

STELLA CLARK TEACHERS AWARD

NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2015



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
YUNIBESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD



CENTRE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT
IZIKO LOPHULISO IWEMFUNDO EPHAKAMILEYO
SENTRUM VIR DIE ONTWIKKELING VAN HOËR OPVOEDING

BACKGROUND

The ongoing crisis in basic education has a huge impact on South Africa's ability to train the next generation of scientists, engineers, technicians and other professionals. The shortage of suitably qualified teachers, especially in township and rural schools, is often blamed for the poor quality of education. However, there are some schools, even in the most impoverished areas, which produce superb results. The success of these schools, in spite of their enormous challenges, can be attributed to remarkable school leadership and in particular, skilled and dedicated teachers. The Stella Clark

Teachers Award acknowledges the work of exceptionally talented teachers – the unsung heroes who go beyond the call of duty to motivate and inspire their learners to perform well and rise above their poverty-stricken circumstances. The

Award was established in honour of Stella Clark, an extraordinary University of Cape Town lecturer from the Centre of Higher Education Development's (CHED) Academic Development Program.

Her husband, a UCT Chemistry professor, and children established the award after her death in March 2005, to recognise her many years of dedicated service to teaching and mentoring students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. At the beginning of each academic year, CHED invites students to nominate high school teachers

who they believe helped make it possible for them to pursue their dream of accessing tertiary education, particularly the University of Cape Town. The successful teacher, the school, and the UCT student who nominates the successful teacher all receive monetary prizes. The teacher receives the award at a ceremony held at UCT in August. The teacher's spouse, school principal, CHED staff, the nominating student, UCT Vice-Chancellor and representatives from the Department of Education attend the ceremony. The University aims to highlight skilled

teaching practices and at the awards' ceremony recipients are given the opportunity to share with the public the reasons for their success in the classroom.

CHED is delighted with the impact the Stella Clark Teachers' Award has had,

and looks forward to the growing influence it will have in future years. This award also plays an important part in widening access to UCT and in forging links with schools in the townships and rural areas. Since its inception in 2006 the success of the Stella Clark Teachers' Award has surpassed all expectations. The variety and large number of exceptional applications from students tell inspiring stories about remarkably dedicated teachers, some with national reputations and many active beyond the boundaries of their classrooms.

“The Stella Clark Teachers' Award Has Surpassed All Expectations”

