

South African primary school team takes top place in coding tournament

By [Qaqamba Falithenjwa](#)

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The #Coding4Mandela championship was held virtually on Tuesday.



Astra Special School learners started to learn coding in November. Photo: Qaqamba Falithenjwa

The #Coding4Mandela tournament was held virtually on Tuesday, 5 December, the day Nelson Mandela died ten years ago.

According to a report released by the Leva Foundation prior to the competition, learners were tasked to practice on a coding app called RANGERS. The app has interactive challenges. The coders needed to direct an object to reach a destination. Teams were given 30 minutes to finish eleven levels.

The winning team was the one that completed the most levels. In the event of a draw, then the team with the least number of wrong attempts wins, and the final tiebreaker is the team that did it in the shortest time.

The top ten winners were:

1. Sunford Primary School, South Africa
2. IT Wizards, Bosnia and Herzegovina
3. Ocean View Library, South Africa
4. 3T- Turbo Teaching Team, Croatia
5. OS Sveti Sava Novi Grad, Bosnia and Herzegovina
6. Belhar Library, South Africa
7. Helene Lange, Germany
8. Valhalla Park Library, South Africa
9. Mthatha High School, South Africa
10. Hwidiem Ghana Team A, Ghana

Ahead of the competition, learners gathered last week at the Astra Special School in Montevideo to practice.

Randal Rousseau, who introduced the coding programme, started teaching youngsters at Belhar Library using an app called Tanks which teaches coding without one needing a computer.

Later, he moved to Bonteheuwel Library, where for two hours a day for two months he taught teacher assistants to teach learners coding. Rousseau also initiated mini-tournaments.

Ricardo Antha, lead coach of the Belhar Coding Club, said he was pulled into coding by his daughter. He started by taking Java Script and Python diploma courses. He feels coding should be part of the school curriculum.



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He adapts his teaching methods to the learners. “Some kids are visually stimulated, so I would use videos like TikTok just to get concepts through to them. Others are audio-based, so I have to sit down and explain for hours in order for them to grasp it.”

Anthas daughter, Keziah, started coding last year in July. “I like it when I have to code my own things – my own games and animation,” she says. She hopes to get a scholarship to go to a private overseas college. She encourages others to do coding as she believes it “can help them with school work and problem-solving”.

Aidan Nissen, 15, from Belhar High, said, “I enjoy coding because it expands our thinking ... I like that we can also have fun with each other while learning.”

Shadwell Overmeyer, who started coaching in May this year, coaches at the Belhar Library and volunteers at Valhalla Park Library, where he says “the children needed purpose”.

“The alternative is drugs and gangsterism and we had to be that catalyst that brings change to the community and coding is doing a brilliant job at that,” said Overmeyer.

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