

The Mandela School of Science & Technology in the Eastern Cape has concluded a successful first year of teaching and learning as powerful contribution to Madiba's education legacy.

420 learners in Grades 8-10 started classes at the Mandela School in January 2014 after the school was opened by President Jacob Zuma as a world-class education institution in the Mvezo birthplace of former statesman and South African President Nelson Mandela.

The pioneering new school was built by Siemens following a 2010 request from Mandela himself, then handed to the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education. The young people of Mvezo were in 2014 able to attend secondary school close to home for the first time, and to specialize in the skills South Africa needs most, including science, engineering, technology and agriculture.

The Mandela School learners have not just welcomed their president, but also built and raced electric cars, published a magazine, learned valuable life skills, and shown a determination to become the engineers and scientists of the future.

The school is already full for 2015, with 540 students from Grade 8 to Grade 11. The first matric (Grade 12) class commences in 2016.

"This school is a triumph for education and opportunity, and a fitting tribute to Nelson Mandela," said Rita Nkuhlu, Executive Director of Siemens Southern & Eastern Africa. "It is making a huge difference in the lives of a rural community, and is a great example of a successful public-private partnership between Siemens, the Department of Basic Education and the Mvezo Development Trust. For the first time the people of Mvezo have a local secondary school where they can develop South Africa's future scientists and engineers. In the words of one of our learners, 'this is the school Nelson Mandela would have liked to go to'."

At the inaugural school awards on Wednesday (3 December 2014), attended by German Ambassador to SA Dr Horst Freitag and Chief Mandla Mandela, the first Madiba Magic Award for Maths was awarded to Mkhuseleli Dzulani.

The Siemens Award for Science went to Nxono Meleza, and eight learners won the Long Walk to Freedom Writer's Award for their contributions to the Mandela School magazine. Further prizes were given for neatness, responsibility, academic achievement, discipline, speaking, reading and

nutrition.

The state of the art Mandela School has 25 standard class rooms and three specialist laboratories for science, biology and agriculture. Its resource centre houses two computer laboratories, an engineering design lab and a library – the first in the Mvezo area.

There is teacher accommodation, wind and solar renewable energy, an emergency generator and new water and electrical infrastructure on a site which previously had limited access to power and water.

The school fulfils a dream expressed by Nelson Mandela, who famously said that education was the greatest weapon for changing the world. During the year, Siemens donated kits which Mandela School learners used to build and race electric cars at the Mthatha Airport, with the winning team travelling to the UK to race in the international Greenpower Challenge at the famous Goodwood raceway.

“Siemens has worked tirelessly with me and my team to help make learning a practical and fun experience,” said school Principal Pat Toni.

“We end our first year as a successful school community with inspired and motivated learners, parents and teachers; and a great future ahead of us.”

Siemens with the support of the Siemens Stiftung (Foundation) in Germany has also helped the Mandela School to forge national and international relationships with other institutions, among them the International Nelson Mandela School in Berlin, and the Walter Sisulu University in Mthatha, Eastern Cape.

The Experimento Kit developed by the Siemens Stiftung is among the education tools being used to stimulate interactive learning at the Mandela School. It is part of a wider series of Stiftung education initiatives, which includes four science competence centres in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Mthatha. The Siemens Stiftung is providing teacher training, partnering with five universities, and has already reached 150 schools, 270 teachers and more than 20,000 learners.

At the awards ceremony in Mvezo on Wednesday, two promising students - Ntando Tshinavha and Anda August - were named as beneficiaries of the Siemens Stiftung's first International Mandela School Exchange, which will see them travel to the International Nelson Mandela School in Berlin. Principal Pat Toni will join them for peer to peer mentorship with his counterpart Christian Nitschke.