

ICT SCHOOLS PROJECT

Project to plug PE schools into 'net set to grow in 2011

■ Team's quick thinking connects 120 new computers

Sherman Bhana and Neo Budumelo

FOR many, connecting to the internet is as simple a matter as reading a newspaper, but for children from impoverished communities it's taken a project run by Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) to show them the worldwide web.

Run by the Centre for Research, Technology and Innovation (Certi), financed through the Hermann Ohlthaver Trust and aided by a beachfront hotel, 120 connected computers have now been donated to six schools.

Emafini Primary, Emfundweni Primary, KwaNnoxolo Primary, Kama Primary, Lungisa High and KwaMmagxaki High School have all been provided with wireless connections set up at NMMU's Missionvale campus.

Project co-ordinator Andre du Plessis said cable theft meant that the schools needed to be connected "wirelessly".

At first, Kama Primary in Soweto-on-Sea was out of range and a connection could not be established, but quick thinking by a member of the NMMU team, Vernon Naidoo, solved the problem.

He noticed that the Radisson Blu Hotel enjoyed line-of-sight with the school, and suggested approaching the hotel for help. Approached by Du Plessis and Certi head Paul Webb, Radisson Blu general manager Clive van Oudtshoorn was eager to help.

The Radisson provided a



HITECH BOOST . . . Ayabulela Veliso (left), 14, and Siphosethu Fila, 13, from Emafini Primary School in KwaDesi, log in to one of the school's new computers. The computers have been connected to the internet via a wireless connection from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University's Missionvale campus.

Picture: B-JAY PIERCY

site on the roof of the hotel and installed electrical points for the erection of the equipment for no charge.

"Part of our responsibility as formal business in the metro is to facilitate and get involved in whatever we can do, especially when it comes to education," Van Oudtshoorn said.

The aims of the programme – preliminary work on which began in 2009 – are to provide support to schools and also to ensure their computer labs are being utilised.

The project will continue in 2011 and Du Plessis will edu-

cate some of the teachers on his "cyber hunt strategy", a personal formulation to help students find information relative to their cognitive levels.

Emafini computer department head Brenda Thambo said: "Students are benefiting a lot and the programme caters for all learning areas. Further, it gives teachers with limited resources an opportunity to prepare effective lessons."

Training also includes teachers from the six schools, while counterparts at BJ Mnyanda, EZ Kabane, Stephen Mazangula, Tyhluwazi and Gqebera have also benefited.