

Lufthansa at the forefront of Education Week with iThemba School

- Lufthansa's school project has a vision to encourage a love of learning and provide basic learning necessities
- help alliance emphasizes the importance of a collaborative and inclusive approach to learning this Education Week
- iThemba School is positively changing the lives of children and has grown from strength to strength

The school curriculum in South Africa is one of the most important factors in education, however it seems to experience overwhelming challenges. In the run up to South Africa's Education Week, commemorated on the 15th and 16th of June, and Youth Day on the 16th of June, the Lufthansa Group highlights the importance of working toward better education for all South Africans.

With a continued commitment to improving the quality of education in South Africa, iThemba School, a CSR initiative founded by help alliance, the aid organization of Lufthansa Group and its employees, has improved the quality of learning and teaching in South Africa's community of Capricorn, in Cape Town, since its launch in 2006 – through the provision of first class education.

The Lufthansa Group has once again demonstrated its unwavering commitment to enhancing access to quality services through its latest education investment. The iThemba Primary School, which opened in January this year, is on the path to fulfilling its promise of providing more than 700 disadvantaged students with a chance of a better future. The main objective was to improve the level of education given to children at grassroots level, in the disadvantaged communities in Cape Town.

"The special relationship between Lufthansa's help alliance and iThemba is a true reflection of Lufthansa's commitment to enriching African communities. We're very proud of this partnership and the positive results it has and continues to yield for the communities in which we operate," comments Dr. André Schulz, General Manager Lufthansa Group, Southern Africa.

Changing the face of Education

In the creation of a knowledge-based economy, education is one of the key focus areas critical to the development of a country. Lufthansa's approach is that meaningful and practical interventions are necessary in addressing some of the challenges that hinder the progress of disadvantaged communities – such as a lack of education.

"The most powerful way to change the world is through education, and sadly this has been sorely neglected for many marginalised communities in South Africa. We were determined to give the iThemba children an educational head-start by facilitating entry into a good primary school," comments Andrea Pernkopf, Managing Director help alliance.

With South Africa's Youth Day highlighting the change of school curriculum, which was mainly a protest of students marching against being taught in Afrikaans to being taught in their home languages, iThemba's educational philosophy is a more formal and structured approach to learning. The school follows the South African School Curriculum documented in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, which aims to ensure that children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives. "iThemba's curriculum has a strong emphasis on languages, as well as

soft skills such as values, attitudes, and school readiness. iThemba's Primary School currently provides for 105 Grade 1 learners, and the lessons exceed the minimum requirements providing a lot of enrichment for them," says Susanne French, help alliance Project Manager at iThemba.

The subjects taught at the school are English, isiXhosa, Afrikaans, Mathematics and Life Skills. Life Skills is divided into personal and social well being, creative arts, and physical education.

Enriching the lives of students

"Numeracy in South Africa is amongst the lowest in the world and literacy is also very low," says French. "High quality primary school education has the power to change this, and by providing both excellent education and an inspirational physical environment we are already seeing the most disadvantaged children obtaining positive results". Inspirational education equips the learners, and ensures that educational imbalances of the past are redressed in a way that equal educational opportunities are provided for all, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical ability or intellectual ability.

"This feeds forward to their parent's sense of pride and we're seeing positive effects on the community as a whole," explains French. "The communities give us their broad support when they see the difference good education, support and nutrition have on the children."

"The iThemba School has the potential to expand in the near future by closing the gap in school education and early learning and we're fully dedicated to its success," adds Dr. Schulz. Thus the Lufthansa Group will continue to ensure that the iThemba School remains at the forefront of advancing the level of education in South Africa and, in turn, contributing towards improving the quality of life for its learners, and the community as a whole.

iThemba has achieved tremendous effective learning through infrastructure development and classroom-based support. In the coming years, iThemba wishes to complete the construction of the schools 26 classrooms – and are almost halfway there. "In the near future, we also aim to use the learning spaces to benefit the whole Capricorn community, by possibly making adult education available in the evenings," concludes French.