

FundaLula Training Empowers Free State Teachers and Curriculum Support Staff to Enhance Mapwork Instruction

Comprehensive training program equips educators with essential skills to develop students' spatial understanding and analytical abilities.

Bloemfontein, July 2023 – The Free State Department of Education (FSDoE) in collaboration with ESRI has introduced FundaLula, a ground-breaking program, that is revolutionizing mapwork instruction in South Africa by equipping teachers with the necessary tools and knowledge to effectively teach this critical component of geography education. Developed in collaboration with educational experts, the program aims to enhance students' spatial literacy and analytical skills, preparing them for a rapidly evolving world.

FundaLula was first presented to FSDoE at the 2022 GIS Day that was held at the University of the Free State. As the Free State Department of Education, the IT & Information Systems and Curriculum Directorates saw it fit to implement this tool, by providing training to all schools that offer Geography. The Free State has 265 schools that offer Geography throughout the Province. 50 Geography teachers were selected and trained between the 17-20 April 2023 and the remaining 217 schools will be trained by the end of August 2023.

FundaLula focuses on providing teachers with practical strategies, resources, and support to elevate their mapwork instruction. The offers workshops, seminars, and professional development sessions that cover a wide range of topics and methodologies related to mapwork teaching. These training sessions empower teachers to implement effective instructional practices, ensuring students develop a strong foundation in map reading and analysis.

One key aspect of the training is the development of map reading skills. Teachers learn how to guide students in interpreting and analysing various types of maps, including topographic maps, thematic maps, and atlases. They are equipped to explain essential map elements such as symbols, legends, scales, and grid systems, enabling students to navigate and comprehend maps effectively.

Moreover, FundaLula introduces teachers to geospatial technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning Systems (GPS). These tools enhance students' understanding of spatial relationships and data analysis. Teachers can create engaging and interactive mapwork experiences, in their lessons by incorporating geospatial technologies, fostering a deeper understanding of the subject matter

FundaLula training also offers teachers guidance on planning and conducting fieldwork activities that complement mapwork lessons. By engaging in hands-on experiences and collecting real-world data, students are better equipped to understand the practical implications of map reading and analysis.

The program also provides teachers with assessment strategies tailored specifically for mapwork. Teachers learn how to design assessment tasks that evaluate students' map reading skills, data interpretation abilities, and their ability to communicate spatial information effectively. This ensures

that assessment aligns with the learning objectives and encourages students to apply their mapwork skills.

FundaLula supports teachers in developing their own instructional resources, including lesson plans, worksheets, and multimedia materials. Through examples and templates, teachers can customize resources to suit their students' needs and the available resources in their schools. This empowers teachers to create engaging and relevant mapwork experiences for their students.

With FundaLula training, South African teachers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to deliver high-quality mapwork instruction. By enhancing students' spatial literacy, critical thinking abilities, and their understanding of the world around them, FundaLula is nurturing a generation of geographically informed individuals ready to navigate the complexities of our global society, and as the FSDoE we take pride in the use of this tool.