



Western Cape Primary Science Programme, Edith Stephens Wetland Park, Lansdowne Rd, Philippi 7785

P.O. Box 24158, Lansdowne, 7779 Tel: (021) 691 9039 Fax: (021) 691 6350 e-mail: info@psp.org.za

Hullo again, dear Colleagues!

Welcome to 2004 - we hope this year will see your efforts bear rich fruit!

During the last term of 2003 many teachers participated in numerous PSP planning meetings to negotiate and draw up the PSP Programme of INSET support for 2004. It is included with this PSP Newsletter. Thank you to all the teachers who advised the PSP on a useful programme.

The PSP is engaged in varied collaborations with the WCED. We would like to acknowledge their friendly encouragement as we develop our professional relationships with them. This bodes well for the future!

Good wishes from us all at the PSP: Mascha, Gcobisa, Vagriuah, Nontsikelelo, Rose, Viv, Zowi and Sandra in the Boland.

INVITATION TO TEACHERS FOR COMMENTS ON THE PSP EVALUATION

This is a request/invitation to all teachers who participated in the PSP External Evaluation in the last 2½ years: we would love to hear your comments and views: e.g. did the school visits or interviews with you or your learners have any learning value? If you would care to write a few sentences about what you might have gained, Prof Cliff Malcolm would welcome this. He hopes to include such comments in the final report, which is due at the end of February. Please forward these comments to the PSP office.

PSP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Some members of the PSP Advisory Committee at the first meeting of 2004.

They are:

Standing: Mandisa Ntlabati - Qingqa Mntwana, Phillip Nkosi - Ummangaliso, Mcebisi Mnconywa - Nomsa Maphongwana, **Seated:** Ruby Gxula - Siyazakha & Viv Kenyon - PSP

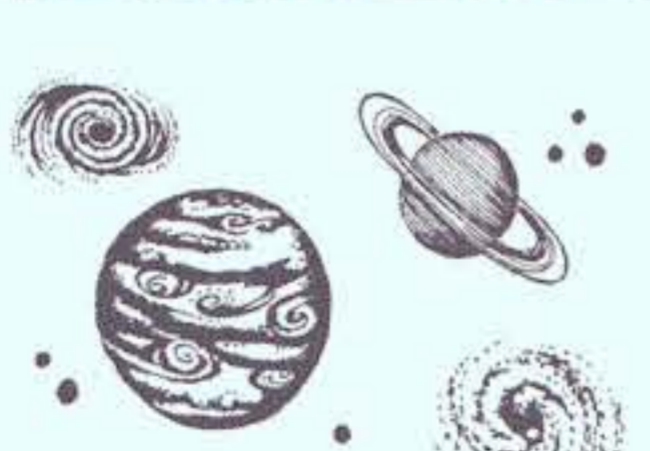


INTSHAYELELO TO TAKE PART IN INTERNATIONAL VIDEO-CONFERENCE ON "THE PLANETS"

This year a grade 4 class of learners from Intshayelelo Primary has been invited to participate in an exciting project. They will take part in a video-conference with a primary school class in England on the topic 'The Planets' in February/March.

This video-conference has been arranged by the *African Institute for Mathematical Sciences / Schools Enrichment Centre (AIMS/SEC)*. We believe this is an exciting opportunity for some of our children to learn more about the universe. Perhaps the experience of participating in this video conference will encourage some learners to follow a career in this area of science. The PSP is very happy to be associated with this initiative.

CERTIFICATION 2003



PSP EVALUATION: FINDING OUT WHAT LEARNERS DO KNOW. Final comments from the external evaluator, Prof Cliff Malcolm, pending the final report

Our attempts to assess learners' achievements through written tests in 2001 and 2002 raised some serious issues for us. The learners did poorly on the tests in spite of our evidence that classes were presented well, learners were deeply engaged, and lots of learning seemed to be taking place. This suggested that the tests were not giving an accurate indication of learning.

