

Poor readers experience learning difficulties

Poor readers equal poor learners. Will our Grade 12 learners matriculate with their deficient reading background? Preparing your child from primary school years for future success is crucial.



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A 2006 study* comparing international reading benchmarks to our 2013 matric skill levels concluded that 78% of the then Grade 5 learners did not reach the lowest benchmark in reading skills and capacity.

"Reading has proven time and time again to be the most important skill that a child must acquire at school, because in order to learn, one must be able to read," says Susan du Plessis, director of Educational Programs at Edublox reading and learning clinic. "The unfortunate implication is that a child who is a poor reader will inevitably also be a poor learner."

Cognitive skills can be developed

Research has proven that in the majority of cases, weak underlying cognitive skills account for the learning difficulties, but these cognitive skills can be developed. Specific brain-training exercises can strengthen these weaknesses, leading to increased reading proficiency and academic performance.

Edublox reading and learning clinic is set to launch a multisensory cognitive enhancement programme known as Edubrain, which is designed to help learners of all ages and ability levels to overcome reading difficulties in the comfort of their own homes.

The programme is based on pedagogical and neurological research, as well as more than 30 years' experience in the field.

"Edubrain is designed as an affordable investment for parents into their children's futures by developing their reading and therefore also their learning competency," says Du Plessis. She developed the programme in conjunction with Dr Zelda Garcia, a medical doctor whose interest is neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to physically change as a result of learning.

The programme provides an effective solution that aims to empower parents to teach their young children to read, as well as help both children and adults overcome moderate to severe reading difficulties in the comfort of their own homes.

According to du Plessis, the reason the programme is so effective is because it does not just focus on reading; it teaches underlying cognitive skills that are the foundation of good reading. "The programme places the emphasis on developing things like form perception, processing speed, visual, auditory, sequential and working memory, and so on," says Du Plessis. "These underlying skills must function well in order for someone to read efficiently and easily."

"We've been through several different reading programmes, reading schools, occupational therapists, speech therapists, one-on-one tutoring....name it, and we have tried it, says Dr Anina van der Bijl whose son was seemingly unable to read. "Great was my surprise to stumble upon a proven, much published method of teaching reading. My son now even reads for relaxation - it remains a miracle to me!"

Several programmes to be launched

The Edubrain Reading Programme is the first in a series of seven programmes to be launched by Edublox in the coming months. Others include the Edubrain Spelling Programme and Toolkit, as well as Handwriting, Maths and School Readiness Programmes.

"We anticipate that the new programme and toolkit is going to make a huge difference to literacy levels," says Du Plessis. "The feedback received about its predecessor has been phenomenal, with reports of children's general grades improving, children finding enjoyment in reading for the first time in their lives; parents seeing a huge improvement in their child's self-esteem, and much more wonderful feedback."

"The new programme has been updated and repackaged to makes it more interactive and affordable than before," says Du Plessis. "The fact that it can be worked through at home, at the child's own pace is an added bonus".

Because the Edubrain Reading Programme has four levels, with carefully graded activities within each level, it is suitable for all ages and appropriate for children with developmental and special needs, as well as high achievers.

For more, go to www.edublox.co.za

* Zimmerman, L. 2010. The influence of schooling conditions and teaching practise on curriculum implementation for Grade 4 reading literacy development. [Online] Available at http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/submitted/etd-05252011-133034/unrestricted/02chapter3.pdf

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