RECIPIENTS

2006 - Mr Sibusiso Maseko

Zwelibanzi High School, KwaZulu-Natal

2007 - Mr Phaldie Tregonning

Rocklands Senior Secondary School, Western Cape

2008 - Mr December Mpapane

Inkomazi High School, Mpumalanga

2009 - Mrs Lavinia Boer

Rhodes High, Western Cape

2010 - Mrs Nompilo Jojo

Clydesdale Secondary School, KwaZulu-Natal

2011 - Mr Siphwe Twala

Khwezi High, Eastern Cape

2012 - Mr Phuti Ramarope

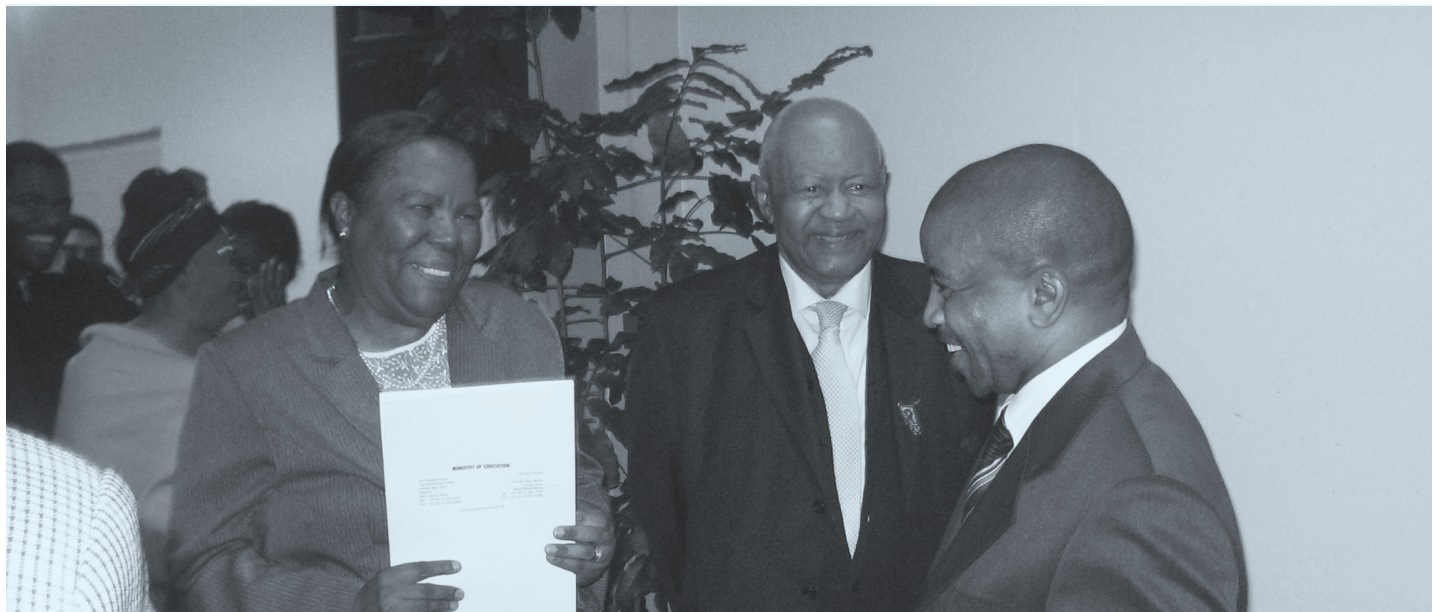
Sinthumule Secondary School, Limpopo

2013 - Mr Noel Solomons

Edgemead High School, Western Cape

2014 Charlene Little and Amina Nordien

2015 Mr Tshabalala and Mr David de Storie



Sibusiso Maseko receiving his award from Naledi Pandor.

2006

The first winner was **Mr Sibusiso Maseko** from Zwelibanzi High School outside Durban. He was first nominated by Phumlani Nkontwana. Thereafter nominations from previous Zwelibanzi pupils registered at UCT, in support of Mr Maseko's nomination, flooded in. The Committee was impressed with Mr Maseko's achievements, judged on the basis of the many motivations received which all enthusiastically and vividly described his involvement in teaching and encouragement of students both academically and socially. The students described an infectious passion for the subject which meant that they looked forward to his classes. All the supporting motivations attested to his influence in assisting pupils to obtain high grades in Physical Science and ultimately to register at UCT. Mr Nkontwana described how his teacher worked around the clock to produce distinctions in Physics:

"He ran afternoon classes whereby he helped learners with problems in Physical Science. The Zwelibanzi learners and teachers idolized him and still do today. Just from my personal assessment he deserves such an honor. He carried himself with dignity and respect but was incredibly down to earth. Mr Maseko did not only help Zwelibanzi Secondary School learners but the whole of Umlazi matriculants who did Physical Science and wanted to get straight A's in it. He would schedule convenient time with them. Daily after the

school was dismissed at 16h00 he would teach the outside learners until 17h30 after which he continued with his fellow Zwelibanzi learners from 18h00 to 20h00. Critics would name Zwelibanzi Secondary a "firm", so all matriculants were called "workers". The "firm-worker" concept came from the fact that the school started at 06h30 in the morning till 16h00 after which the matriculants proceeded till 20h00. Mr Maseko is the reason for the "firm-worker" nonsense; he was after all the only teacher at school at 20h00. After 20h00 he would go straight to one of the biggest and supported SABC radio stations, Ukhozi FM Stereo where he had his session that took about 30 to 45 minutes live. In this session he continued to help learners with skills, some questions they had and the actual material of Physical Science. He also ran and still runs winter school where he helps learners from almost all KZN schools with problems in Physical Science. Each and every Zwelibanzi matriculant has to attend each and every session. Summer school is no exception to all Grade Eleven learners from outside and inside Zwelibanzi High."

