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**Namaqua Pupils Shine in National Spelling Bee Competition – October 2014**

Two Grade 3 pupils from the Namaqua District of the Northern Cape came in the top three places of the 2014 Nationale Spelfees. Tiffany Bezuidenhoudt won the contest and Laurnay Saal came third. Both pupils, from Concordia Primary, participated in the Basic Concepts intervention programme (BCP) when they were in Grade R.

The BCP Namaqua Education District project (2010-2012) trained 42 Grade R teachers at 23 schools, impacting 1075 pupils. BCP trains teachers as mediators to develop language and conceptual thinking skills so that their learners are better prepared for Grade 1 and future learning.

The project results indicate that word knowledge at the end of Grade 1 of the intervention group was almost double that of a baseline group (previous Grade 1 pupils who did not have the BCP). While Grade 1 test scores of Tiffany and Laurnay found they were doing well, they were not the exception – about 20% of their peers had similar scores. In fact, 54% of the intervention learners were functioning on the level of an average to high performing Grade 1 learner in SA. This is in contrast to the baseline group where only 20% were functioning on this level. In addition, the Grade 3 Annual National Assessment results showed that the learners who were part of the BC project in Grade R (2011) were amongst the strongest learners in the province. The project, funded by the *Rural Namaqualand Education Fund*, has clearly been of significant benefit to the pupils, with Tiffany and Laurnay being examples of this.

The Nasionale Spelfees or Spelling Bee Competition is run annually by the University of Stellenbosch and is open to pupils from Grade 1-10. Children are tested on pre-selected words that they have studied. These two Northern Cape learners’ achievements should encourage more teachers to utilise the BCP. In 2015 we hope to continue the project by training another 30 teachers in the Namaqua District with the aim being to eventually train all the Grade R teachers in the Northern Cape. This will raise the platform for further pupil success from the Northern Cape!