

Archway Foundation joins forces with UWC professor's initiative

An innovative programme by a UWC professor aimed at redressing the 'abysmally' low levels of science and maths skills in Western Cape Schools, has attracted the attention of the Garden Cities Archway Foundation, established six years ago to alleviate the shortfall of 700 school halls in the province.

The programme initiated by Professor Shaheed Hartley enhances the skills and content knowledge of science teachers to enable them to bring science and maths to acceptable levels in primary and secondary schools. Now, the Archway Foundation is among the institutions providing funds not only to help train the teachers, but to fit and equip science laboratories in the schools. Last year the Foundation provided R1 million to fit six labs in rural schools in Worcester, Robertson, Ashton, Suurbraak and Mossel Bay. This year, R2 million from the Archway will ensure that at least 8 more are provided.

In the laboratories, 40 to 50 children at a time can receive science instruction at modular octagonal workstations, and teaching is done with the assistance of an interactive whiteboard on to which lessons are downloaded. Practical demonstrations are given with

chemicals and equipment also provided by donor funds.

By the end of this year, over 10 000 Western Cape schoolchildren will have access to the science laboratories.

Professor Hartley, who is the Director of the Science Learning Centre for Africa in the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), devised the programme, and also designed the laboratories that have been put into existing classrooms in the chosen schools.

The programme includes training sessions for teachers, the establishment of science clubs at schools, and an annual inter-school science competition that will help identify the schools, says Hartley, that are most likely to benefit from the science laboratory programme.

The Archway foundation that by the end of this year will have provided 42 halls for schools in disadvantaged areas, also participates in education assistance to FET institutions and annually R2 million is donated to UWC, UCT, Cape Peninsula University of Technology and Stellenbosch University. Chief Financial Officer of Garden Cities, Kim Gibson, said that the participation of the company and Foundation in education initiatives ensured the enhancement of skills in the trades. 'This

in turn improves the quality of the work eventually done on building and development projects that are core to our business. It's essential that we are involved at training level.'