The award had clear benefits for Mr Maseko and the school. After hearing him speak at the award ceremony in 2006, the Minister of Education, Ms Naledi Pandor, invited him to share his experiences at York University in the UK.

2007

In 2007 CHED presented the award to **Mr Phaldie Tregonning** from Rocklands Senior School, who was nominated by Mr Dulan Simons, a second year student registered for B Sc in Chemical Engineering. In his nomination Mr Simons wrote:

"Mr Tregonning has been my inspiration throughout my school career. He has come from bad circumstances and is now standing up to the challenge of not only improving maths and science education in the community, but also in the country. He has shown a lot of dedication to his job. He spent many Saturdays at the school helping learners improve their maths skills.

Through this he got involved in the Dinaledi project, which is committed to improving maths and science education in our country... After hours he also gave extra classes in the Khayelitsha and Gugulethu areas... Mr Tregonning has a great willingness to help others with their problems. It is his

unpredictable and flexible way of teaching that is his greatest asset. He goes down to the particular level of each learner, assesses their needs, but most importantly understands their situations, in order for him to help them. He is one of the best mentors that I have ever had..."

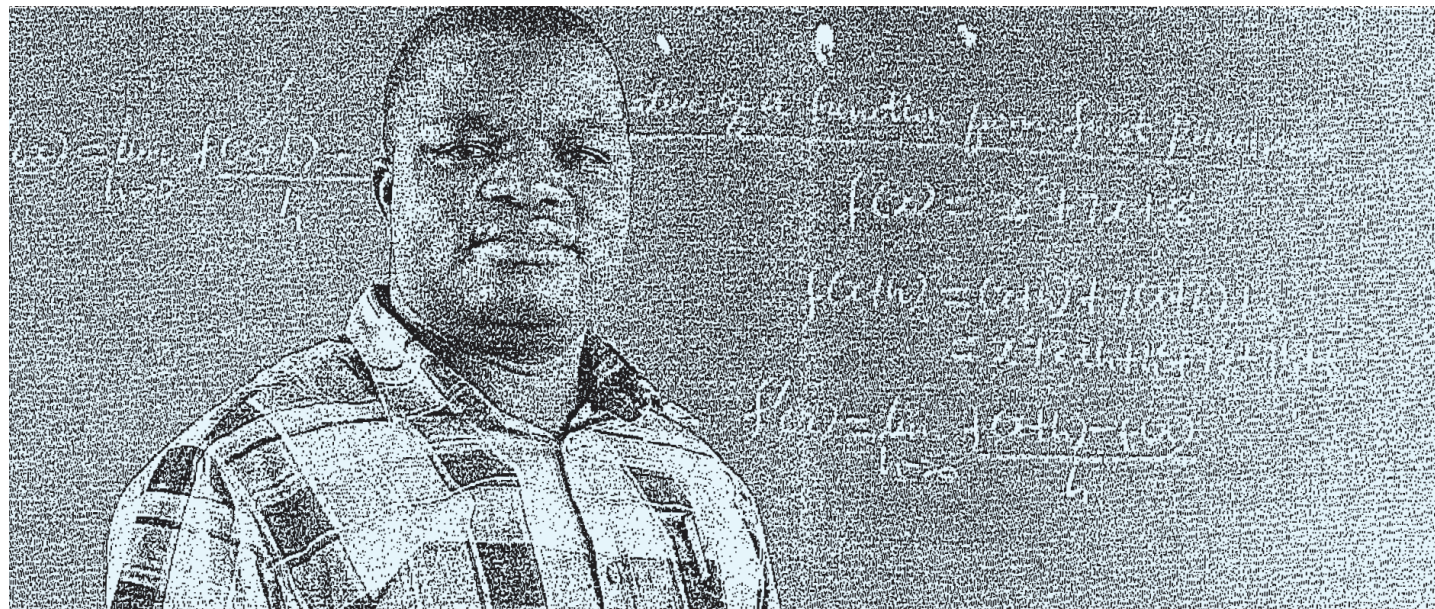
In his seminar Mr Tregonning's passion and activism for quality Mathematics and Science teaching was very apparent. He plays an important role in schools' development through the Dinaledi Schools' Project and is regarded as a regional resource. He was present at the award ceremony in 2009, at which he told us how the award has helped him to

build links with other individuals and organisations in the field. Mr Tregonning has subsequently played a key role in a Mathematics workshop organised by the UCT Science Faculty to facilitate dialogue between UCT and schools on the new Mathematics curriculum.

