

Math pupils to take part in PAMA Competition

With mathematics skills once again in the spotlight and the education crisis in this area set to continue, five South African pupils will for the first time participate in the international Pan Pacific Abacus and Mental Arithmetic (PAMA) Association (PAMA) competition to be held in India this year.

The pupils have been drawn from the top five winners in the second National Soroban Education Mental Arithmetic System (SEMAS) competition held in Johannesburg on 13 September. Two pupils from Krugersdorp, Ilke Lemmer and Wilhelm Erasmus will be taking part.

More than 320 entrants from across South Africa took part in the local competition this year, which was hosted by SEMAS.

The three selected pupils attending the international competition will demonstrate their arithmetical ability, learnt through the SEMAS system, against learners from all over the world. The pupils must solve certain problems with and without an abacus in a certain time limit.

SEMAS is an educational system based on the study of the Abacus technique of Japanese origin and designed to improve mathematical literacy and understanding among four to 12-year-old learners.

"The abacus is the oldest surviving 'computer' and is more than 2 000 years old.

"As an educational technique, mental arithmetic and the use of the abacus helps children to develop their mathematical skills without reliance on technology in a fun, non-threatening way," says director of SEMAS SA, Marlene Ras.

The system has been shown to improve IQ by up to 25 points and create greater mental and memory capacity.

Significantly, it also fosters in children a love of maths. Pupils from Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, Chinese, Taipei and Singa-



Champions of the maths competition Tamsin Rossouw, René Eloff, Ilke Lemmer and Wilhelm Erasmus. Photo submitted.

pore, all of which use abacus education, performed the best in maths tests out of 150 countries.

International studies have shown that the training not only improves a child's calculating ability and his/ her understanding of arithmetic, but also increases

memory power and creativity, concentration level and listening skills, as well as the ability to analyse problems.

"Moms in particular can benefit from becoming a franchisee and taking part in the training in the system."

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