom, they are not in a bubble anymore. I see so much growth in them.”

- Grade 7 Educator Wes-Eind Primary

camp they have a Papa JP and he means something to them.”

- Desmond Jonkers, Educator, Joostenberg Primary

Term 4 Impact



**8
CAMPS**



**531
LEARNERS**



**38
EDUCATORS**



**1,062
WARM BEDS &
SHOWERS**



**3,717
NUTRITIOUS MEALS**



**10
PARTNER SCHOOLS**



**238
FACILITATOR
/ COACHING HOURS**



**8
VOLUNTEERS
(total of 226 hours)**



**140
CURRICULUM
ALIGNED ACTIVITIES**

Bridge the Gap

Through **sponsorship**, our donors make the impossible happen for learners from our city's poorest schools.



All proceeds go to sponsoring one of our **Outdoor Education Camps** for one of the under-resourced schools in our community.

Support the work we do, by sponsoring young lives, and making it possible for more learners to attend **this life-impacting opportunity.**

Donate



Snap Scan

Peach Payments

Thank You!

In the words of one of the Grade 7 teachers from Elnor Primary School, to the Bridges team (which includes all our partners and donors)

“We appreciate your efforts, we appreciate your passion, we appreciate the fact that you guys are putting in the time to make a difference to these children’s education. They are the forgotten generation, but someone is paying attention, someone is working to make their lives better. For that, thank you... know that it is deeply appreciated.”

Thank you to each of you for your financial support which enables all of this to happen. It is deeply appreciated in the lives of this generation of young people.

Looking forward to a busy term 2 with 11 camps planned!

With love, The Bridges Team



Bridges Retreat Centre

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