

The Mathematics Centre Seminars and Workshops

At the start of the second term the Mathematics Centre organized a series of Mathematics teaching workshops and seminars. Professor Anne Watson and Professor John Mason were invited from Oxford University and the Open University to run these workshops and seminars for teachers in the Grahamstown area. Professors Watson and Mason are among the most respected and influential mathematics educators in the world. They were chosen both for their wealth of experience but also because of their fantastic ability to work with teachers in ways that stimulate deep and meaningful mathematical engagement. This focus on pushing mathematical boundaries is well suited to the aims of the Mathematics Centre.

The workshops and seminars were well attended. 55 participants from Grahamstown as well as from Port Elizabeth, East London and Keiskammahoek attended. Feedback has been very positive. Not only did all who participated have a lot of fun (especially in the dancing with numbers activity) but there have been benefits to our teaching through the development of discovery type worksheets based on ideas presented at the workshops. Subsequent to these workshops there has also been increased reference in meetings to the importance of continuing to challenge our learners to engage more deeply, independently and meaningfully with Mathematics. The Mathematics Centre now has a sign with a reminder to “Keep the Maths challenging and help students to get there! Avoid the temptation to oversimplify” [the key message of John Mason’s workshops].

In addition, the Maths Centre arranged for a special “Think Tank” on teacher development. 22 people involved in teacher development in the broader Grahamstown area were invited by Dr Graven and Professor Marc Schafer (Head of the Rhodes School of Education) to engage on the way forward in mathematics teacher education. Invitations were sent to a range of stakeholders involved in mathematics teacher education. For example people from RUMEP, MIST, Heads of Departments from various schools and so forth. The session generated some important insights for working with teachers successfully. The workshop was chaired by Professor Anne Watson.

The Mathematics Centre will continue to organize seminars, workshops and ‘think tank’ sessions. Such sessions I believe helps to build a vibrant supportive community of mathematics educators in the Grahamstown area and also helps to keep us internationally and nationally connected and at the forefront of learning within our profession.

Written by: Dr Mellony Graven