

FUNGI FOR FUTURE PROJECT LAUNCHED AT A THIRD PRIMARY SCHOOL

FABI research Fellow Dr Neriman Yilmaz and the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Tree Health Biotechnology (CTHB) Outreach Team visited Laerskool Menlopark within the “Fungi for future” Citizen Science project. Dr. Neriman Yilmaz presented on the 'good' and the 'bad' of fungi. The learners learnt that fungi are more closely related to insects than plants. They also learnt that fungi cause diseases and produce mycotoxins; however they can also be useful and produce antibiotics, or used in food production such as Roquefort cheese and soya sauce.

The learners received soil collection kits with instruction on how to collect soil samples to be analysed at the Westerdijk Fungal Biodiversity Institute in the Netherlands. If a new fungus is discovered, it will be named after the child who collected the soil sample.



The project has so far included three schools: Laerskool Menlopark, Nwa'vhangani and Tlakukani Primary Schools. It was a great success to introduce fungi to the children and show them that science is fun. The Vice-Chancellor and Principal of University of Pretoria, Prof. Tawana Kupe showed his support for the initiative by collecting soil samples at the Future Africa campus.