

KZN schools receive R660,000 for science, maths development

The Willowton Group has donated R660,000 to 20 schools in the Umlazi District, south of Durban, to promote science and maths development. The Durban leg of the sponsorship was launched at a function held at the Moses Mabhida Stadium on Monday, 18 August 2014.



Abdul Razak Moosa, Logie Naidoo, Ali Akbar Moosa, Gideon Vundla and Suleman Farouk Moosa displaying the certificate of appreciation which Logie Naidoo presented to Willowton Group

Willowton's Chief Executive, Abdul Razak Moosa with brothers Ali Akbar Moosa and Suleman Farouk Moosa, have worked closely on this initiative with representatives of the Department of Education, New Africa Education Foundation and Edutrade, the supplier of the learner kits. They are all confident that the kits will be used by learners from Grade 8 to Grade 12 and will play a major role in improving maths and science performance.

A sum of R500,000 will be spent on the latest Curriculum and Assessments Policy Statements (CAPS) compliant physical science kits for 20 Umlazi schools as part of a new eThekweni municipality initiative. This follows the donation of four maths and science kits to four Pietermaritzburg primary schools last week totalling R160,000.

The initiative was triggered by the poor performance of South African learners in the areas of maths and science as revealed in an international survey by the World Economic Forum this year, which placed South Africa last in a ranking of 148 countries.

Razak Moosa said, "There is a shortage of maths and science teachers and learning resources which is resulting in our poor results. Education starts at primary schools and learners need to be excited about science and maths. By changing the way we think we can change the way we learn."

The science demonstration at the launch by Dr Megandhren Govender fascinated all present. Using household equipment and some plumbing pipes, he manufactured a weapon through which he fired marshmallows at the crowd. Another test revealed that an ordinary plastic straw could pierce a raw potato.

"Armed with skills in maths and science, matriculants are open to a wide variety of careers," said Professor Deresh Ramjugernath of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. "Engineers change the world, and the career needs to be glamorised to attract matriculants who prefer to study the more well-publicised careers."

"To increase the GDP of South Africa we need more scientists and engineers, and to do this we need resources and support so we welcome the generosity of companies such as Willowton Group."

Creating a love for maths, science

eThekweni Municipality's plan is to introduce a science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) programme targeted at Grade 8 and 9 learners that have not yet chosen their subjects to determine their career paths. The aim is to create an awareness of all the career choices available, with a focus on STEM-related subjects. It will highlight the importance of choosing pure maths, physical science, chemistry and technology studies and the need to perform well in these subjects to maximise career opportunities in medicine, engineering and science.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and the University of KwaZulu-Natal have both endorsed the project and members of their staff will participate in the road show.

An important part of this initiative is the provision of physical science resource kits and the municipality is relying on the corporate sector support to bring the project to fruition - hence the involvement of Willowton Group, after being approached by Ahmed Motala of New Africa Education Foundation and Edutrade.

Edutrade's physical science kits cover the FET physical sciences curriculum for grades 10 to 12. Topics include mechanics; waves, sound and light; matter and material; and chemical change. They contain all the necessary chemicals and are housed in a lockable metal cabinet with topic trays. They come complete with a teacher's guide and learner worksheets.

"Willowton Group is proud to be one of the pioneers of this initiative," Moosa said. "We see this as an investment in the learners who will become our country's technical leaders of the future. It is an investment in the economic growth of our country. It is such an important initiative that we hope other corporates will come forward to support this worthy cause."

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