



# Ukufunda

Let's get involved in our children's education



DEBBIE STOTT

# Teachers on tour

By ANELE MBEKULA

Two enthusiastic teachers from Samuel Ntsiko Primary School are on their way to Cape Town to take part in a national mathematics conference.

Principal Nombulelo Koliti and Grade 3 teacher Yoleka Mase started a maths club after noticing a drop in their pupils' maths performance levels.

It's taken them on a journey that will see them participating in the annual gathering of the Association of Mathematics Educators of South Africa (Amesa) in just over a week, thanks to maths clubs coordinator Debbie Stott.

Speaking to *Grocott's Mail* this week, Koliti said in past years they had realised mathematics performance levels had become low in their school. She said together with some of the other teachers, they had decided to start a maths club.

"We did both foundation phase and intermediate phase, but at different times," she said. Koliti says last year they decided to re-examine the process.

Focusing on one grade at a time, they started with Grade 3. "We saw mathematics programmes in *Grocott's Mail*. We decided to follow up on these and find out who was facilitating them," she said. They ended up meeting Stott, who is the maths clubs coordinator of the South African Numeracy Chair Project.



The principal of Samuel Ntsiko Primary School Nombulelo Koliti (right) and Grade 3 teacher Yoleka Mase will attend the Association of Mathematics Educators of South Africa conference in the last week of June. Photo: Anele Mbekeula

"She briefed us about the activities that they do in their maths clubs," Koliti said.

Stott became interested in their maths club, especially because they had started it independently, according to Koliti. Stott visited the school and

they immediately started doing the activities.

Koliti said another important reason they had started with Grade 3 was to help with the transition for pupils who had been doing maths in isiXhosa in the early grades and would start do-

ing it in English in Grade 4.

"We want to introduce the English component in the maths club, so they don't get overwhelmed in Grade 4," she said.

Koliti and Mase will do a presentation at the conference about the games they play.

## FOCUS ON WORKING MENTALLY IN MATHS

In the last series we explored the idea that maths is all around us. Every day, we come across situations that call for us to do maths on the go. For example, we work out the price of an item that is on sale, we work out tips at the restaurant, we keep track of what we are spending at the supermarket, we decide when to leave home so that we can get to a place on time, double and halve recipes and much more.

Most of the time we do all this when we are out and about without the help of pencil and paper. Marilyn Burns (an American educator) calls this "Math without pencils". This new series is based on that idea and is about sharpening our mental maths skills and doing maths in our heads.

Math without pencils is from Marilyn Burns' "Mental Math" article (2007)

It is important for our children to develop efficient, flexible and accurate strategies for working mentally. One way to do this is to use carefully selected problems that

guide children to focus on the relationships between the numbers in a problem. This helps to develop mental strategies instead of relying on memorised or rote procedures.

If we pose a problem and ask our children HOW they worked it out (e.g. "how did you solve this problem?") rather than

asking what answer they got, we can encourage them to see that there are multiple ways to approach solving a problem. Next week we start by looking at our first strategy, substitising using dot patterns.

### NEXT WEEK:

Solving mental problems using a Substitising strategy.



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