



## **Standing room only @SchoolNetSA 2017 Conference**

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*Mr Enver Surty, Deputy Minister of Education and Mr Nathi Kunene of the Telkom Foundation*

**The Deputy Minister enthused delegates with his opening address at the 2017 ICT in the Classroom Conference held at Brescia House School in Johannesburg at the weekend.**



*Shafika Isaacs introduces Deputy Minister*



*The Hon Deputy Minister Enver Surty*

SchoolNet South Africa proudly hosted the national, 'ICT in the Classroom' conference at Brescia House School from 5 – 7 October 2017. Over 400 hundred delegates from around the country attended the conference, including educators, provincial and national educational department officials, sponsors, as well as representatives from other development and training organizations.

Shafika Isaacs facilitated the opening ceremony for the 2017 ICT in the Classroom Conference. Shafika Isaacs is currently with UNICEF and working in advisory capacity to the national department of education. She was therefore well placed to introduce the Deputy Minister to make the opening address. Shafika walked delegates through the context of digital learning in South Africa and provided a brief history of SchoolNet. She mentioned that SchoolNet had been founded in 1997 as a national organisation following the merger of a number of informal provincial groupings of teachers and applauded the work that SchoolNet had been doing for the past two decades. She particularly paid tribute to Nomty Gcaba who had been associated with SchoolNet from the late 1990s in KZN and who had sadly passed away this year. She recalled her infectious enthusiasm and how she had taught a Xhosa dance to hundreds of delegates at a Gala dinner in Russia. Shafika is an independent consultant for digital learning for social equity who is a most well-published and well-respected researcher in the field of digital learning. Shafika introduced the principal of the Brescia House Primary School, Ms Ann Owgan who opened the conference with a prayer. Shafika then introduced Ms Benedikte Nott, principal of the Brescia House High School who welcomed delegates to the school and the province.

SchoolNet remains indebted to Brescia House who not only took responsibility for much of the planning and organisation but also agreed to host a conference for 400 delegates while school was in session.

Speaking from the heart and not from the script, the Deputy Minister of Education delivered a most engaging opening address to the 2017 SchoolNet South Africa teachers' conference. Delegates felt they were being treated to a real-life insight into the national department's thinking. Not only was the address pitched at teachers and the most crucial issues facing them currently but it also outlined the forward planning and wider policy development around digital learning for South Africa. The Deputy Minister included a tribute to Oliver Tambo and also conveyed a broader message for our overseas presenters who were most appreciative of the national and continental context provided by the Deputy Minister. The tweet from Ollie Bray, one of the brilliant keynotes from Scotland provides some sense of the impact of the Deputy Minister's words,

"@olliebray Oct 5 impressed by @DBE\_SA DepMin Enver Surty speaking at #SNSA17 about vision & values without the political rhetoric that we often get in UK.

Maggie Verster, the renowned Maths and social media guru, managed to live stream the Deputy Minister's full opening address via Facebook. The full speech can be viewed here:

<https://www.facebook.com/maggieverster/videos/10155929274194994/>

This conference has been a premier event for teachers who are passionate about ICT in education for the past twenty years and has been hosted in different venues around the country on a bi-annual basis. The Deputy Minister made reference to the interesting themes for the conference which were:

- Digital Learning
- Innovations in Primary Schooling
- Leadership for Change
- Connecting Classrooms
- Gaming and Makerspaces
- Technologies in the classroom – for exhibitors

SchoolNet SA was extremely fortunate this year to secure the amazing international guest speakers and workshop leaders, Stephen Reid, Ollie Bray, and Peter Rafferty, as well as our own Saretjie Musgrave, each speaking on different aspects of digital learning according to individual expertise but all with the same passion for making teaching and learning exciting.



Stephen Reid from Scotland was the opening keynote speaker and shared innovative examples of how to link digital technologies to create rich learning experiences. Stephen's passion for merging multiple technologies with innovative pedagogy to allow learners to immerse themselves in learning shone through his keynote address as well as throughout the many workshops he ran. Stephen runs a company called Immersive Minds <https://www.immersiveminds.com/>

Peter Rafferty from Liverpool had been scheduled to conduct a series of workshops around innovative ideas for digital learning in the classroom. He was more than willing to repeat his popular sessions but also kindly volunteered for some extra sessions where there were gaps in the programme.

Sarietjie Musgrave was the keynote speaker for the middle day of the conference and as usual managed to pin point crucial points for teachers and particularly around values and ethics. Her presentation title was Anywhere, Anytime Learning and touched partially on learning that is, enabled by technology. An interesting exercise that Sarietjie conducted early in her address was seeing how many people stood up when she asked delegates to stand if they had changed the way they teach because of SchoolNet South Africa – whether it had been a conference or a training session. It was an eye-opener and a time for SchoolNet staff to feel proud of how many teachers had changed the way they teach over the past 20 years.

Ollie Bray was the closing keynote and made a brilliant job - with delegates tweeting his every statement but he also worked extremely hard during the 3 days prior, delivering a series of varied and brilliant workshops on a wide range of topics from social media use, Google Earth and Geocaching.





Check out the SchoolNet SA Facebook page for more details around the conference and updates including uploaded presentations shared by most of the presenters.

The sponsors for the conference this year included the Telkom Foundation who not only made it possible for a large number of teachers to attend but also funded the cocktail function for the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of SchoolNet South Africa. Telkom was one of the very first funders of SchoolNet back in the 1990s - so it was most appropriate that Telkom were able to be together with delegates and friends of SchoolNet to reminisce over the past 20 years.

The national Department of Basic Education provided the conference lanyards, Microsoft was a silver sponsor, providing the conference bags and water bottles as well as funding Stephen Reid's attendance. Vastratech donated a SMART KAPP 84" board as a prize and Computers4Kids donated a Windows Cloud book as a prize. Academic Partnerships and Mwabu were bronze sponsors.

The conference included DBE presentations and workshops around the newly-approved ***Professional Development Framework for Digital Learning***. These were delivered by Gerald Roos on behalf of the DBE and provided an overview of the Framework, its premises and key components, including an introduction to the supporting resources with explanations of how educators could use these resources to plan their professional development and how to develop their own subject-related examples of the teaching change frame.

With approximately 400 delegates at the 2017 ICT in the Classroom conference it was clear that teachers considered it well worth the effort to sacrifice their school holidays. Some had not seen colleagues since the previous SchoolNet conference and really appreciated the camaraderie of other pioneering educators and the wealth of innovative ideas packed into one big vibrant conference.

## Storify collection of tweets

The link to the Storify collection of tweets that were sent throughout the conference can be accessed at: <http://bit.ly/2lc1ATs>

## Photo gallery

Photos taken at the conference will appear on the SchoolNet website's [Photo Gallery](#) – but in the meantime they are accessible on [SchoolNet's Google Photos](#) - where delegates and presenters have already added to the album.

## Video footage

- To access Maggie Verster's videos that she live-streamed on Facebook:
- The Deputy Minister's [Opening address](#),
- [Sarietjie Musgrave's keynote address – Anytime, Anywhere Learning](#)
- [The 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration speeches](#)
- [Ollie Bray's closing plenary](#)
- [Interview with the Deputy Minister by Janet Thomson](#)
- All the videos: <https://www.facebook.com/maggiEVERSTER/videos/10155935216404994/>

## Further photos



