

# SAfrican students study math via cell phone

September 23 2010, By MIA SNYMAN , Associated Press Writer

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(AP) -- A South African think tank said Thursday they have lined up volunteers to tutor on a popular mobile phone platform after a nationwide teachers' strike left students unprepared for final exams.

With exams for graduating students a month away, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research is concentrating on [math](#). Students can download study materials from MXit as well as exchange messages with tutors.

"MXit is cheap and efficient," said Laurie Butgereit, who is overseeing the tutoring effort called Dr. Math. More than 1,000 MXit messages can be sent for one rand, about 15 U.S. cents.

"It is a perfect opportunity for [South Africa](#) to roll up its sleeves and help" final year students, she said Thursday. "Dr. Math is currently helping 12,000 learners on MXit, but we could be helping so many more if we had additional volunteer tutors."

A three-week strike by teachers and other civil servants ended Sept. 6. Since then, students have protested across the country, complaining they had not had enough time to prepare for exams. Last week, a police officer fired on one group of protesting students, killing a 17-year-old girl.

More than 100 Dr. Math volunteer tutors have been screened and registered.

Ishmail Makitla, a master's student in information technology, is among the tutors.

"It is a great experience to chat with students and to help them with their problems," Makitla said.

Butgereit said Dr. Math is only available outside school hours.

"We've had complaints from [students](#) saying that the only bad thing about Dr. Math is that it can't help you cheat," she joked.

Butgereit came up with the idea when she helped her son and a few of his friends with their math homework using MXit.

To access the program, log on to MXit using a [cell phone](#) with [internet access](#) or a computer and find the Dr. Math option under "MXit Cares."

**More information:** <http://www.mxit.com/>

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