



UKUFUNDA



Powered by the Grahamstown Literary Project

Speaking in numbers

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“**M**athematics is a language and the only way to learn a language is through speaking it,” said Mellony Graven. In an effort to encourage young primary school learners to start speaking numbers, Graven, based at the Rhodes education department, has helped to develop “Fun with Maths”, an insert consisting of stimulating maths activities, for the Ukufunda page of *Grocott's Mail*.

“Our experience in general is that learners in class are quite passive in terms of receiving mathematics and receiving methods, and aren't active enough and verbal enough in their own sense-making process,” said Graven. “It's in the speaking and the discussion of maths that you make sense of it.”

The insert, running each Tuesday for 10 consecutive weeks, aims to promote numeracy by providing learners with activities that are innovative, creative and enjoyable.

The insert allows for talking and thinking mathematics

outside the classroom, creating a more informal site for learning that includes family members. “For parents who are not confident about maths themselves, it will provide something that they can refer to when working with their children,” said co-developer Debbie Stott, Ph.D student in the education department.

“It's mostly so that they can have some kind of mathematical conversation with their children.”

This initiative is part of a broader focus on numeracy education in the early schooling years. Graven is the South African Numeracy Chair at Rhodes University, one of only two in the country being funded by the First Rand Foundation, Rand Merchant Bank, Anglo American Chairman's Fund and the Department of Science and Technology. “People are starting to realise that investing only at the matric level isn't really resulting in a huge difference, because at Grade 4 level the learners are already three years behind,” she said.

The Ukufunda insert is an extension of the way Graven

and her team aim to improve learner numeracy performance in the broader Grahamstown area. In addition to working with teachers, five school maths clubs have been created to work with pupils on a more individual basis and allow them more time for maths than they can spend in class. Graven and Stott work with 15 schools altogether.

“It's really about learners making sense, being active, discussing their mathematics and about confidence-building,” said Graven.

The maths clubs will incorporate the Ukufunda insert by creating an exciting competition for the pupil members.

“If they can bring [the inserts] in and show us that they've tried and attempted to work at them, then we'll give them a maths prize,” said Graven. Stott believes the Ukufunda insert is a useful addition.

“Instead of us just [impacting on] the children in the clubs, we are potentially reaching far more children, because it's open to the broader Grahamstown population.”



COUNT ON THEM... Debbie Stott (left), co-ordinator of the Grahamstown maths clubs and Mellony Graven, South African Numeracy Chair at Rhodes University, have developed a 10-week maths series for families to try out at home. Look out for it on the Ukufunda page in *Grocott's Mail* every Tuesday. Photo: Daniella Favis