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For immediate release

NEW ORGANISATION SET TO IMPROVE EDUCATION LEVELS IN RURAL EASTERN CAPE

With a 2009 Matric pass rate of just 50%, the Eastern Cape is a region that is desperate for interventions that will improve the quality of education in the area. It is, therefore, exciting that a new non-profit organization called Axiom Education has been launched in Cape Town with the specific goal of improving levels of education in the Eastern Cape.

Says Craig Paxton, the founder of Axiom Education, "With rampant HIV/Aids and a legacy of inferior schooling, the vast potential that exists in remote communities in rural South Africa must be harnessed, and we believe that Axiom Education is well positioned to make a difference in this area".

At the pilot site near the Zithulele Village in the Eastern Cape, 16% of twelfth graders pass the final matriculation exam, and that does not take into account the drop-out rate of learners in previous years. With only a handful of school graduates obtaining the grades necessary for further study, youth have no opportunity to break out of the cycle that keeps them either locked in rural poverty or on the road to life in a city shanty-town where there is little hope of work.

Axiom Education aims to transform rural communities through education. The organisation uses a two-pronged strategy working with learners and educators to raise student achievement, and successful students are encouraged to return as the next generation of rural engineers, doctors and teachers.

Established only a year ago, Axiom Education has already forged relationships with a number of important stakeholders, including the Department of Education, SADTU, NAPTOSA, the local community-based Jabulani Rural Health Foundation NGO, Rhodes University, the University of Cape Town and the Regency Foundation Network.

During 2009 Axiom Education hosted a series of maths "bootcamps" with learners from surrounding villages. These "bootcamps" were hosted by a group of university students with



sound isi-Xhosa and maths skills, who facilitated the learning for rural students under the direction of more senior teachers. Benchmark test results showed a dramatic improvement of over 130% on average!

“We’re very pleased with the progress that we’ve made to date”, says Paxton, “and we believe that we can achieve a lot more with the right resources and partners on board”.

The organisation still requires extensive funding to achieve its goals for 2010 and invites corporate and communities with a vested interest in the Eastern Cape to contact them about partnership opportunities. In addition, the organisation has capacity for a limited number of teachers to join them in 2011.

About the Founders

Founders Craig and Michelle Paxton are South Africans who have worked and studied in South Africa, the US, Canada and the UK over the past ten years. Both combine strong private-sector backgrounds with a passion for education. Craig worked as a chemical engineer and client manager until 2002, when a stint in a remote school in KwaZulu-Natal convinced him of the desperate need for educational innovation in rural Africa. He recently graduated with a Masters degree in school leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where he was a Fulbright Scholar and held a Reynolds Foundation Fellowship in Social Entrepreneurship.

To learn more about Axiom Education and its work please visit www.axiomeducation.org.

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