



# PSP NEWS

2nd term  
2009

Western Cape Primary Science Programme

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## Greetings to all our friends and colleagues

How time flies when one is having fun!

The past four months have been busy, fruitful and interesting. PSP is a dynamic organization where new ideas flow and new opportunities grow. During the first term the PSP staff had the privilege of discussing and embracing new ideas by Professor Hubert Dyasi, retired professor of science education at the City College (City University of New York), and current Director of the Workshop Center at the City College. Prof Dyasi spent time visiting a selection of science lessons in Cape Town schools and spoke to us about the importance of investigations in science education. Generally in science education, asserts Prof Dyasi, "instead of gaining experience with science as a human activity, students are merely told what they need to remember to pass tests and get good grades. This is, of course, a far cry from real science - a far cry, as well, from an instructional environment that could be described as 'mind engagement'. True mind engagement requires student involvement in defining the content. Students need to question, to wonder, to pursue their own interests". Our discussion with Hubert was both inspiring and informative.

Trevor Douglas, Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry and Director of the Centre for Bio-Inspired Nanomaterials at the Montana State University in the USA met with PSP with a proposal for establishing a Science Outreach Programme in Cape Town. The programme will "focus on creating an avenue for interaction between 'real scientists' and their communities. 'Real scientists' approach learning through inquiry. Unfortunately this critical facet of the learning process is often absent from standard science curriculum. There is subsequently a need to create the path that allows scientists to share what they do and how they think with children." The programme will begin in September 2009 with informal workshops that emphasise exploration via hands-on activities for children who typically do not

have access to this type of playful, informal learning environment.

E. Wendy Saul, editor of *Crossing Borders in Literacy and Science Instruction* in writing about the obvious links between language and science, quotes a science educator and children's book author who was working with students and trying to teach them to observe more closely. She had placed two turtles of similar size and with similar markings in a pan and asked the children how they could tell the turtles apart. "That's easy," announced one of the children. "Just name them."

### DEPARTURE FROM PSP OF VAVA MAKHUBALO

We are saddened by Vava Makhubalo, PSP Language Facilitator's resignation and subsequent departure to READ where she has been appointed as a trainer. We wish Vava much fulfillment and joy in her new position and know that READ will greatly benefit from her vast experience, wisdom and skills.



The PSP Team sadly said goodbye to Vava Makhubalo.

As a result of Vava's resignation, we are needing to recruit and appoint a new Language Facilitator who would play a major role in the conceptualisation, organisation, planning and implementing of all PSP Language and Literacy activities together with the PSP team. In addition, the person would be responsible for implementing teacher / school support to boost literacy levels at schools or any other project work as may be required.

## ZENEX-SPARK PROJECT WORK

The four full day **Literacy workshops** ran as planned first on 2 & 3 February for the Intermediate Phase teachers and then on 9 & 10 February for the Foundation Phase teachers. The intermediate Phase focus was the Reading genre - fables and myths, while the Foundation Phase focus was on Letter writing across Grades 1-3 as well as studying the National Curriculum Statement and Assessment Standards which apply to the genre.



Washiela Govender showed us the letter she co-created with her Grade 2s.



The **Foundation Phase workshops** focused on letter writing and the teachers did practical tasks of writing letters and making cards. They were provided with the opportunity of planning lessons on the genre with a Grade colleague from their schools. The teachers wrote letters to/from story characters and this worked well. Wardah Abrahams facilitated a session of the workshop on the challenge of communicating without words, through gestures and drawings, with someone who speaks a language different from one's own. Mind maps and picture books were used as tools to aid the workshop discussion.



Merle Sonnenberg showed us one of the envelopes her Grade 3s made.



A Grade 3 child re-reads the letter he has written.



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With the **Intermediate Phase** teachers the workshops focused on fables and myths which are two text types in the new WCED Language Learning Programmes. Teachers worked in pairs, small groups, grade groups and in plenary. The facilitator provided the opportunity for discussion of educational issues such as curriculum change and implementation, learning and teaching, some education theories and associated methodologies. The constant focus was on seamless, purposeful integration of all six (R) NCS language Assessment Standards.



Teachers plan together how they can work practically with fables & myths.

The **Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase Numeracy** teachers participated in four full day workshops.

In the **Foundation Phase** workshops the teachers were shown a DVD aimed at building morale. This, coupled with a "welcome back" emphasizing the importance of teachers, had positive results and teachers left the workshop feeling positive. The work - related focus was on LO1, number and planning and the weighting of the Learner Outcomes was clarified and enabled the teachers to plan effectively. Interactive games gave teachers a fresh way of teaching LO1. Team work, group activities and discussions, demonstrations and presentations were the methodologies/approaches used by the facilitators.

In the **Intermediate Phase** workshops the focus was also on LO1, Number and Planning. A sample lesson from Eric Schollar's "Back to Basics" was demonstrated and critiqued by the teachers.

