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### Saturday school bright sparks soar

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The top Grade 12 pupils in Port Elizabeth's Incubator School Programme are, front from left, first-placed Asisipho Ndinisa and her twin sister, third-placed Siphosethu, both from St Thomas Senior Secondary, and second-placed Stephanie Cronjé from Linkside High. With them are, back from left, head of corporate social investment at Capitec Foundation, Neptal Khoza, science facilitator Luzuko Jama and maths facilitator Ncedile Konzana  
Image: Michael Sheehan

Starting in February, 480 grade 10 to 12 pupils from 45 schools across the Eastern Cape gave up their Saturdays to improve their maths and physical sciences skills – and it's paying off.

Among the Nelson Mandela Bay pupils attending the technology-driven Incubator School Programme (ISP), run annually by Nelson Mandela University's Govan Mbeki Mathematics Development Centre (GMMDC), 65% of the Grade 12s showed an improvement in maths and 70% improved in science, when comparing their June results with 2018's November marks.

More than 60% of the Grade 11s improved in both subjects, while more than 40% of the Grade 10s improved in maths.

"Over the past five years, the ISP has helped thousands of promising Eastern Cape learners improve their marks, and gain access to tertiary education," GMMDC head Prof Werner Olivier said.

The top-achieving Grade 12 ISP pupil in the province was Tausiquil Islam from Mthatha High School, achieving 93% for maths and 91% for science, while the most improved pupils was Zimbini Ntsula from Ndlovukazi Senior Secondary School in Komani, whose maths and science marks in June improved by 22%, compared with last November.

In addition to the Saturday school lectures, each pupil received an Android tablet to use as a "personal tutor" at home.

The tablets were loaded with a GMMDC-developed app called TouchTutor®, made up of interactive digital resources, all offline and aligned with the curriculum.

These included video lessons, PowerPoint presentations, calculator assistance, self-tests with scoring and feedback, old national and provincial exam papers and language support in eight indigenous languages.

Adding to the success of the 2019 ISP was the introduction of student-teacher tutors at the Port Elizabeth and Mthatha ISPs.

They were trained to use a small new digitalised teaching device called the GammaTutor, which includes the TouchTutor® app, and can be directly plugged into a projector, TV or any digital screen.

"The GammaTutor added to this year's ISP success," Olivier said.

"We are looking forward to rolling out this new mobile teaching device to other provinces, to empower teachers to engage in teaching practices geared towards 21st century learners."

The tutors, all final-year education students at Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu universities, used the GammaTutor during 90-minute midweek tutorials with small groups of Grade 10 pupils at the participating schools, helping them work through challenges and deepen their understanding of maths.

NMU student teacher Monique Paulse, who tutored at Sancto Secondary School in the Bay, said the tutorials provided an opportunity for pupils to ask questions and work through topics they didn't understand in class.

"The GammaTutor helped me a lot, as we were able to find different examples on different topics quickly and easily."

Neptal Khoza, head of Capitec Foundation, which sponsored the Saturday school programme, said: "Capitec Foundation has adopted a teacher development approach as part of our strategy.

"It was therefore fitting that we infuse this into the ISP programme, in partnership with the GMMDC.

"The aim is to support future teachers with much-needed teaching experience and access to 21st century teaching, while assisting high-school pupils with extra tutorials to help them perform better in maths."

He said the ISP programme had helped pupils to "learn for understanding and not just to memorise".

"The TouchTutor® platform enables pupils to access content remotely any time, anywhere and without data costs. It enables them to learn at their own pace."