

Making ABC and 123 Child's Play!

Since 2006, the Foschini Group has contributed to the successful implementation of the Rural Education Project (REP), which is aimed at developing the literacy and numeracy skills of primary school learners in under-resourced rural schools.

The University of Cape Town's Schools Development Unit (SDU) / Western Cape Education Department (WCED) partnership project was made possible by core funding from the Claude Leon Foundation in 2005, with the Foschini Group taking up the challenge shortly thereafter and becoming a partner.

Project leader, Cally Kühne gave an outline of REP: "This exciting, four-year education and development project aims to offer numeracy and literacy interventions in 38 rural schools. The interventions are aimed at supporting curriculum advisors, teachers and principals with improving learner performance and teaching practices.



Ms Kühne went on to say: "The project is closely aligned with the WCED's Strengthened Numeracy and Literacy Strategy, as well as with current professional development and teacher support programmes. As part of its contribution to this effort, the WCED has made bursaries available for Foundation and Intermediate Phase teachers to complete an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE), which will further strengthen teachers' capacity to deliver in the classroom, and improve their professional qualifications."

In addition to funding of R1 million rand over 4 years to REP, the Foschini Group awarded 6 jungle gyms to the schools that showed the best improvement in their literacy and numeracy levels. The jungle gyms are worth R15,250 each. The winning schools come from Vredendal, Caledon, Villiersdorp, George and

Mossel Bay rural districts. A further 12 jungle gyms are to be awarded.

Foschini Group, Senior CSI Manager, Karde Buys, is an enthusiastic supporter of REP: "As a responsible corporate citizen, the Foschini Group believes that interventions are required at all levels of education to ensure that South Africa meets the demands of a rapidly growing economy. By helping learners to get to grips with literacy and numeracy from the primary school stage, we are creating a strong foundation upon which the future of our country rests."

She went on to say that one of the greatest challenges of education in South Africa, was that of educating learners in the rural areas. She used a quotation by former president, Nelson R. Mandela to illustrate this point:

"I have often said that the most profound challenges to South Africa's development and democracy can be found in its rural hinterlands. These areas, systematically and intentionally deprived of the most basic resources under apartheid, continue to lag behind the rest of the country in the post-apartheid era. Foremost among the challenges facing rural South Africa is the task of improving the quality of education. What is often overlooked, however, is the immense

untapped potential of rural communities to take the lead in shaping a better future for themselves."

Ms Buys added: "We at Foschini Group are proud to be part of the Rural Education Project and look forward to a long and fruitful association with UCT's Schools Development Unit in the implementation of this exciting and important project."



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