



→ Provincial Winner

Excellence in teaching Physical Sciences (FET)

Name: Bernice van Blerk
School: Vredenburg High School, Vredenburg
District: West Coast

As a passionate and innovative educator, Ms Van Blerk's philosophy on the culture of learning is based on explaining work in a simplified way which includes practical everyday examples and the use of a systemic instructional model with clear objectives. She encourages critical thinking and problem solving by teaching them consequences for choices and taking responsibility, inside and outside of the classroom. She is instrumental and a driving force behind the science ethos at Vredenburg High School, situated in a rural area on the West Coast. She is a holistic educator integrating sport, science, and technology.

Ms Van Blerk believes in a blended learning approach and has created a OneDrive system for her classes where she uploads recorded lessons and resources for her learners to access at their convenience.

During her science lessons, she

puts an emphasis on learners experiencing science hands-on with informal practicals and provides meaningful feedback by means of weekly informal testing as well as specific feedback on their answer sheets. She has various methods to motivate learners to compete, choose science careers and become science educators in their near future. She played an instrumental role in learners contributing to their own community once graduated in fields such as BSc, Medicine, Engineering as well as Education.

To enhance the learning experience further, she uses various forms of technological aids, such as Google platforms, PhET Interactive simulations, YouTube videos, WhatsApp and email. Her practical nature allows her to perform informal practicals in class to help learners to conceptualise difficult sections of the content they are trying to master.

She encourages her learners to be

partners in the learning process and through her learner support programme she provides a safe space for learners to study. Additionally, as part of her role as acting deputy principal, she focuses on sports and the holistic development of learners. In this way she fosters diversity and inclusivity teaching them endurance, resilience and accountability.

Despite the socioeconomic conditions of the rural area of her school, she was a keynote speaker at National Science Week hosted in the West Coast district focusing on women in science. She has made meaningful connections with a wide range of science organisations which include the Royal Academy of Science, Allan Gray Foundation, Department of Water and Sanitation, STEM mentHER, Eskom Science Expo and Imbewu Science Foundation

(fostering international relationships).

Ms. Van Blerk fosters strong working relationships with her colleagues and the community. She creates a sense of social responsibility by training and sharing resources with fellow educators. She has been a senior marker for several years. It is, therefore, without reservation that Ms Van Blerk is chosen as a worthy recipient of this award.