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SBIDZ

Media Release – Maths Graduation Ceremony

Maths teachers honoured at graduation ceremony

- Teachers are catalysts for change
- Partnerships and collaboration drive the vision to ensure quality education for all

On Tuesday, 8 March, the Saldanha Bay Industrial Development Zone (SBIDZ), in association with the Universities of Stellenbosch and the Witwatersrand, hosted a graduation ceremony at the Blue Bay Hotel, Saldanha Bay.

Mr Brent Walters, education superintendent-general of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), gave the keynote address. The gala dinner honoured 14 Saldanha Bay Grade 8 and 9 mathematics teachers who recently completed the Professional Development Programme in the Applications of Dynamic Software for Secondary Mathematics Teachers.

Walters praised the cooperation and partnership forged between the SBIDZ, the Western Cape Education Department, the Saldanha Bay Municipality, and the individual schools, and looked forward to taking the collaboration further.

“The education department is in this for the long haul, and when we do it, we must do it well. Education is a basic human right, and our vision is to provide quality education for every child in every school and to ensure that no child is left behind,” said Walters.

He said the graduation was a true celebration of teachers, recognising their crucial role in the community.

“The role of the teacher is more than simply teaching maths,” he said. “Teachers are the agents of change. You are the catalysts for change, the people who will help change the lives of our children.”

Walters and colleagues from the WCED made a site visit to the SBIDZ facilities earlier in the day. The tour, he said, made them aware of the opportunities the SBIDZ presented. He reiterated the need to make Saldanha Bay and the SBIDZ a driving force for the region’s economic revival. He stresses that while infrastructure investment was crucial to providing opportunities for the future, there was also a need to provide the community with a sense of hope and belief in the future.

“We are not blind to the fact that this can’t be done without developing the people,” he said, “We can develop the infrastructure, but we cannot succeed without human development.”

SBIDZ CEO Ms Kaashifah Beukes, in her opening remarks, pointed out that the teachers had formed a “community of practice” within which they would continue to explore, develop, and assist each other and other teachers in the region.

“Being that agency of change is the cornerstone of our purpose in the IDZ. Our purpose is to act against history and be the catalyst for human development that goes beyond infrastructure investment but also brings about a durable transformation of the lives of the working class.”

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Beukes praised the programme as an example of SBIDZ's vision that schools provide the perfect opportunity to encourage and support the leaders of tomorrow. Teachers are a vital component in achieving this vision. The programme equipped the educators with a combination of strong educational knowledge and digital, technical and leadership skills to inspire their pupils to greater heights and better equip them to face the future.

The course – the first of its kind – was designed and run by Dr Erna Lampen, Mr Alwyn Olivier, Dr Luci Abrahams and Mr Songezo Mata under the auspices of the University of the Witwatersrand, LINK Centre at the Wits School of Education and the Stellenbosch University Department of Curriculum Studies.

Dr Luci Abrahams said the challenge was bringing digital learning into the classroom. "This is not about the internet," she said. "Nor is digital the only answer for making teaching maths a success. But, going digital meant we can do the things we could not do before. It helped us understand that a "school" is bigger than simply its geographical space. Digital can connect 365 days, seven days a week."

Ms Heather van Ster, director, West Coast Education District, said it showed the strength of the partnership between the WCED and the SBIDZ. The programme was to help prepare learners for a complex world and was not just another "special" project. It was a partnership that set out to "improve and transform the human condition" by recognising the role of teachers as change agents. She emphasised that the programme was to ensure that "no one was left behind".

Mr Bryan Slingers, SBIDZ communications consultant and one of the primary instigators of the development programme, said it owed much to Beukes and Van Ster's efforts and the strong partnerships they had forged to make it happen.

The business of leadership is leadership," said Slingers. "And leadership requires courage, which these two had shown, and which is displayed in the success of the programme." He summed up the event by thanking the people who designed and implemented the programme, saying the SBIDZ and the community "owed them an enormous debt of gratitude".

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