Hence in 2003, working with 10 schools, we tried a different approach. We asked learners to tell us, in any way they wished, something important they had learned as part of studying the current module. They could write, draw, talk, enact, using any language they wished. We then interviewed them about their reports. The learners enjoyed the task. Whereas in the reports, they often presented partial ideas, during interview many were able to extend them and link them into deeper understandings. Furthermore, the knowledge they demonstrated during interviews was often not the kind that can be readily tapped through tests.

These results are important: they bring some consistency into what we had observed in classrooms, what teachers and learners felt was happening, and our assessments of learning. They also point to the weaknesses of written tests and the power of assessing learners through asking them to present and then talk about their ideas.

This, of course, is central to Continuous Formative Assessment: allowing learners to think in different ways, present in different ways, and talk about their thinking gives rich information about what they do know, as well as information about errors, misconceptions and appropriate next steps in teaching. It takes time, but it is worth it.

Cliff Malcolm

LOOKING FOR PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES FOR LEARNERS?

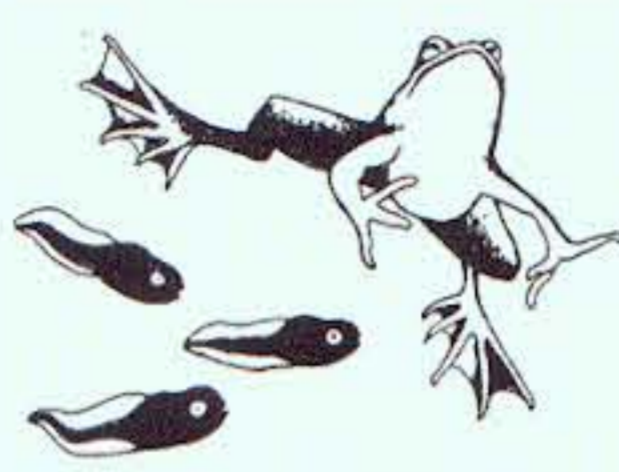
Come and find out how to integrate these exciting activities into your existing curriculum (all Learning Areas) through the PSP HOEP Project.

The topics planned for this term include the Water cycle, (seasons and climate) and Water Pollution (water quality, conservation)

- See the PSP Programme of workshops
- Book a bus and bring your learners for hands-on-environmental learning for free!

For more details tel PSP: 691 9039

Thanks to the National Lottery for the sponsorship.



VIV KENYON JOINS THE PSP TEAM



We are very pleased to welcome Viv Kenyon into the PSP team. Along with her many years of teaching experience in primary schools, Viv brings a wealth of experience in teacher education and materials development. Although her passion lies in language development, she has acquired a great deal of experience in primary science development, having worked with Alan Kenyon, her husband for many years. The PSP looks forward to exciting work with her!

Viv will be involved in many of the PSP projects as well as starting up a PSP Foundation Phase Natural Sciences project in partnership with the EMDC South.



TWO OCEANS AQUARIUM WORKSHOPS

The Two Oceans Aquarium Environmental Education is offering free workshops to all teachers on the topics below. Please call the Education Centre tel; 4183823 to book your place.

- After the workshops teachers will be allowed free access into the Aquarium.
1. Topic: Whales: 9 - 13 Feb: 15h45 - 16h45
 2. Topic: Sharks: 15 - 19 March: 15h45 - 16h45

ASTRONOMY

The stars have always played an important role in the lives of people in Africa. Recently a film, Cosmic Africa, was made here in South Africa. It is about Dr Thepe Medupe, an astronomer who works at the South African Astronomical Observatory.

On 30 October 2003 we attended a seminar for teachers, convened by the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT). Did you know that the largest telescope in the southern hemisphere is being constructed here in South Africa at Sutherland? Professor Eric Wilcots, an astronomer from the University of Wisconsin, was one of the speakers at the seminar. He spoke of the need for more Black astronomers in the world. The inclusion of the science content area: Earth & Beyond in the new Science Curriculum will provide our learners with more exposure to this fascinating topic.

LASTEST MATERIALS FROM THE PSP

As a result of the recommendations of the PSP External Evaluation, we are currently revising the example Learning Experience booklets in the four Natural Sciences content areas from grade 4 - 7.

