



PSP NEWS

4th term
2010

Western Cape Primary Science Programme

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Dear Colleagues

Teachers have experienced difficult times during this past term. With the extended holidays over the World Cup, as well as the protracted industrial strike, learners could almost be forgiven for seeming to forget that there ever was school! We hope teachers can overcome the serious disruption caused to their many careful teaching plans.

As all teachers know, one of the most important elements in achieving learner success at school is to maintain a learning rhythm and momentum in teaching. This allows for children to deepen their thinking and grow their knowledge and experience on a daily basis. All good teachers also know that any disruption to such momentum (however slight!) sets the whole process back immensely and the teacher has to start again...

Good luck, dear teachers with regaining the lost momentum and succeeding in your catch-up this term!

PLEASE COMMENT ON THE DRAFT CURRICULUM

The Department of Basic Education has called for comments on the draft new National Curriculum. It's called the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)*. You'll find the drafts at:

<http://www.thutong.doe.gov.za/Home/PolicyDocuments/tabid/1952/Default.aspx?PolicyTypeId=1>

Please take some time and send in your critical comments and submissions to the national e-mail address: CAPScomments@dbe.gov.za by the 15 October.

The PSP has been engaged in this process and has made many comments and suggestions. We hope this will result in an excellent, teacher-friendly and child-focused curriculum. With good wishes from us all at the PSP: *Mascha, Zorina, Rose, Nadiema, Viv, Nocawe, Sandra, Gcobisa.*

THIS ISSUE

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INVITATION TO THE PSP ANNUAL MASS PLANNING FORUM for 2011

To all teachers who are interested in the PSP courses and support for 2011

You are invited to attend the Annual Mass Planning Forum, to decide on the priority topics for PSP courses in 2011.

Date: Wednesday 13 October 2010

Time: 2:30pm

Venue: Edith Stephens Wetland Park, Lansdowne Rd, Philippi

We invite teachers and members of the SMTs and principals to this important planning meeting in the life of the PSP.

We will make decisions on the following subjects:

Natural Sciences and Environment grades 4 - 7

Mathematics / Numeracy grades 1 - 7

Languages / Literacy grades 1 - 7

Social Sciences grades 4 - 7

Our 2011 Programme of Courses is drawn up according to these discussions.

Teachers will also receive their Certificates of attendance for 2010.

Please RSVP to Linda/Gcobisa at: T:021 691 9039

Email: info@psp.org.za by Monday 11 October.

CHECK OUT THE PSP ON CTV

The PSP will be featured in a new show on CTV called 'A Better Place'. The show is about NGOs within the 4 focus areas: Education of adults over the age of 18, Environment, HIV/Aids and Community Safety. Check it out!



COACHING, MODELLING AND MENTORING TECHNIQUES INFUSE PSP'S PRACTICE

Through many years of close collaboration with teachers, and constantly seeking to improve its practice, the PSP has developed a style of working with teachers that makes effective use of coaching, modelling and mentoring techniques. Research shows:

***"The engagement of support using coaching, mentoring and networking activities may assist in the transfer of teacher learning to pupil learning, resulting in greater impact within the classroom and the increased potential to raise standards and attainment ..."* (Rhodes and Houghton-Hill, 2000: 92). Accessed on the internet @<http://books.google.co.za>**

Our training courses focus on concept development and meta-thinking, which includes classroom methodologies and management as well as the practical hands-on activity experience for teachers to reflect on. The techniques of coaching, modeling and mentoring are built into our PSP work. The PSP facilitators *model* ways of teaching the concepts practically, taking into account the different contexts where teachers find themselves.



Nadiema Gamielien facilitating a learning experience with teachers at the Overberg District course in July.

We believe the PSP's *mentoring* support in the classroom with the teacher is where the most learning takes place. All the *coaching* and workshop training is brought to this point, where teachers can practise changing their styles. We can see that mentoring / coaching (and modelling lessons with their learners) is one of the most powerful activities in supporting teachers.

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In the Zenex Spark Project the PSP facilitators spend 80% of project time in classrooms with teachers. They support 150 Language and Literacy teachers in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases in eight primary schools. Here grade 1 learners from Highlands Primary are constructing a graph with the data they have collected. The activity is concluded with a shared writing and reading exercise.

In the PSP Cluster Project the facilitators are currently working with 83 Intermediate Phase and over 100 Foundation Phase teachers at fourteen primary schools. Again, *coaching* and *classroom mentoring* are built into the project work.



Teachers explore ways to investigate biodiversity at the course in the Overberg District.



