

Neurologist turned teacher to explain "aha moment" at African EduWeek in July

Issued by [Spintelligent](#)

3 Jun 2014

Conference and expo to provide practical and relevant support to teachers



A neurologist who became a classroom teacher will explain how best to stimulate young people's brains to process information into knowledge and wisdom during the upcoming **SABC Education African EduWeek** in Johannesburg in July.

Thousands of teachers and education experts will attend the annual conference and expo from 10-11 July at the Sandton Convention Centre for an interactive gathering that will empower them through technology, skills and interaction with their peers.

One of the **African EduWeek** keynote speakers in the opening session is Dr Judy Willis, a board-certified neurologist in California, who left her practice after 15 years to become a teacher. At the time she says there was a marked increase of children being referred to her with suspected neurological conditions, and she discovered that this was due to the vast amount of material that students had to learn at school.

Dr Willis explains: "I realised that these stresses of frustration and boredom had wiped out the joy of learning and kids were unable to be engaged in learning through curiosity, but instead by drill and forced memorisation. I felt that this was something I could make a difference in and influence a better way of teaching."

She continues: "I believed that because as a neurologist I had a strong background in things like memory and how the brain processes information, I felt that if I had the opportunity to become a classroom teacher and receive the training, I could take what I know in neuroscience and see if it worked with students in the classroom and that's what I did."

Having ideas coming together in 'aha moment'

Dr Willis taught for ten years to 2nd grade, 5th grade and 7th grade mathematics. "During this time I was delighted by the power of neuroscience to shine a light and suggest strategies from education that would be most correlated with the neuroscience research that was increasing in quantity and with more specificity, thanks to neuro-imaging. So as I found correlations between strategies and neuroscience research that guided me to apply certain strategies at different intervals depending on what the brain responded to best."

She eventually gave up teaching children, reluctantly, but today enjoys sharing her insights with fellow educators. "I have always loved watching learners experience the thrill of developing their own knowledge, of discovering, of capturing the meaning of something, of having ideas come together in an 'aha moment'. That same joy is my greatest pleasure in teaching other educators now. It's seeing the 'aha moment' when they realise that their best strategies, things that have been most successful, are indeed highly supported by the neuroscience research. It is not that neuroscience is suggesting a whole new way of teaching, but the excitement to me is when educators recognise the "why".

Read and hear the full interview with Dr Judy Willis as part of the **African EduWeek** expert interview series on www.educationweek.co.za/interviews.

More African EduWeek opening session highlights:

Chairman: Graeme Bloch, Independent Education Specialist

- **African Education Update: Is Africa's education potential beyond the Millennium Development Goals being met?**

Panel of experts includes:

- *Edem Adubra, Chief of Section, International Taskforce on Teachers, UNESCO, France*
- *Prof. Rehabeam Auala, Professor of Educational Management and Leadership, University of Namibia, Namibia*
- *Marius Ehrenreich, President, South Africa Principles Association, South Africa*

- **Breaking boundaries and reaching your full potential**

Sheri Brynard, Teacher, South Africa - first person with Down's syndrome to qualify as a teacher

African EduWeek dates and location:

Expo and conference: 10-11 July

Pre-conference: 9 July 2014

Venue: Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa

Website: www.educationweek.co.za

Twitter: https://twitter.com/education_week

Contact:

Communications manager: Annemarie Roodbol

Telephone : +27 21 700 3558

Mobile: +27 82 562 7844

Email: annemarie.roodbol@spintelligent.com

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>