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## JAPANESE FUNDING MAKES SCIENCE4U MOBILE SCIENCE LAB A REALITY



**Vice-Chancellor, Dr Albert van Jaarsveld, and Counsellor Isamu Yamaguchi of the Japanese Embassy with pupils from Bonela Secondary School at the official launch of Science4U..**

[Science4U](#), UKZN's snazzy new Mobile Science Laboratory which operates under the auspices of the [Science and Technology Education Centre](#) (STEC), has been officially launched.

Generous sponsorship from the Japanese Embassy, represented at the launch by Counsellor Isamu Yamaguchi, and Project Consultant, Ms Nomtandazo Hoboyi, enabled the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science to buy and convert a Mercedes Vito van.

Sponsorship of the van was facilitated by the UKZN Foundation which put UKZN's Science Centre in touch with the Japanese Embassy's Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Project.

Science Centre Co-ordinator, Dr Tanja Reinhardt, said: 'We named our van Science4U which reflects our goal to provide science education for everyone.'

The van, especially designed and equipped to carry out physics and chemistry experiments, has already been out to schools to provide hands-on activities and lab experiences to learners.

The vehicle, able to involve up to 50 pupils in the experiments, has 15 high-tech SPARK Science Learning System units which are all-in-one mobile devices that integrate a data logging tool with inquiry-based content and assessment, providing a compact and portable solution to data collection.

'The SPARK science Learning System units run on batteries, which is important as it allows us to conduct practical sessions at schools with no electricity and during load shedding,' said Reinhardt.

Research had shown that hands-on experience personally impacted learners in a positive way as it increased engagement in learning, taught new skills and increased awareness of scientific careers.

'We hope learners will benefit from this programme with an increased content knowledge and improved attitude towards science, which in turn will develop a scientifically-oriented mind,' said Reinhardt.

Reinhardt said that the medium to long term impact of the mobile lab would be to raise levels of educational attainment in science and mathematics by pupils from historically deprived communities. 'This in turn will increase the success rate and number of learners gaining access to university.'

Pupils from Bonela Secondary School were at the launch which included an address by UKZN Vice-Chancellor, Dr Albert van Jaarsveld, who encouraged the youngsters to embrace science and assured them that the University would welcome them as science students once they had successfully completed their high school education.

Sally Frost