"He is one of the best mentors that I have ever had"

Phaldie Tregonning during his acceptance speech in 2007.





Mr December Mpapane teaches grades 10 to 12 at Nkomazi High in Mpumalanga.

2008

In 2008 **Mr December Mpapane**, a Mathematics teacher from Nkomazi High School in Mpumalanga, received the Award. He achieved outstanding results (including 175 distinctions, and not a single failure in the 13 years he has been at Inkomazi). The student who nominated him, Nhandla Nkuna, said at the award ceremony:

“He has won the award for best Maths teacher in the Mpumalanga Education Department’s Ehlanzeni region every year since 1996. His passion, dedication and love for what he does are the things that motivate me every time I meet a challenge.”

Mr Mpapane’s address at the award seminar provided insight into some of the daily struggles of teaching in an impoverished context:

“I introduced extra classes as in afternoon, Saturday and even Sunday classes. Some community members strongly challenged the issue of Sunday classes: I did not give up.

“For the past 13 years every single child taught by me has passed”

The Sunday classes are only meant for tests purposes. For me every day of the week is a school day. To date I have produced 175 Distinctions. For the past 13 years every single child taught by me has passed, and many have become engineers, doctors and accountants; the list is endless...”

“My teaching time is very inconsistent; some days when learners write tests, they finish off at 21h00-22h00. It becomes then my financial responsibility to call the parents who are mobile to collect their kids and to those

who are immobile a transport (minibus) has to be arranged for safe home delivery and I have to be financially liable. Because of the socio-economic situation of the area and the time span spent at school by learners during teaching and learning, it remains a personal obligation to buy my learners soup and bread as well as juice for survival and concentration especially on these days. The little that I’m paid I have to share it with my family and my learners and I’m not complaining.”

2009

The recipient for 2009 was Cape Town-based Afrikaans teacher, **Mrs Lavina Boer**, who has taught Afrikaans since the mid 1980s, mainly at Marian Roman Catholic High School in Matroosfontein. She recently moved to Rhodes High in Mowbray, where she is currently subject head. She is an innovative teacher who has achieved excellent results teaching Afrikaans as a second language to diverse groups of students through our political transition. At the awards ceremony, her past and present students spoke movingly about her inspiring teaching and of her nurturing.

Mrs Boer was nominated by her former student Nangamso Hlathana. Mrs Boer, who studied at UCT in 1991, used

to teach Afrikaans at Marian Roman Catholic High School, where her learners called her a ‘living legend’. Nangamso said Mrs Boer was a hard-working, committed and disciplined

individual — a role model for both learners and colleagues. “She had a great passion, and went the extra mile for her learners, especially those who were Xhosa-speaking”, she recalled. Hlathana said Boer let them play games and act scenes from prescribed books as some of her teaching methods. Mrs Boer also taught female learners life skills, and started a hiking club with

another educator. “When she left in 2007 it was the most devastating news for us,” said Hlathana. However, she continued to tutor them in the lounge of her home, and helped Hlathana apply to study at UCT.

“She had a great passion, and went the extra mile for her learners, especially those who were Xhosa-speaking”

Lavina Boer, right, an Afrikaans teacher, is congratulated by Nuzhah Adams after receiving the award in 2009.





Prof Nan Yeld, Dean of Centre for Higher Education Development, and Dr Max Price Vice Chancellor, Vangeli Gamede, Nompilo Jojo and Nondumiso Ngubo at the SCTA ceremony.

