

## Published articles

### Maths manuals help children Written by Lynley Main 11 July 2011

*(City of Johannesburg website)*



**M**ATHEMATICS is one of those things that either clicks for you or just

doesn't. But Mom's Maths Manuals guarantee to change all that and make it all fall into place the first-time around.

Johannesburg Maths teacher Louise Wells, the author of the books, explains: "I do believe that the government is trying to solve the matric maths problem each year, but the problem arises in primary education. This is where I believe the solution will be found."

The idea for the manuals was sparked when she was approached by the mothers of schoolchildren to whom she gave extra lessons. Wells began offering extra lessons after her divorce and, she says, the demand grew until she was spending afternoons, evenings and weekends teaching children.

"The repeated question became my bright idea when parents of government and private school children would say to me, 'If only there was a book to help me help my child.'"

She also studied the book market, and discovered that while there were many textbooks and workbooks on sale, there were no manuals directed at assisting both parents and children in the early stages of education.

"That was the beginning. I started writing in January of 2008," she says.

It is not only her vocation as a teacher that gives her with insight into what children need to understand maths, though. She was diagnosed as dyslexic at a young age, and she battled with reading and writing. Maths, on the other hand, was a lot easier as she could recognize patterns.

"With my dyslexia, I found I was able to explain maths in the simplest of ways. I seemed to understand where the pupils in my class kept going wrong," she says. She made notes of the common problems they faced, and would include the steps that needed to be taken to complete the question. Colour and stories also helped, she found.

"I believed if I, as a dyslexic, needed colour and simple explanations to master a skill, so would children. I wanted [them] to overcome their fear of maths and enjoy it."

This is the crux of the manuals.

## Classrooms

They also aim to fill the gaps that exist in classrooms. "Teachers are burdened with an immense amount of admin work, a high teacher-child ratio and discipline problems in the classroom, so it is impossible for a teacher to attend to every pupil who needs help," she says.

"Most parents would also like to help their children but don't know how to."

There are three books currently on the market: Grade 3, Grade 4 and a combined Grade 5 to 7 guide. Originally, the Grade 5 book was written separately but was soon combined "when I realized that if a child has a problem in Grade 7, they would need the explanations from grades 5 and 6".

The Grade 3 book covers topics such as even and odd numbers, addition and subtraction, rounding off and multiplication; the Grade 4 book deals with themes such as fractions, conversions, geometry and symmetry; and the grade 5 to 7 manual focuses on subjects such as consecutive number patterns, decimal numbers, and quadrilateral geometry, among others.

Wells is busy writing the Grade 8 manual, which will include information from the Grade 7 curriculum to make the transition to high school easier.

She was approached by Exclusive Books in Rosebank in 2010 to stock her manuals, and is now trying to get her books sold through other channels. For

instance, she is hoping to get Waltons on board to include them in its Back to School range. She has also approached schools in Johannesburg, and is planning free workshops for teachers in Soweto on how to use the manuals.

There are additional plans to meet with the Gauteng department of education, and she also wants to start giving talks at schools to give hope to parents whose children battle with the subject.

“My vision is that each household/child owns a copy of Mom’s Maths Manual and in so doing will help our future generation with maths as early as possible. It is best to sort out this national concern early enough, while children are young and parents enthusiastic,” she says.