



Greetings to all our friends and colleagues

We are on what seems to be a rollercoaster ride as we head towards the end of 2009. Another year of experiences, insights, new colleagues, learning, losses, sadness and joy is almost behind us and we will all conclude the year as somewhat different people from the way we began it.

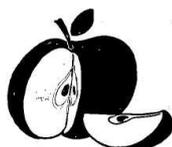
The PSP has a new Language Facilitator, Nocawe Malatse, whom we warmly welcome and wish a long and fruitful period of employment with us. Nocawe received her formal education at Inyibiba High School, Fort Beaufort in the Eastern Cape where she received a Senior Certificate, and Hewat College of Education, Athlone where she received a 3 year Diploma in Education. Her most recent employment was at Springdale Primary in Mitchells Plain where she was a Foundation Phase teacher.



Nocawe Malatse - new PSP Language Facilitator

We are fully confident that Nocawe will relate well to teachers and learners alike and that the relationship between her and those with whom she works will be mutually beneficial, joyful and scintillating.

It is with deep sadness and a sense of heart wrenching loss that we extend our sincere, unequivocal sympathies to Viv, Caleb and Cloud Kenyon on the death, on 18 September, of Alan Kenyon. Alan was a long standing friend, mentor, educator and inspiration to many, many people associated with PSP and the teaching community. He died after a lengthy illness during which time he displayed inimitable courage and the determination to continue to live life fully and cheerfully. Alan's energy and dedication to education will be sorely missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him.



Tribute to Alan Kenyon



Alan Kenyon passed away in September

Alan began working with the PSP in 1988 from UCT, and immediately started inspiring teachers to develop a real interest in and practical understanding of broad science in our society. I had the privilege of experiencing Alan's extraordinary ability to light the spark of enthusiasm and creative freedom in teachers' hearts, which allowed them to co-design and plan rich lessons. We often saw the effects of this teaching, where teachers and their learners excelled way beyond expectations.

Alan's deep understanding of primary education and how to bring about meaningful learning infused all his work with the PSP. His many remarkable talents and expertise helped build and shape the PSP, its philosophy and vision. He inspired his colleagues, nationally and locally.

In the dark, early days of education, Alan gave teachers hope.

We salute this giant of a man. His legacy will remain with the PSP and we will remember him with great fondness and gratitude.

Umhlab' uyafihla! Hamba kakuhle, dear Alan.

Mascha Ainslie



Dear Leyla,

In the segregated days of the late 1950s I was lucky enough to have one primary school teacher whose enlightened attitude transcended the unimaginative repression that was apartheid education. His name is Alan Kenyon. Against the grain of mediocrity and corporal punishment that was the norm, he fostered a holistic approach to education, encouraging those weird and wonderful talents that are present in any classroom but were in those days suppressed into conformity. Alone amongst the staff, he saw that my interest in cartooning wasn't just a distraction from more serious things. In the school newspaper that he started, I was editor and had my first regular cartoon gig where a character called 'Preppie' commented on the goings-on at the school.

Under his mentorship I read both serious literature and comic doggerel. He managed to stimulate passion in things artistic and scientific. I attribute to him my first understanding of lateral thinking. At a time when politics was forbidden in the classroom he was clearly a political progressive, always promoting tolerance and humanity. He helped me open my mind and for that I am deeply grateful.

Best regards, ZAPIRO

From *All that I am: because they made a difference in my life*
Leyla Haidarian and Mbulelo S Plaatjie

Tribute to Deidre September



Ms Deidre September (left) at a PSP workshop

PSP mourns the passing of a very dear and dedicated colleague, Deidre September of Leiden Avenue Primary. We were honoured to have known and worked very closely with her during the period that the school participated in the Cluster Project. She had been a strong driving force at the school and regularly offered support to her colleagues as well as teachers at other schools. She lived for her learners, and worked tirelessly to make a difference in the lives of the children entrusted to her. She will be remembered by all and sadly missed by her learners. We salute her for her tremendous bravery and dignity.

The White-breasted Cormorants



A colony of White-breasted Cormorants at Edith Stephens Wetland Park

The White-breasted Cormorants (Ugwidi) that have been breeding on the three islands (especially the back island) in the retention dam at the Edith Stephens Wetland Park (ESWP) may lose their breeding sites due to the destruction of the trees in which they build their nests. Have you noticed the trees on the back island in the retention dam have disappeared? Amazingly, the trees are not being destroyed by humans but rather from the birds themselves. Since these birds breed in colonies, and use every available space, they destroy the trees by using them year after year, in addition to their excessive droppings.

Generally, bird droppings ('pooh' or 'guano') are rich in nitrogen and can act as good fertilizer chemicals, but too much nitrogen can cause it to become toxic (poisonous). This is what happens to the trees - the accumulation of guano year after year eventually kills the trees. And as they become weaker they easily fall down with the help of the strong south-easter winds.

If there were more trees available, the birds could rotate between used and unused trees and allow time for the used trees to strengthen and re-grow. But with only few trees and many birds this cannot happen.

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So what can we do? One option is to build artificial breeding platforms on the islands which can then be maintained on a regular basis. These have been used successfully at Intaka Island wetland near Century City.

The Conservation officers at the park are planning to build such breeding platforms in the retention dam. It would be wonderful to retain the cormorants here at ESWP as the park does offer a safe and secure place for them to nest and raise their chicks.



