



Technology boosts teaching

By LULAMILE FENI
Mthatha Bureau Chief

A COFIMVABA Schools District Technology Project aimed at contributing to the improvement of education in the rural area through technological innovation, was launched yesterday.

The project, which is being piloted at Arthur Mfebe High School in St Marks near Cofimvaba, is a joint initiative between the Department of Science and Technology, the Department of Basic Education, the Eastern Cape education department and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

The project, launched by Science and Technology Minister Derek Hanekom, together with the Deputy Minister of Basic Education Enver Surty and Education MEC Mandla Makupula, is expected to be rolled out to eight other schools in Cofimvaba next year.

"The primary purpose of the initiative was to examine whether and how technology can contribute to quality teaching and learning in a rural context," he said.

The project will be piloted in the Nciba Schools Circuit in early 2013 and will serve as a "testing ground" of different ways in which the teaching and learning of maths, science and technology can be enhanced.

Teachers at Arthur Mfebe High School have been taught by the CSIR how to use tablets in teaching while pupils have also been taught on how to use the tool. A total of 16 teachers have received tablets and are being trained how to use these in the classroom.

Grade 12 pupils were given four tablets loaded with maths and science content sponsored by Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and are being trained by the institution.

For the first time, the local community will have access to the internet, thanks to the Meraka Institute of the CSIR which has installed the wireless mesh network or Wi-Fi.

In addition, the provincial education department has invested R540 000 towards an experimental farm to enhance the teaching of agricultural management practice at the school as it was an agri-

cultural school.

This contribution has seen the establishment of a piggery, a chicken coop, an orchard, experimental crop farming with drip irrigation, as well as a nursery.

Going forward, the project will also focus on using technology to improve other factors in the environment that have an impact on learning and teaching.

These include basic services such as clean water and sanitation, nutrition and healthcare. This is against the background that adequate basic infrastructure and the provision of good nutrition either at school or where learners live plays a very important role in improving learner performance.

Hanekom said a science centre would be built in Cofimvaba to serve as a skills training facility for teachers and unemployed youth on a range of technologies including agricultural processing, building and maintenance.

School principal Lwando Rwayi was happy about the project.

"The learners like having maths and science teachers in the pocket," said Rwayi. — *lulamilef@dispatch.co.za*



TEACHING TOOLS: Education MEC Mandla Makupula, Deputy Minister of Basic Education Enver Surty and Science and Technology Minister Derek Hanekom, at the launch of the Cofimvaba Schools District Technology Project at Arthur Mfebe Secondary School in St Marks, Cofimvaba, yesterday Picture: LULAMILE FENI