

Hunting for top STEM talent

The South African National Roads Agency (SANRAL), in partnership with the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) launched the SANRAL Physical Science School and Educator of 2017 Competition on Wednesday, 1 February 2017.



At the launch of the Physical Science School and Educator of 2017 Competition were Pieter Swart (NMMU Director of the Department of Marketing & Corporate Relations), Isabel van Gend (STEM Pipeline Programme Manager), Michelle Ah Shene (SANRAL Southern Region Marketing and Communications Manager) and Dr Peter Manser (Alexander Road High School Principal).

The competition is part of the NMMU's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Pipeline Project (STEM PP) which recognises outstanding work by the most dedicated educators for sustained efforts of excellence in Physical Science education.

The top school will walk away with R30,000 Physical Science lab equipment and the winning educator will walk away with a R5,000 voucher and second prize is R3,000 voucher. The winners of these competitions will be announced in May 2018.

"The success of the project is dependent on the collaborative approach between SANRAL who is a sponsor and initiator, NMMU the academic service provider, the participating schools, educators and most importantly the learners," said Michelle Ah Shene, SANRAL Southern Region marketing and communications manager.

Ah Shene added that the project was also important because it exposes learners to careers in the field of engineering and other science related career pathways.

“The STEM programme is also a feeder to our bursary and scholarship programme,” Ah Shene said.

The competition’s main objectives are to encourage excellence in Physical Science experience of the learners from grades 9-12 and ultimately increase the number of learners passing Physical Science with more than 50%.

The competitions’ criteria is strict, for both the schools and educators. Schools are judged on their efforts to promote Physical Science as a subject in their schools and the support they give to their learners. The educator has to improve the Physical Science experience for the learners.

“We judge the school and educator based on the unique situation at their schools. This is facilitated by the range of objective assessment tools used to judge both competitions. This then means that no school is being disadvantaged during the judging process. We evaluate the schools according to their attitude, attendance and collaboration with NMMU. They also have to submit documents which track their progress on the subject,” said Isabel van Gend, STEM PP programme manager.

The previous competition’s winning school was Alexander Road High School, the winning educator was Cronje Oosthuizen of Alexander Road High School and Raymond Mali, of Khumbulani High School, achieved second place.

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