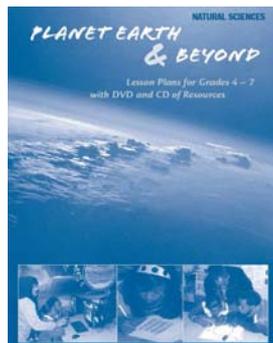
PSP NEW MATERIALS

We are pleased to report that our Natural Sciences Investigations booklet for the Foundation Phase has recently been translated into isiXhosa (Uphando nabaFundi besiGaba seSiseko) and has been distributed to some of the teachers who participate in our Cluster Project. The booklet is now available in English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa and has been well received.



Foundation Phase
Investigations book now in
English, Afrikaans and
isiXhosa

Lesson Plans book
on Planet Earth &
Beyond



In celebration of the International Year of Astronomy 2009, the PSP developed a brand new multi-media resource on how to teach Planet Earth & Beyond in grades 4-7. It consists of :

- a book of 16 lesson plans covering the core knowledge *Planet Earth & Beyond* in the curriculum
- a DVD showing these practical ideas in classrooms together with Edumedia
- a CD of Resources with the resources used in the DVD.

We would like to extend our grateful thanks to SAASTA for their support.



PSP NEWS

Current Cluster Project 2007 - 2009 draws to a close

The current cluster project, run in partnership with the Winelands, Central, South, East and North WCED Districts will be ending with a Conference on **7 November** at the Lutheran Youth Centre in Athlone. Teachers who participated in the project over the past three years will be presenting examples of practical teaching to their colleagues.

Interesting topics such as :

- Growing Seeds, how I can help learners to make predictions during an investigation
- Pushes and Pulls
- Sound and
- How I teach Natural Sciences in mother tongue - testing a leaf for starch and more, will be discussed with colleagues.

The final external evaluation report of the Cluster Project for 2007-2009, has provided insights into some important changes which need to be implemented with the new two year cluster project, beginning in 2010. In addition, it provided clear indicators of the successes and weaknesses of the project.

The evaluation methodology sought to assess and to explain the Cluster Project's impact on participating teachers and Natural Science teaching teams after a two-year cycle of support. During the first term of 2007, teachers from a sample of the primary schools involved (over 25%) were assessed on the outcomes.

They were re-assessed using the same instruments in 2009 and the total teacher population was 375 with a research sample of 46 (12%). The total number of project schools was 40 with the baseline of 10 (25%). Natural Sciences teams ranged in size from 3 members (farm schools) to 7 (fairly large, poorly resourced urban schools).

Relative to the participant teachers' knowledge, the mean improvement in knowledge of the content of all four curriculum strands was 38%. In terms of teachers' concept knowledge, the mean improvement was 39% and 13 teachers improved their basic knowledge by over 50% while the mean improvement in teachers' scientific knowledge was an impressive 40%. In contrast though, the mean improvement in knowledge of applications was only 2.5%.

It appeared that despite their significant improvement in basic and scientific knowledge, 13 of the 20 teachers in the sample might be regarded as still having an inadequate understanding of key Natural Sciences concepts and phenomena.

With regard to the goal of Natural Sciences being taught as required by the new curriculum - (appropriate curriculum coverage, evident concept development and the utilisation of a range of assessment strategies) - the mean score reflected by grade 6 learners' workbooks and portfolios increased by 23%.

The evaluation carried a range of recommendations for future cluster project work. One recommendation is to reduce the project to two years, will be implemented in 2010 -2011. We hope to work in the same districts as we did from 2007 - 2009, but we will also work in the Overberg District. The project will focus on **The Natural Sciences curriculum and its implementation, formal and informal assessments, integrating the curriculum and being a reflective practitioner.**

Steady Improvement at Leiden Primary School



Leiden Primary School's new administration block

After many years of patience and suffering, Leiden Primary was finally given a facelift. The school proudly boasts a new office and administration block. This block includes offices for the principal, deputy principal and the heads of department, as well as a staff room, sick bay, strong room and a store room.

The teachers and learners celebrated the new addition to their school with much enthusiasm. These developments have certainly contributed to boosting the morale of both teachers and learners alike. The PSP congratulates the teachers and learners, and we hope that this is only the start of bigger and better things to come. May they go from strength to strength.

Review of the Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement

In July this year, Minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga set up a team of experts to investigate challenges in the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement.

The report from the task team recommended changes that will relieve teachers and schools of some of the challenges experienced as a result of the current curriculum assessment policies and will leave more time for teaching and learning.

Some of the recommendations will be implemented from as soon as 2010.

Recommendations include;

- Learning Programmes, Learning Areas and Subjects must all be called 'Subjects' to ensure simplicity, clarity and consistency.
- Reducing the number of Learning Areas in the **Intermediate Phase** to six subjects which are suggested as Home Language; First Additional Language; Mathematics; Natural Sciences (including aspects of technology); Human and Social Sciences; and General Studies. Time made available through the rationalising of Learning Areas should be reallocated to the teaching of Language and Mathematics.
- The teaching of English as a First Additional Language must be given priority, both in the provision of text books and reading material and in the clear specification for teaching mother tongue and English as the language of teaching and learning in parallel. English must be taught from Grade 1.
- The **Foundation Phase** Learning Programmes need to be changed to four subjects, with English being taught as a separate and important part of the timetable. The suggested four subjects are; Home Language; First Additional Language; Mathematics and General Studies.

The department is not doing away with Outcomes Based Education but streamlining and simplifying it.

Some of the changes are aimed at simplifying and reducing the administrative functions that teachers are responsible for but which do not have a bearing on their teaching. They rather result in teachers being bogged down in administrative work.