



**REPORT ON THE WITBANK
PRIMERE SKOOL -
INFRASTRUCTURE, TRAINING
AND SUPPORT PROJECT**

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1. Background

Biotherm Energy, an independent power producer, recognises the need to provide underserved and rural communities with inclusive access to digital technologies and basic digital literacy. To this end, Biotherm Energy requested SchoolNet South Africa to propose a solution to enable a learning environment at Witbank Primere Skool through the provision of an ICT lab, teacher professional development and include basic digital literacy training for out of school communities around the school. This snapshot report serves as a project status update on the project implementation thus far.

The school is a small farm school and is a multigrade school that has two teachers and three support staff. The learners are split into two groups: A Grade 1 - 3 group consisting of 20 learners and a Grade 4 - 6 group which consists of 20 learners. The school currently does not have a Grade 7 class and learners who complete Grade 6 have to move from Witbank to Poffader a small town, 60km away from Witbank. Most community members in Witbank do not work however the few that do work are mine workers in Khâi-Ma mines.



2. Project plan

Below is a table outlining key activities and their status of completion

Category	Activity	Time Frame	Status update
Phase 1 (August)			
Contracting	Contract signed by SchoolNet and BioTherm Invoice 1 paid	30 Jul-21	Complete
Classroom renovations	Measurements confirmed Classroom selected Tiles and Concrete ordered	11-13 August 2021	In progress
Classroom Furniture	Measurements completed Classroom design approved Furniture procured, awaiting delivery	19 - 23 August 2021	In progress
Security	Windows and Door measured for burglar proofing	26 - 30 August 2021	In progress
Leadership Training	Module 1 & 2 scheduled	12 - 13 August 2021 (Face to Face)	Scheduled 15-16 September
Leadership Training	Module 3 scheduled	27-Aug-21	Scheduled 23 September
Phase 2 (September)			
Teacher devices	Digital Equipment procured, awaiting delivery	6-10 September 2021	On schedule
Interactive board		6-10 September 2021	On schedule
Installation of air conditioner		6-10 September 2021	On schedule
Installation of learner devices and NComputing		13-17 September 2021	On schedule
Installation of ICT server		13-17 September 2021	On schedule
Internet Installation	Quotations complete Awaiting final setup of Classroom, before installation	20-24 September 2021	On schedule
Leadership Training		15 - 16 September 2021	Postponed to 29 - 30 September
ICT skills for teachers training		21 - 24 September 2021	On schedule

3. Overview of Project Activities

3.1. Infrastructure and Security

The team visited Witbank Primere Skool and was well received by the school principal Mrs Fortuin. Mrs Fortuin is very excited to be participating in this project and is excited to see the end result.

The link alongside gives a clearer picture of the school: <https://tinyurl.com/7xpm98fc>



A. Selection of Classroom

In consultation with the Principal, the team discussed two options for the dedicated space for the Computer Lab. In making the decision about the Computer Lab space, Ms Fortuin highlighted two potential options as documented below.

Classroom A



Classroom B



Classroom A has two classrooms that are merged into one making it a spacious option as a computer lab. The classroom is the best equipped classroom for setting up a computer lab in the school. Whilst the classroom is large, there is a lot of work to be done to refurbish the floor and furniture.

Classroom B is smaller than classroom A. Although the classroom is tiled well, there is an interleading door to the kitchen. In the long term this might prove tricky to manage with the schools feeding scheme. This space is therefore not considered ideal for setting up a computer lab.

After discussion, it was agreed that Classroom A would be the computer Lab.

B. Classroom Design

Two options were discussed for the design of the classroom.

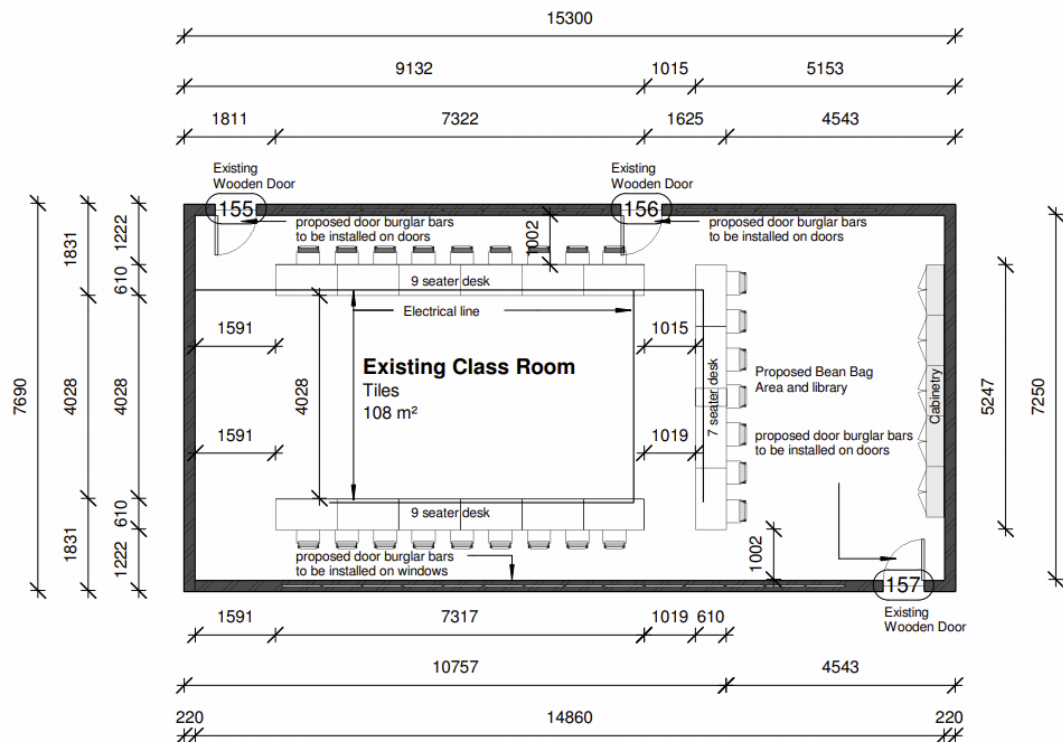
- The classic computer lab design which is rows of tables with computers on them.
- U shape design, which has tables against the wall with learners facing the computer screen

The classic layout - this layout has long been the modus operandi for all schools where the teacher stands in the front and learners sit in rows listening. Whilst this ensures efficient use of space this is not needed at Witbank as the classroom is large enough for multigrade classes.

