

# Computer learning goes rural

## Knowledge Network® in partnership with the Mpumalanga Department of Education has found a way to take computer literacy to city schools and to the remotest of rural areas.

For schools in remote areas, some without landlines, modern computer technologies and sophisticated infrastructures, the idea of participating in an information technology learning programme and achieving the required outcomes in between eight and ten weeks seemed unthinkable.

In April 2004, the Mpumalanga Department of Education in partnership with Knowledge Network® implemented a pilot programme to equip educators and learners with the skills needed to use a computer as a tool. The programme involved Project Managers and Curriculum Implementers from the Department training educators in a new learning methodology.

The outcomes based, project- and goal-oriented, active learning environment created for the learners required that the learners achieve the required outcomes at the end of each lesson, and complete an assessment. Educators, some with no prior exposure to computers, were required to mark the assessments and submit results in electronic form.

For educators, teaching, marking and results generation are all too familiar - they do that everyday. It is difficult to imagine the process when computers are involved if you are not familiar with computers.

This proved no problem for the educators and learners in the Mpumalanga Department of Education schools selected for the pilot. Educators attended the

ILAMM® course (Integrated Learning and Mentoring Methodology developed in 1994 by Jil D Hrdliczka) and training on the Knowledge Network® sessions, and then presented the sessions to their learners.

The learners applied what they had learned to the projects and were ready to work in teams, interpret the assessment, complete the assessment, and pass the assessment with a minimum of 70% - some schools achieving this within eight weeks.

The pass rate achieved for the pilot in 2004 was 86% (2313 learners). Dikotelo Combined School achieved a 100% pass rate for the participating classes.

Mr B S Lekalakala, educator at Dikotelo Combined School, says that the educators responded positively and embraced the project.

"Their dedication, enthusiasm, and methods used under pressing conditions, produced unbelievable, amazing and excellent results."

"In 2004, all 137 learners passed and received certificates even though they had only one period per week and worked in groups of five. It is a milestone for the school to produce such excellent results under difficult conditions."

Sibonelo Primary School achieved a 90% pass rate for the participating Grade 6 and 7 classes. Mr M E Mahlangu, Principal of Sibonelo Primary School says that all class teachers took their own classes for computer literacy.

"The educators liked the

programme - it was easy to present to the learners. It was also easy to change from one method to another method - this made it easy for the educators to get the attention of the learners throughout the lesson. Generally, the learners liked the programme and enjoyed it very much.

They understood all the lessons and had the maximum participation in all lessons and in all the groups. The programme could also be linked to the other learning areas", says Mr Mahlangu.

"It is an honour to work with members of the Mpumalanga Department of Education, the principals and educators of the participating schools", says Jil D Hrdliczka, Managing Director of Knowledge Network®.

"The potential of the educators and learners in these schools should never be underestimated. They are capable of achieving whatever it is they put their minds to, no matter how difficult," says Jil.

"For many of the schools involved in the pilot programme, no time is being wasted on waiting for more modern technologies to be installed."

"They are using the opportunity to equip their learners with the computer skills they need for life, creatively working with limited resources and achieving outstanding results", says Jil.

"What seemed unthinkable has turned into reality for hundreds of educators and learners in Mpumalanga schools," says Jil.

Some of the assessments submitted by **Dikotelo Combined School (Grd 9)**

The Knowledge Network® Assessment (after learners had completed only 6 sessions) involved the design of a logo using shapes and a maximum number of colours.

“I feel very happy when using a computer because it improves my creativity”, says Paul Lesola, Grade 9 Learner at Dikotelo Combined School.



**Sibonelo Primary School (Grd 6 and 7)** achieved a 100% pass rate.

These are some of the assessments submitted by learners after completing six sessions (approx 6 hours of training). They were required to create a design for drawing software using basic drawing tools. Learners worked in teams to interpret the Knowledge Network® assessment, create their design, draw the design, print and submit their design on disk.