2010

The award winner for 2010, **Mrs Nompilo Jojo** (affectionately known to her students as “Ma’am Jojo”) obtains outstanding Mathematics results at Clydesdale Senior Secondary School in the rural Umzimkhulu town of KwaZulu-Natal. Described by principal, Vangeli Gamede (a UCT alumnus), as the pillar of the Clydesdale school, Mrs Jojo’s weapons for success are patience, sacrifice and motivation. In her motivation UCT Health Sciences’ student, Nondumiso Ngubo, spoke of how Mrs Jojo served as a role model for her students, always motivating them to work harder and not to underestimate their abilities. She spoke of Ma’am Jojo’s role at a difficult point in Clydesdale’s School’s history:

“...there were many predictions saying that it was going to be a disaster only in mathematics. The eyes of the community were focused on Clydesdale Secondary, which in previous years had led in achieving distinctions. Despite all these challenges, Ma’am Jojo won the trust of our parents and amazed many by producing a number of distinctions in mathematics.”

At the Awards’ ceremony, Mrs Jojo spoke of how she often

has to deal with hungry learners who dislike Mathematics, and who lack the proper foundation for the subject. In such a context, she has to go back to basics: “When you are building a house, you can’t put blocks in the air. You must put other blocks where you feel there is air.” In her motivation, Nondumiso described in great detail how Mrs Jojo’s passion and dedication facilitated the building of these blocks:

“Ma’am Jojo won the trust of our parents and amazed many”

“I still remember the way my classmates and I loved maths. Every day, after the maths period, we used to come into small groups and discuss what was being said during the period. If we had anything that we did not understand, we used to go to the staffroom and ask our teacher during the lunch time. She was approachable; she never chased us away saying it was her break time. Instead, she always tried by all means to make us understand by explaining, giving us study guides, and other relevant sources of information. [...] To keep us active, she also used to give us tasks to go and find information by ourselves before she explained to the class. That increased our skills to work in groups and our abilities to do research using relevant study guides and textbooks.”

2011

The 2011 award winner, **Mr Sipiwe Thwala**, taught at Siyamukela High, a township school in Madadeni. Mr Thwala had only been teaching for 7 years, but his Mathematics results were already the best in the district. Mndeni Msibi, the Health Sciences student who nominated him, described him as a great motivator, as his ‘voice of confidence’, a man with patience, humility, dedication and commitment, who inspired passion for Mathematics and engaged with his students at an individual level, despite being faced with large classes. Mndeni said that when he taught him in grade 12 in 2009, Mr Thwala had no car, lived far away from school, but was always at school at 6h30 in the morning for extra Maths lessons. There were also extra Maths classes in the afternoons and during the June holidays, he taught Mathematics at nearby schools. At the ceremony, Mr Twala spoke of the challenge of teaching students through the medium of their second language. He said:

“Sometimes you find that learners fail maths not because they don’t understand the subject, but because of the language barrier. As teachers we need to use different languages to make it easier for them.”

In turn, Mndeni commended him for his “exceptional teaching methods”. He proceeded to outline how peer learning formed a crucial part of Mr Twala’s teaching strategy:

“He always believed that one understands something better from someone of the same level. So he had his own Mathematics peer educators and I am proud to say that I was one of them. There were two peer educators assigned to each group and every Friday and Saturday we had our own extra classes as learners, where we explained to each other things we did not understand. Learners from other schools were also allowed to join and they did in great numbers. Learning was made a fun process; everyone was given an opportunity to ask the questions they feared to ask in class. As peer educators we always had to be prepared. So this encouraged us even more, to encourage others to learn also. Everyone wanted to be a peer educator so they worked hard to get excellent results.”

Mr Thwala’s extraordinary efforts have been recognized through promotion to Head of Mathematics and Science at Khwezi High, but he has retained strong ties with his former school and has continued to support their Mathematics teaching.

VC Dr Max Price, student Mndeni Msibi and SCTA winner, Sipiwo Thwala.





The winning team: VC Dr Max Price (far right) congratulates the winner of the 7th Stella Clark Teacher's Award, Phuti Ramarope, and his nominator, Hilda Khunoana.

