

# We read to expand our life horizons

By Didi Assure-Wertheim, issued by False Bay College

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*'When you sell a man a book you don't sell him just 12 ounces of paper and ink and glue - you sell him a whole new life.'*

Between the covers of books reside a treasure trove of pleasures and discovery. You can travel the world, explore adventures, interact with great intellects, and journey to places only limited by the boundaries of imagination.



False Bay TVET College students with Zimkhitha (FunDza) at the Nal'i'bali/FunDza stand during the College's Orientation.

The opposite is unfortunately true with an inability to read or write. It limits our experience and engagement with the world.

One of the primary aims of False Bay TVET College is to equip students with the requisite skills and qualifications to obtain income, step in and scoop up the jobs that require the skills in so short supply within South Africa. And most importantly, by being an active participant in the economy and workplace we develop as holistic human beings.

The very strong correlation between reading and learning is hard to refute. While one of our priorities is to increase the literacy levels of our students, due to its impact on learning; we also want to encourage a love for reading.

We hope to encourage students to write and to unlock the imagination of budding prospective young writers. With this end in mind, the English Department across the

different campuses has embarked on different projects over the years to stimulate reading among our students.

One of the most recent projects has been a partnership that was forged between our Fish Hoek campus, FunDza Literacy Trust and Nal'i bali.

FunDza Literacy Trust is a non-profit organisation that is dedicated to improving literacy among teenagers and young adults. Nal'i bali is an arm of PRAESA (Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa) whose aim is to embed a culture of literacy into the fabric of everyday life in South Africa.

This project was birthed through the initiative of the Fish Hoek Open Learning Centre Co-ordinator, Marianne Elliott, Natascha Krull and Tamarah Jooste who are two lecturers of English at the same campus. It has been their drive and dedication that has resulted in the success and sustainability of this project.

Since the initial discussions and plans, this project has evolved into an array of other activities which students have embraced with much enthusiasm and verve.

An ongoing event is the reading campaign/competition that will culminate in prize-giving ceremony. A book voucher was secured by Nal'i'bali as one of the prizes; and another prize has been sponsored by Pearson Publishers. Students are required to read books throughout the year from a prescribed list compiled by Marianne Elliott, Natascha Krull, Tamarah Jooste and the local Fish Hoek library.

Students write reviews on each book they have read. They also have to read stories to young children. This forms part of the criteria that will determine the



winners of the competition.

*Pelokazi Vimba, a False Bay College TVET student, reading to children in her neighbourhood.*

Our students participated in World Read Aloud Day. They have also taken time to read to children at the pre-schools in the area.

The sessions during which FunDza Literacy Trust representatives and lecturers facilitate activities, which have been designed to allow students to discover the value of reading, and also to engender a love and appreciation for reading, have been thoroughly enjoyed by our students.

These sessions have inspired one of our students, at Fish Hoek campus, to write her manuscript. One of the FunDza Literacy Trust authors has volunteered to mentor her. Similarly, many other students have been encouraged to read, write and to produce creative word pieces of their own.

Three lecturers and the Open Learning Centre Co-ordinator will be accompanying 11 students to the Franschoek Literary Festival at which two of the FunDza authors will be speaking. This excursion has generously been sponsored by FunDza Literacy Trust.

When students were asked for their responses to the reading campaign, this is what some of them had to say: "I now love reading. I have read two massive books in one month, which I have never done before." "I like reading now. I don't go to sleep without reading a book or magazine. I even borrow books from my sister."

Since the reading campaign was launched, the Open Learning Centre Co-ordinator, Marianne Elliott, has reported that students snap up the FunDza series of books available at the Open Learning Centre; these never stay on the shelves. She says that: "Circulation has since doubled." The local Fish Hoek library is ecstatic that their membership has increased; and that False Bay College students now come to the library to borrow books instead of disinterestedly passing by.

The spirit of reading has come alive among students. It has ignited the imagination of some and in others sparked the belief and confidence that they can be great writers who can inspire others. The impact on learning is a positive spin-off that will inevitably result with continued endeavours to get our students to read, but it is the love and appreciation for reading that will unlock limitless possibilities for their young lives, pregnant with promise.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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