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Individual work, pencil and paper tests, demonstrations and group discussions were the approaches used in the workshops. Teachers were required to do a pre-test to assess their level of knowledge relative to the mathematics level they were teaching.

#### School based support

Both the **Foundation Phase** and **Intermediate Phase** school visits focusing on literacy began with a pre-visit meeting in order for the teachers to share their planning and to decide who would teach for observation by the facilitator.



Marianna Smit helps one of her Grade 2s with the letter he is writing.

The seven Zenex Spark schools were visited for **Foundation Phase** and **Intermediate Phase** Mathematics and Numeracy observation and support. A total of 25 hours was spent with teachers in the Foundation Phase and 25 hours was spent with those in the Intermediate Phase. In the planning workshops teachers were asked to volunteer for the classroom visit and one teacher for each Grade was requested. The model worked well and will be utilized throughout the year. Teachers were enthusiastic about the visits, had prepared well for them and in most classes there was evidence of significant work in the learner books.



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### CTLI IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Towards the end of 2008, PSP was fortunate to be awarded a tender to undertake an impact assessment study to assess the impact on the classroom performance of educators who have undergone the training courses at the Cape Teaching and Leadership Institute (CTLI) on Foundation Phase (FP) Numeracy, FP Literacy, Intermediate Phase (IP) Mathematics, IP Languages, Senior Phase (SP) Mathematics and SP Grade 8 Reading.

We were fortunate that Zynoe Patience, well known to many of the teachers associated with us, could undertake the thorough assessment with the PSP team. It should be in the public domain once the CTLI management formally accept the report.

### NATURAL SCIENCES COURSE FOR INTERMEDIATE PHASE TEACHERS AT CAPE TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE (CTLI)

For two weeks in March, forty-six teachers participated in a Natural Sciences Course for Intermediate Phase at the CTLI. Topics discussed included Planet Earth and Beyond, Fossils and Evolution, Life and Living and the Role of Language in Teaching and Learning in Natural Science. The WCED Work Schedules and Teachers Guides were introduced to the participant teachers by the PSP facilitators. Sam Christie did a session on e-learning and representatives from The South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) presented a slide show and discussion on the Universe followed by a telescope workshop.



Teachers dissecting plants at CTLI.

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Our facilitators will be returning to the CTLI for a further two week training session from 25 May - 5 June and have been undertaking school based support since March.



Teachers doing an activity on Day & Night at CTLI.

## INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF ASTRONOMY 2009

Forty-four teachers attended our Innovation Project Astronomy course at the Edith Stephens Wetlands Park in January.

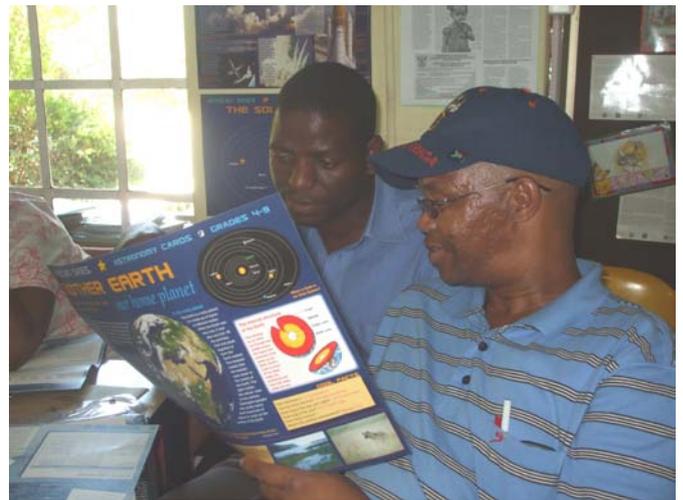
The Solar System was introduced with the use of our Astro card and a projection of it. Teachers had a hard copy and wrote the names of the planets onto the copy. Thereafter teachers made play dough models of the solar system on a paper plate. This activity worked well. A model was used to demonstrate aspects and movements of the Solar System and the teachers demonstrated the movements with their playdough balls. The off-plane orbit of Pluto was also discussed and teachers asked questions about the status of Pluto as a planet. Teachers were most interested in the discovery of new planets.



Teachers making playdough models of the solar system on paper plates.

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Dr Enrico Olivier an Astronomer from the SAAO gave a presentation on the second day of the Innovation workshop on Astronomy. The presentation was well received and elicited a number of questions on the discovery of new planets beyond Pluto; what makes a planet; whether teachers must teach about the eight planets plus dwarf planets; and the concept that our knowledge is changing all the time. All participating teachers received a set of the PSP Astronomy cards.



Teachers reading up information on Planet Earth at a PSP Astronomy course.

**The Innovation Project** continues to offer a wide range of courses for teachers keen to adopt innovative ways of teaching concepts which are often or difficult. During the first term teachers filled 799 seats at our courses. It is always a pleasure to welcome you all to our offices at Edith Stephens Wetland Park.



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