

From textbooks to hip-hop; disrupting education for the Gen Z student

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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Kurt Minnaar is a teacher with a difference. Dreamer Education, an NGO started with his wife and a little help from his friends in the creative industry, is revolutionising the way basic foundation phase mathematics skills are being taught by incorporating music and rhythm - you can also play a part.



Kurt Minnaar of Dreamer Education.

Minnaar presented a packed Creative Mornings session with a difference at AAA School Cape Town on 26 July on the theme of 'End', by demonstrating how he's incorporated fun techniques in the classroom to bring the traditional mathematical skills learning back to life for today's ever-distracted student.

The first thing that strikes you isn't just his funky personal style, but his innovative way of doing things.

For example, Minnaar got the session started by asking attendees to follow a simple choreographed counting-body tapping rhythm that showed maths is truly everywhere. This blood-pumping feeling of exhilaration from not just watching and listening but also doing is what he brings to the classroom.



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Minnaar admits that he, himself, had been an 'E student' when it came to maths at school, and finds it funny that the creatives he works with today, to add an engaging dance/art/music element to his teaching, are those who similarly didn't grasp those numeric skills in the typical educational setting.

But everyone has their individual learning style, and it's on teachers to find a way to engage with those students, else they fall to the wayside. It's admittedly tough to innovate in an environment where things need to be done a certain way, and Minnaar's by no means saying we need to toss traditional textbooks out the window.

But much can be done to improve on teaching style and innovate to keep the year-in, year-out teachings fresh and relevant to today's easily distracted learner.

Using rhythm and relevance to reimagine maths

His tips are to always bring something new to the table, while acknowledging that context gives intent to the content you teach.

So if you just teach the content as it appears in the textbook, it soon gets boring. Then blame is deflected onto the children for not absorbing the information, instead of trying a different way of teaching. "It's like trying to trim a bonsai into a shape that just doesn't let it thrive," says Minnaar.

Minnaar's mode of choice – [hip hop education](#) - is actually taught as an educational module elsewhere.

He acknowledges that while he chose to bring this particular flavour to his classroom, it may not be a method that works for everyone, but demonstrates that you can take two seemingly unrelated concepts like hip-hop and multiplication, and link them together in an interesting new way.

In creating the songs, dances and music videos he's making a name for locally, Minnaar says he's creating and controlling content that makes the kids in his classroom 'putty in his hands'.

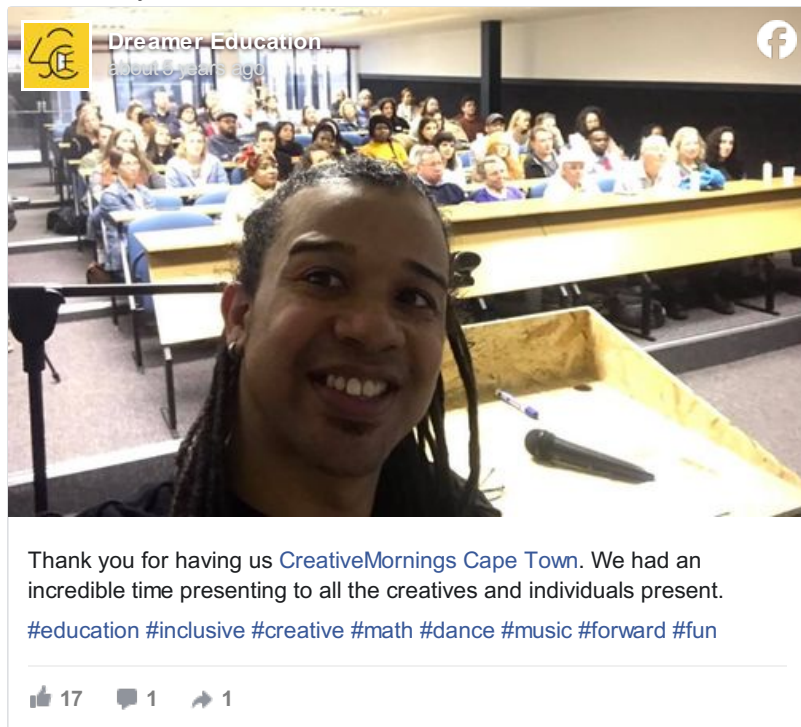
He also makes use of creative multimedia materials like posters that show the presence of maths in everyday objects like sneakers, and has devised a mathematical board game – who says learning mathematical concepts can't be fun?

Collaborate to create SA-specific solutions to SA-specific problems

To tap into his style of work, Minnaar says teachers and creatives alike need to act and react fast.

“ We speak of inclusivity but usually don't try communicating the lesson in what's beyond the textbook. Look at symbols, which we make ourselves. Look at sign language. At movement and sound and colour. As creatives, we should make it a personal passion to go beyond the obvious and give the children the basics in a new, engaging way. ”

Minnaar says we need to take the basics and make them relevant to this time and beautiful again.



Minnaar asked for collaboration and ideas from the talk's attendees, with the parting note that creatives already control what people buy or look at through the marketing work they do.

Through collaboration with educators, we can also play a role in changing how children learn in the classroom and in creating SA-specific solutions to SA-specific problems in our own space, without taking a page from elsewhere in the world that may not translate as well locally.

If you'd like to take part, Contact [Dreamer Education on Facebook](#) to help make your mark.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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