2012

The winner of the 2012 award was **Mr Phuti Ramarope** from Sinthumule Secondary School in Limpopo. In her motivation, Hilda Khunoana, a first year student in Chemical Engineering, described Mr Ramarope as someone who is known and respected by every teacher in the village as the master of Life Sciences and Chemistry. Mr Ramarope has been teaching since 1992 and his pass rate for life sciences has been 100% since 2008. The pass rate for Physical Sciences was 82.4% in 2010 and increased to 92% in 2011. These efforts have been recognised by a district-level Life Sciences Award. At the awards ceremony, Hilda said that Mr Ramarope stands out for the “love, passion and knowledge” he has invested in his teaching.

“Exemplary leadership as a deputy-principle who pays meticulous attention to school management and to connecting to parents”

His school day starts at 6h30 each morning and he often teaches till 18h00, as well as on Saturdays. Hilda also paid tribute to his dedication to motivating the strongest and weakest students and described him as a father figure to many students and a role-model to younger teachers at Sinthumule and at other schools in the district. She described his exemplary leadership as a deputy-principle who pays meticulous attention to school management and to connecting to parents. Mr Ramarope in turn spoke of the need to improvise when teaching subjects that require practicals at a short-staffed school with no laboratory or library. He had no problem stashing laboratory lizards and rats in his home refrigerator.

2013

Our 2013 award winner, **Mr Noel Solomons**, has been teaching Science at Edgemoor High for over 20 years. The committee was moved by the really excellent, detailed motivation written by Tarryn Lewis and David Kuter, both postgraduate students in the Chemistry Department at UCT. What is really significant is that they went to Edgemoor High School 10 years apart and were taught by Mr Solomons who made a lasting impact on them. Tarryn is currently registered for Honours in Chemistry and David is a PhD student in the department. Both students say that Mr Solomons has influenced generations of students at Edgemoor. This was evident at the awards' ceremony (which included many of Mr Solomons' past students). Tarryn and David described Mr Solomons as a role model with a unique commitment to teaching and to his students. They described his deep knowledge of his subject area, his ability to provide accessible explanations for complex concepts and stimulate critical thinking. Tarryn spoke of how he would generate interest and excitement in his students by using real world applications of science. In her words, “Mr Solomons exceeds the requirements of a typical

high school teacher by relaying his passion for his field in a way that makes students want to learn”. They described Mr Solomons as a humble, kind and generous person who connects with his students on an individual basis. Speaking at the Awards' ceremony the principal of Edgemoor High, Mr Lawrence, said that “*Mr Solomons (who is also the deputy principal of the school) has the ability to instil a passion for science that has resulted in increasing numbers of our pupils entering tertiary education in this discipline and succeeding. He is at school at 6:30am where he takes extra-science lessons be it for 1 or 30 students. He has given up countless hours in the holidays to travel to rural areas throughout the country to tutor students and teachers who are struggling or do not have access to such knowledge and expertise. Within his own community and surrounds, he gives up his personal time in the afternoons and evenings to mentor less privileged students. He is a man who understands the needs of children, who has risen above his trials and tribulations, has chosen to remain in the trenches in order for our children to forge a better future for themselves and our country*”.

Mr Lawrence, Headmaster Edgemoor HS, David, Tarryn, Noel Solomons and Max Price





Mrs Charline Little, Vuyisani Bisholo, Tozama Nkunkuma, Helena Le Grange, Lia Jacobs, Mrs Amina Nordien and Professor Kevin Naidoo

2014

Charline Little, an English teacher at Maitland High School, and Amina Nordien, a drama teacher at Alexander Sinton High School in Athlone, are the joint winners of 2014 Stella Clark Teachers' Award. The 2014 winners have an outstanding record of achievements, often accomplished under difficult circumstances.

Mrs Little, a dedicated teacher for over 24 years, was nominated by Vuyisani Bisholo, a first-year Construction Economics student. In his motivation Mr Bisholo said: "Mrs Little's task is made harder by the fact that she teaches English

(as a) home language to students for whom it is a second language. I witnessed her love for English and her yearning to impart her knowledge to her students". Encouraged by Mrs Little to "read whatever you can lay your hands on, be it a newspaper or a magazine of interest", Mr Bisholo

says he applied this lesson to other subjects. "This helped me broaden my horizons in learning and pushed me into loving engaging with text in a way I had never been able to before; I guess that was a contributing factor to my coming to UCT."