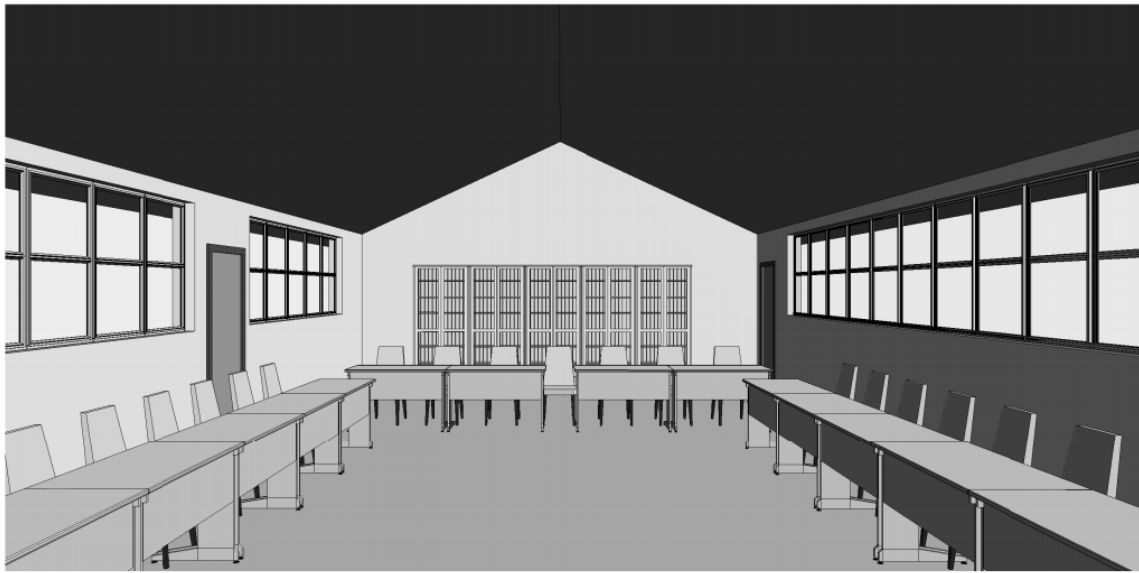
U shape design - The layout creates an environment that allows learners to engage with the teacher and allows for space in the middle of the classroom for the teacher to have a lot more interaction with the learner by being able to walk into the U for closer engagement.

The team and the principal agreed that the U-shape was ideal for the classroom. Two rows of 9 tables on either side of the classroom, with a seven seater desk facing the Interactive board. All learners will be facing computer screens to allow the teacher to see the screens instead of relying on computer software for classroom management.

Final design of the Computer Lab is below.



The space behind the 7 seater desks, will be set-up as a creative space for playful learning. It is our intention to include bean bags, activity tables, puzzles, books to support foundational literacies and also provide 21st Century opportunities for physical coding.



C. Flooring

All the measurements have been captured and the required tiles and materials for flooring ordered. The refurbishing team will be on-site again on the 30th August 2021 to complete the tiling and flooring.

D. Security

Burglar Bars, Table brackets, Alarm

The door and windows have been measured for burglar bar installations for windows and doors to the classroom. Brackets for computer screens will also be installed to ensure that screens will be fixed to the desks. In this way the brackets will act as an additional security measure. The table brackets are being custom-made and are due to be installed in the first week of September.

E. Furniture

The tables are currently being custom-made and installation will take place between the 1- 3 September 2021. The tables will be bolted to the ground made of angle iron and a tabletop of wood that is 44mm thick and will be painted with white laminate for waterproofing. In order to bring the feeling of play into the classroom, colorful cafe chairs have been secured. We have endeavoured to match the Biotherm logo colours for this purpose.



3.2. ICT equipment

The equipment has been procured and will be delivered once the classroom renovations and security has been completed.

The school is set to receive a computer lab with 25 desktop i7 computing devices on an N-Computing architecture with a server. Additionally two teacher laptops will be provided with full Microsoft Office licenses. A 65" interactive board will be installed in the classroom for projection as well as an air conditioner to maintain optimal temperature in the classroom.

3.3. Internet status

Fibre Internet connection has been procured and the last mile installation will happen in the second week of September 13 - 17 September 2021. The project will ensure that unlimited connectivity will be in place at the school for 12 months.

3.4. Teacher & Community training

The teacher training and development within the project has been consciously delayed to ensure that all equipment is in place. In this way we will work with the staff to gain basic literacy and then to optimise the use of the sponsored digital technologies to improve teaching and learning at the school.

The school and community is due to receive management/leadership training, digital literacy and we will ensure that sufficient out of school programmes are also provided to ensure that community members can benefit from certification programmes.

4. Conclusion

We are incredibly excited by this project and the value that BioTherm is providing to Witbank Primere Skool and look forward to seeing the project develop and be successfully completed.

SchoolNet SA

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