Teachers engaged in investigating the water-holding capacity of different soils at an Intermediate Phase Natural Sciences Course at the CTLI in July / August. The PSP ran the second half of the four-week training course for the WCED.



Grade 4 learners at Bishop Lavis Primary engaged in a lesson on Ecosystems at their school. Here they are observing the mini beasts in the ecosystem under the tree.

We have often seen confidence levels of teachers rise dramatically as they use new methods learnt in courses, to improve teaching and learning in class. Teachers have become more energized, passionate and informed.

SATURDAY COURSES WITH GRADE 7s

PSP is running NS courses on Saturdays with grade 7 teachers in the North District. The PSP has been working with the Curriculum Adviser, Noleen Appel. The PSP facilitators have enjoyed interacting with the Senior Phase NS curriculum on topics such as: the structure of the atom, the periodic table of elements, the particle nature of matter etc. This is a productive collaboration and is set to continue in the fourth term.

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RURAL TEACHERS BENEFIT FROM PSP HOLIDAY COURSE

The PSP was awarded the WCED tender to run a four-day course on Natural Sciences for Intermediate Phase teachers during the September holiday break. Sixty-three teachers from the four rural Education Districts attended the course in Caledon.

This course was extremely well received and teachers' evaluations and feedback was overwhelmingly encouraging. It was gratifying to hear teachers say that initially they had been reluctant to come during their holidays, but after the course they reported they had found it an invaluable experience, learnt so much and had been so stimulated and inspired by the course that they couldn't wait to get back to their schools to try out the new ideas and resources! A general opinion was that such training and refresher courses should be available to teachers regularly.

"We really enjoyed working with these wonderful teachers," said Zorina Dharsey. "They were relaxed, enthusiastic and ready to participate, contribute and learn. Our team of facilitators really enjoyed the experience of getting to know these rural teachers!"

We were particularly pleased that the WCED officials were in attendance every day and we are grateful for their friendly encouragement and support.



Teachers practice drawing a circuit which they have just constructed with wires, a cell and a light bulb. This course was run at Swartberg Primary School in Caledon during the September holidays.

WATER BIRDS SET TO RETURN TO THE RETENTION DAM

After three years of having the retention dam covered over with water hyacinth at the Edith Stephens Wetland Park, the City of Cape Town has started removing this invader water plant from the dam! This water hyacinth plant, comes from South America and is South Africa's most damaging water weed. It literally takes over water-bodies (any dams or rivers etc) that are rich in nutrients. These plants cover the surface of the water and restrict sunlight from reaching the water, thus killing off most of the other plant and animal life in the dam.

The water hyacinth plants are being removed from this park with a special harvester machine. This work is being carried out by local people employed under poverty-alleviation funds.



People removing the water hyacinth from the retention pond at Edith Stephens Wetland Park.

How will the removal of this plant help water birds?

As more open water becomes available, birds such as Yellow-billed Ducks, Cape Shovelers, Red-billed Teals (iDada), Red-knobbed Coots (uNompemvana), Moorhens and Little Grebes (uNolwilwilwi) should return to the dam. These species love the open water and they were quite often seen here before the hyacinth became a problem. These birds probably went to surrounding wetlands on the Cape Flats, when the water hyacinth choked the dam. The cormorants (Ugwide) and darters (iVuzi), which do breed at the dam, should start to return once the fish populations (mainly carp) start to recover, along with Malachite Kingfishers (uNdozela), Grey Herons (Isikhwamanzi) and even the odd pelican or two.

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We are very pleased that, after the rehabilitation work is completed, the wooden bird hide will once again be used for viewing birds. Schools and the local community will be able to enjoy the rich birdlife that Edith Stephens Wetland Park offers.



This photo was taken in September 2006 before the hyacinth outbreak. It shows the large expanses of open water which are more beneficial to water birds. Let's hope the retention dam will once again look like this in 2010.

With thanks to Doug Harebottle from the ADU, UCT.

FOSSILS & EVOLUTION BOOK TRANSLATED INTO AFRIKAANS

We are pleased to announce that our very popular Fossils & Evolution book for grades 4 - 9 (also suitable for the FET) has been translated into Afrikaans. **The National Heritage Council** kindly funded the translation of this handbook as well as the development of a set of timeline cards called *"The Story of Life on Earth"*. We hope to have this classroom resource finalised early next year.



The PSP's new Afrikaans Fossils and Evolution handbook. This book integrates the Fossils and the Evolution sections of the Natural Sciences and the Social Sciences curricula for grades 4 - 9. Teachers feel it is also suitable for the FET.

This and all other PSP resources are available from Edumedia (edumedia@pgwc.gov.za) as well as from the PSP at (info@psp.org.za).