

Support us!
What's new at PSP
Mission Statement
History
Core Activities
Need for ongoing support
Courses we offer
Materials for Sale
Governance
Annual reports
PSP newsletters
External Evaluation
Map to PSP offices



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Hullo again, dear Colleagues!

By this time we feel sure teachers must have 'Learning Programmes', 'Work Schedules' and 'Lesson Plans' dominating their lives! We do hope however, that the great efforts with planning made by so many teams of teachers at so many schools will bear fruit and become useful next year. This term we will also invite any teachers interested in PSP support to attend the meetings to plan the PSP courses & workshops for 2005. These PSP Annual Planning Meetings take place from 11 October 2004. Please see the programme for dates and Learning Areas. Good luck for this short term - we wish you strength and a positive attitude to help you remain productive.

Regards from Mascha for the PSP team:
 Vagriuah, Rose, Ntsiki, Viv, Gcobisa & Nthabi

ISOETES CAPENSIS
 A very special fern

Our Edith Stephens Wetland Park (ESWP) is famous for its ancient and rare fern, Isoetes capensis that does not grow anywhere else on earth!

At present this precious fern is in danger of being crowded out by different grasses growing around it.

Richard Erskine is the supervisor of the nursery at ESWP, where they propagate plants as part of the Working for Wetlands Project. He explained that they have taken three specimens of this special fern from the Isoetes Vlei to find out if they can be propagated in the nursery. They hope to make many more plants and then re-introduce them into the vlei area.

This work is supported by the National Botanical Institute (NBI) in conjunction with Working for Wetlands.

Just imagine - these ferns were growing 300 million years ago - and were living at the same time as the dinosaurs!



Richard Erskine shows the PSP staff how the Isoetes Capensis fern reproduces by means of spores attached to the bulb - a very special fern



FOUNDATION PHASE INVESTIGATIONS TAKE OFF

The Foundation Phase Science workshops (as part of the MSET Project EMDC South) continued their investigation of Matter and Materials. This time they investigated the properties of dry powdered clay.

The children looked at the mystery powder carefully. They touched it, smelled it, and some even tasted it! They compared it to other powders that are similar in appearance.

We asked the children to predict what would happen if they added water and when they did add some water, everybody wanted to put their hands in to touch this material. They were very excited to share their conclusions.

We were inspired to see how the children concentrated throughout the investigations and enjoyed the experience.



Hillwood Primary : feeling the powder, is it smooth? What is it like?



Does it have a smell?



Ukhanyo Primary : making handprints with wet clay

Announcement: The PSP Cluster Project will work with new schools next year -- let us know if you are interested.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE FOR LO 3 - PSP breaking new ground

This term Rose and Nontsikelelo have been researching and developing new PSP science courses on LO3, involving traditional knowledge, technologies and the environment. This is a little known area to be included in the Natural Sciences curriculum - and these courses will be further developed and offered in 2005. Watch this space!

FAREWELL TO ZOWI

The PSP said a fond and sad farewell to Zowi Gaqa, our Materials Co-ordinator, who has left Cape Town for the Eastern Cape for family reasons. We wish her well!



Zowi (2nd from left, back row) and PSP team at her farewell.

THE BLACK-WINGED STILTS ARE BREEDING AT ESWP

After the rain in August, the seasonal wetland at Edith Stephens Wetland Park (ESWP) has been transformed from a dry, barren area into a flourishing marsh. New grasses, sedges and plants, like the beautiful white Arum lilies, (Inyibiba) have started to grow and large pools of water have formed.

This area has become a wonderful breeding place for many waterbird species. Ducks have moved into the marsh to breed, while other birds such as snipes and moorhens have also arrived to build their nests in amongst the grass tufts above the water level.

One species that really likes these conditions is the Black-winged Stilt. They are easy to see as they have long red legs, black wings and a long pointed bill. The Black-winged Stilts breed mainly in marshy habitats and over the past three years large numbers have been seen in the seasonal wetland at Edith Stephens Wetland from July to November.

Black-winged Stilts have returned to breed at ESWP every year. This season two nests have already been found. No-one knows where these birds come from or where they go to after the marsh dries up. But it is fascinating that they come to ESWP every season to build their nests and raise their chicks.



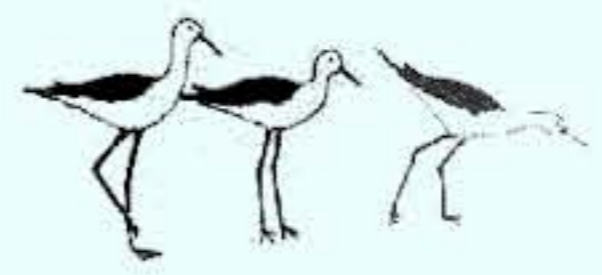
Black-winged Stilts spend long hours feeding in the shallow water where they search for worms, snails, insects and small crustaceans.



Black-winged Stilt nest at ESWP

We can only hope that their breeding is successful and that they remain safe from people and dogs and seagulls during this crucial time in their life-cycles.

Doug Harebottle, ADU, University of Cape Town Tel: (021) 650 2330



NEWSFLASH
Foundation Phase Language Work

During the 4th Term the PSP will be offering a Language course for Foundation Phase teachers. We will continue with our focus on getting learners writing. This term we will be looking at "Shared Writing". We hope that teachers who attended our previous Foundation Phase Language courses will also join us to explore this important topic.

PSP ASSESSMENT GROUP LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Teachers from Disa Park, Manenberg, Luzuko and Yomelela attended the PSP assessment group meeting last term.

Teachers brought examples of their learner's work and explained how they had assessed them. They showed their assessment criteria and rubrics. The teachers explained the difficulties of writing good rubrics, which differentiate between different levels of work. They also said that rubrics are often difficult to apply, because it takes more time to read the rubric and understand it than it takes to read the learners' work and make a sensible judgement based on their experience! But teachers all felt that it was important to have a checklist of criteria when assessing. This process was most instructive because we were working with real examples and the teachers were able to report on some of the daily issues that arise as they try to assess learners in a fair way using criteria. These were some aspects of the discussion:

- Rubrics that are based on the **number** of questions answered are not helpful. Rather they should be based on the **difficulty** of the question in terms of the higher order thinking that is required for each particular question
- Sometimes different criteria need to have different **weighting** because different aspects of the task require more conceptual effort on the part of the learners.
- Sometimes, depending on the task, many things could be assessed but sometimes it is better to just assess one aspect **in depth**.
- On the other hand, an assessment task should provide an opportunity for the learners to show many aspects of their learning. The teacher should choose to assess the aspect of the **task** that provides the **most information**.
- Teachers are grappling with the idea of when to award a code 4 to a learner. One teacher left an **open column** in her rubric for code 4. This meant that she did not specify exactly what was required but that it showed openness on her part to **accept anything on her partial interest** around the task. Teachers thought that the assessment task should include an **invitation** to learners to add something more when they are completing the task. The criteria should accommodate this. **NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 5 October 2004**