"The 2014 winners have an outstanding record of achievements, often accomplished under difficult circumstances"

In her motivation, Lia Jacobs, a first-year BA student said Ms Nordien was a teacher who went the extra mile to help struggling learners. "She challenged and inspired her students and inducted them into drama through exposure to live theatre performances and by starting her own

theatre at the school," says Ms Jacobs. "Thanks to Ms Nordien's guidance, I had increased confidence, not only on stage during performance but in my personal life as well. I valued myself more and doing Drama also helped me to mature and grow in compassion for people around me."

2015

2015's joint winners were Kenneth Tshabalala from Lesiba Secondary School in Daveyton, Gauteng, and David de Storie from Harold Cressy High School, in central Cape Town nominated by Yameen Motlala, a first-year BSocSci student who matriculated at Harold Cressy, and Blessed Ngwenya, a first-year BSc student who completed his schooling at Lesiba High School. Both teachers have previously been recognised by their respective provincial education authorities for achieving 100% pass rates, but the Stella Clark Teachers' Award has special meaning for the veteran teachers because it's their former pupils who put them forward. Tshabalala said the secret of his success was "investing time". "I teach in the mornings, I teach during the periods, I teach in the afternoons.

On Saturdays and Sundays, I am there. I arrive the earliest and leave the latest. I don't take my learners for granted." Another of his techniques was to encourage the students to get involved in teaching each other as a way of bedding down their knowledge. "Knowledge sharing is powerful," is his motto.

De Storie said the award was "unexpected" but an honour for the profession and his school. He stressed the importance of helping learners connect the concrete with the abstract, the practical with theory, and the known with the unknown. He believes in "intrinsic motivation" which allowed learners to "master the subject, the world and themselves".

Ngwenya said in his nomination about his former teacher:

"The award is still the best thing to happen to me and one year later I have more courage and energy to start new projects"

"Despite the multiple roles that he has to play in the system of the school, he never fails his learners. "He is an educator, a father, friend, leader, guide and an inspiration to the youth ... Mr Tshabalala is the reason why I managed to get a good distinction for physical science and the rest of my subjects. It was his motivation and wise words that kept us going as a class. Ngwenya added: "I'm very grateful to have found a teacher like him at high school because if it weren't for him, due to lack of resources and proper information, I wouldn't have made it to UCT." To compile his motivation, Yameen Motlala interviewed Mr de Storie and came away with an inspirational story and a 4500-word oral history. He wrote. "This is the story of a behind-the-scenes legend, the story of a real hero [who]

had made it his mission to bring education to those who would otherwise go without it". "He told me how he consciously decided to dedicate himself to help, develop and empower the youth, thereby continuing the struggle through education. This was linked to

his realisation during the 1976 youth uprising that without education, the liberation of the country and its people would not be possible."

"Besides currently still teaching physical science at Harold Cressy High School, he continues to work with learners from disadvantaged backgrounds in various schools in the townships of Cape Town". Story by Andrea Weiss. Photos by Michael Hammond.

At the Stella Clark Award ceremony, from left: Assoc Prof Suellen Shay (Dean of CHED), Blessed Ngwenya (BSc student), David de Storie (teacher at Harold Cressy High School), Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price, Kenneth Tshabalala (teacher at Lesiba Secondary School), Yameen Motlala (BSocSci student) and Assoc Prof Rochelle Kapp (School of Education).



Vice-chancellor Dr Max Price views the Stella Clark Teachers' Award as important because UCT depends on the school system for its students, and teachers are key in influencing learners to aspire to come to the university. It also links the university with the most remote schools in the country.

"This is our small signal of appreciation to the excellent teachers and to the teaching profession in general"

The Stella Clark Teachers Award is currently funded by Sekunjalo and generous donations from Stella's family and friends. Past corporate donors are Paarl Media and HCI Foundation. If you would like to contribute to the Stella Clark Teachers' Award Fund then you can donate by either:

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