

SAMF

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SAMF eNewsletter - April 2013

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Foreword - Prof Johann Engelbrecht

Mathematics is and will always be front of mind for both the government and private sector. This year has seen a dramatic increase in learners registering for the South African Mathematics Olympiad which proves that our office, as well as others who are passionate about mathematics, has been doing something right during 2012.

In spite of the text book debacle and other challenges around education, teachers and learners are still working hard at creating a future for our beautiful country. Mathematics is the one subject that teaches people how to solve problems and it is this quality that makes an individual a leader. Mathematics can, and will, create leaders in politics, business, science, education and even sport and music.

It is for this very reason that the country can be proud to host the 55th annual International Mathematical Olympiad next year. The South African Mathematics Foundation will be hosting more than 600 high school learners from over 100 countries at the University of Cape Town for a battle to be crowned the world's best young mathematician.

But, in the meanwhile we should not take our focus off the everyday education of young people in the art of problem solving. We urge you, whether you are a teacher, parent, student or corporate business person, to join us in promoting mathematics as a crucial subject not only for the individual, but also for the country and the rest of the world.

Record entries for South African Mathematics Olympiad

This year, a total of 81 578 learners from 1031 schools registered for the first round of South Africa's biggest Olympiad. That is 22,000 learners more than in 2012 and is also a huge increase on the previous record of 60 418 entries set in 2009.

A total of 199 schools participated in the Olympiad for the first time ever this year.

The first round took place at schools on 14 March and teachers can announce the results to their learners as soon as they have marked the 1st round scripts.

The second round will take place on 14 May with the finals on 9 September. The country's top young mathematicians will be receiving their medals at the Annual Gala Awards evening on 12 October.



Official launch of the International Mathematical Olympiad 2014

On 13 February a group of prominent business people attended the launch of the 55th Annual International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) at the Manhattan Hotel in Pretoria, hosted by the National Treasury.

The purpose of the launch was to make corporate South Africa aware of the sponsorship packages available which will assist us in covering the costs involved in hosting such a prestigious event.

Hosting the IMO 2014 is a huge responsibility. The host country is responsible for all aspects of the organisation of the IMO and pays all the costs, including accommodation, meals, local travel, airport transfers, excursions, entertainment and other activities.

A number of corporate organisations have already pledged their support and official sponsors will be announced soon.

Teachers excell at Harmony Teacher Development Programme

The Harmony Teacher Development Programme is a short course for teachers to improve their skills in solving Olympiad type mathematical problems. It is available free of charge as a live taught or DVD course and certificates are issued which may be used for continuous professional development.

Earlier this year Mr PJ van Wyk, a math teacher at the Tshwane Christian School as well as Mr J Cornelissen of Tuks Sport High School received a prize for completing all three levels of the training programme. Says Mr Van Wyk: "This three year journey has been a very enlightening experience for me."

We encourage all mathematical teachers to take advantage of this unique opportunity to improve their problem solving skills. Teachers can then go back to their classroom to train and enter their learners in the South African Mathematics Olympiad, which will result in a better quality of product from the schools and will put their learners in a position to reap higher achievement levels at university.



Mr van Wyk (left) and Mr Cornelissen receiving their prizes.

Siyanqoba Maths Experience Day

The Siyanqoba Regional Olympiad Training Programme, organised by the South African Mathematics Foundation (SAMF), is a Department of Science and Technology (DST) supported programme that aims to develop problem-solving skills, unlike in regular school curricula where the focus is more on solving routine-type questions. Learners identified through the South African Mathematics Olympiad (SAMO) are invited to attend regular classes. On-going training will ensure that learners perform well in the SAMO and other mathematical competitions, as well as the 55th International Mathematical Olympiad that will be hosted in Cape Town during July next year.

Approximately 400 learners attended classes on a regular basis at ten training centres in 2012.

With the aim to increase participation in the Siyanqoba Regional Training Programme in 2013, training centres hosted a Mathematics Experience Day during the month of February. The event was used to promote mathematics as subject and to select learners for the programme.

Bersan Lesch, Deputy Director, Talent for SET Careers at the Department of Science & Technology says that the success of the programme can be clearly seen in learners' pleasing performance in the SAMO, especially since the training programme is still in its

irritancy (it commenced in August 2011).

208 learners qualified for the second round of last year's SAMO and a further 37 advanced to the final round. A total of 327 of the learners on the training programme have been selected to participate in the Southern African Inter-provincial Mathematics Olympiad last year. Six of the country's top national medallists of the SAMO come from the training programme.



Students at the Math Experience Day.

Appointments

Prof Nigel Bishop of the South African Mathematical Society has been elected as Chairperson of the SAMF Board for 2013/4.

Dr Willem Conradie (UJ) and Dr Duncan Samson (Rhodes University) have been appointed on the SAMO Committee.

Dr Jay van Zyl (Rhodes University) has been appointed as IMO leader and Dirk Basson (SU) as deputy leader.

Maciek Stankiewicz (UCT) has been appointed as PAMO leader and Phil Labuschagne (UCT) as deputy leader.

The following people have been appointed to serve on the 2014 IMO's Local Organising Committee:

- Prof John Webb (University of Cape Town): Convener, member of IMO Advisory Board
- Prof Johan Meyer (University of the Free State): Chairman, Problems Committee
- Prof Dirk Laurie (University of Stellenbosch): Chief Coordinator
- Prof Sizwe Mabizela (Rhodes University): Chairman, IMO Jury
- Prof Nic Heideman (University of Cape Town): African liaison
- Prof Daniel Makinde (Cape Peninsula University of Technology): African liaison
- Prof Johann Engelbrecht (Executive Director, SAMF)
- Ms Elie Olivier (Operational Manager, SAMF)