



Free State: Innovative Schools



Country: South Africa

Location: Free State, South Africa

Industry: Education

Software and services:

Microsoft Partners in Learning
Professional Development
Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert
Microsoft Showcase Schools Program

Websites:

<http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/>

<http://www.eunice.co.za/>

Partners:

SchoolNet SA
ICTISE Division: University of Free State
Eunice High School

Engage with Microsoft Showcase Schools around the world to learn best practices for transforming your school through technology.

Eunice High School, one of the top performing academic schools in South Africa, was selected as a Microsoft Innovative School in 2009, a Mentor School in 2010 and a Microsoft World Tour school in 2011. This global recognition for a Bloemfontein, all-girls school stemmed from exceptional leadership and having teachers who are willing to try new teaching methods.

Whilst the achievements of Eunice High School as a Microsoft Innovative School have been impressive, what has been even more encouraging has been the uptake of the innovative schools approach in five under-resourced schools in the Bloemfontein area. These five schools, namely Vulamasongo, Moemedi, Kaelang, CommTech and Kopanong, were invited to be part of a three year project to localise the Microsoft Innovative Schools Toolkit, during which time they received mentorship and support from both Eunice High School and the ICTISE Division of the University of Free State.

Whilst these five Microsoft Innovative Schools have received some assistance from outside, the process has made their school leaders realise that within their own ranks they have knowledge and experience and can actually support one another. During contact sessions they were able to form a network of principals who could then draw on one another for help without having to ask a supervisor or the Department of Education for assistance. For example, Nkululeko Kalipa the principal of Vulamasongo says "When I have a problem I phone Jaques (Jacques Redelinghuys, principal of Kaelang Secondary School). He is knowledgeable about timetables; I know about staff disciplinary issues. I am knowledgeable in one area and he is knowledgeable in another."





EUNICE
HIGH SCHOOL

"I learnt to sit back and let the school management team think about how to implement, think practical, and think of how we can solve problems without resources. I realised we have to change the mindset."

Jacques Redelinghuys
Kaelang Secondary School

For More Information

Microsoft in Education
<https://education.microsoft.com>

Microsoft Showcase Schools
<http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/school-leaders/showcase-schools/default.aspx>

We are a Microsoft Showcase School



"When we had contact sessions we learnt from one another. We all have common problems"

Kagiso Motshlamadi, Moemedi Secondary school

Learning from others

The Innovative Schools sessions have also provided some opportunities to listen to outside speakers and to apply the lessons learnt to their own contexts. Jacques Redelinghuys says that listening to the principal of Eunice High School speak about his experiences of managing Eunice has been both encouraging and reassuring. He says he now realises that whilst Eunice has been able to make great strides as an innovative school, they have also struggled at times.

He also says that when Dan Buckley from Microsoft ran an Innovative Schools workshop for the group it made him realise that it is not enough to just have a vision and a mission – rather schools also need to think of something that can be implemented – a practical thing.

"In that workshop Kaelang School was also invited to attend the Pan African Microsoft in Education Forum in Mombasa, Kenya which gave two staff members from this school an opportunity to share best practices with school leaders from throughout Africa.

Working with resources available

Whilst the principals say that the programme could have been more structured; that they should have organised themselves better to meet more regularly; and that they should have used technology to stay in touch in between contact sessions; they all believe that the process has been beneficial to both themselves and their schools.

Malebo Monchusi, a member of the school management team at Moemedi Secondary School says the Innovative Schools process "opened their minds. The problem is the facilities at the schools. It is difficult to implement". The principal of this school, Kagiso Motshlamadi, however notes that "some of my educators have never been exposed to the internet, but now they are buying laptops and tablets that they are using for their admin and lesson plans. One teacher has shown learners how to get information from a cell phone." For Redelinghuys the most important factor, and one that does not require resources, has been the mindset change. He says "younger teachers are more inclined to use computers but knowledge is also a resource."

Through the support of Microsoft, these schools have had the opportunity to register a domain for the school and each teacher has received an e-mail address and training on how to use Microsoft Office 365 by the ICTISE division of the University of the Free State.

As part of the Innovative Schools Process, teachers of each of the schools also completed the Partners in Learning School Research survey which provided the individual schools with a free tool to measure their own innovative teaching practices and to set goals for their schools. Based on the feedback received from these schools, the Microsoft Innovative Schools materials are now also being implemented at schools in the Xhariep district in the Free State.

Key Technology

- Office 365 and Office
- Partners in Learning School Research
- Innovative Schools Toolkit