

Vol. 5 No. 1 January 2019

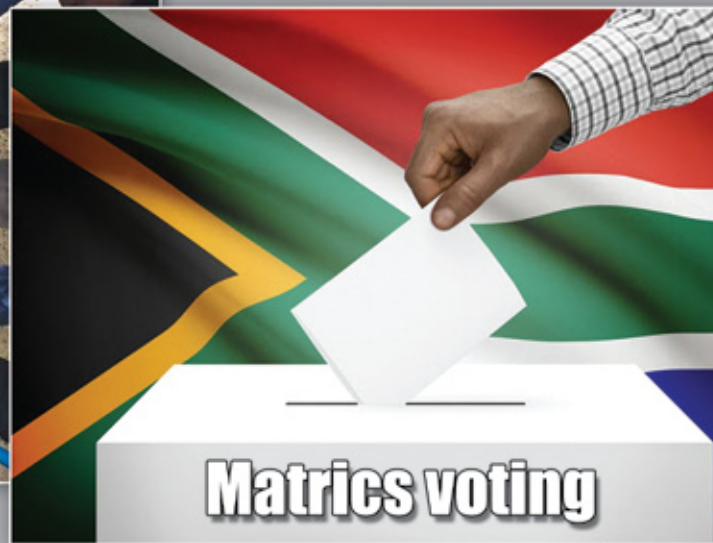


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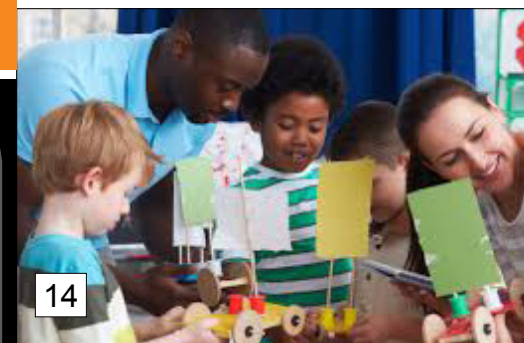
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Publisher

The Mighty Pen (Pty) Ltd
The Mighty Pen EDUCATION magazine

Branding

TheMightyPen.co.za

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Editor's column

A report on education in Africa

According to a public report by The Africa-America Institute (AAI) titled, *State of Education in Africa Report 2015*, the African education system stands at a crossroad.

More students than ever before in history are enrolled in schools throughout Africa. That's good reason to cheer, but the pipeline of trained teachers, instructional materials, and infrastructure developments have not kept pace with the heavy demand. Rising enrolment rates have drastically outpaced an increase in education funding, resulting in shortages of instructional materials and supplies, poorly stocked libraries and overuse of school facilities.

Indeed, while more students are in school classrooms, there is a deeper learning crisis at play: many students are not gaining basic skills while attending school. In fact, some students in school are not much better off than those who missed school. Consequently, the quality of education in Africa is in a perilous state. Private institutions are increasingly stepping in to educate children who lack access to an education or to fill the gaps in a country's public education system.

Key statistics

The power of effective teaching can transform children for the rest of their lives. However, a severe shortage of trained teachers is a stark reality for much of the continent, impacting overall learning outcomes. In 2012, the average pupil/teacher ratio in primary school was 42:1. That statistic has not changed since 1999.

For primary education alone, one million new teachers need to be recruited in Africa to achieve the universal primary education development target.

African students are not on the receiving end of enough quality teaching time in the classroom.

International standards recommend that primary schools operate between 850 and 1 000 hours per year. In contrast, African countries mandated 720 hours of instructional time per year in the early primary grades, progressively increasing to about 830 hours by grade 8.

The number of private schools across Africa for primary and secondary education continues to rise. In a UNESCO survey of 25 African countries, the proportion of private primary schools increased from 9% to almost 10% in the past ten years.

The quality of education offered within a country is a strong predictor of economic growth rates, according to the World Bank. African nations stand to benefit from a better-educated labour market where workers possess the skills and knowledge to compete in a knowledge-based global economy. While universal access to schooling yields some economic benefits, significant improvements in the quality of learning will achieve a greater impact for advancing development progress and economic growth in countries.

The report closes with a controversial conclusion: "The rise in private schools should not be seen as negative, but instead as a viable alternative to a failing public education system."

Yours in education

Janos Bozsik
Editor

Rocket challenge targets local coding skills

Addressing the growing skills gap within software development, local information technology value added distributor Axiz has sponsored the Rocket APT Challenge and encouraged 39 students to participate in the regional round of the Rocket.Build coding challenge. This comprises 40% of the total number of entries received globally. Hosted by Rocket Software and APT Solutions, this annual challenge provides a forum for participants to develop applications on Rocket's MultiValue platform.

Colleen Becker, Axiz pre-sales engineer, says that the response to the challenge was exceptional and the company is excited to be part of this global initiative: "This is a fantastic innovation challenge that provides students with an opportunity to hone their coding skills on a leading software platform. South Africa is by far the bigger pool of entrants and we are excited to see who is selected for the global Rocket.Build 2019 Hackathon."

Participants are required to design an app on Rocket's MultiValue application platform in support of the challenge theme: 'Improve your Community'. Consisting of three regions: EMEA, Asia-Pacific, and the Americas, three winners from each region will be selected and awarded a cash prize of:

1. \$5 000 (USD) – first place
2. \$2 500 (USD) – second place
3. \$1 000 (USD) – third place

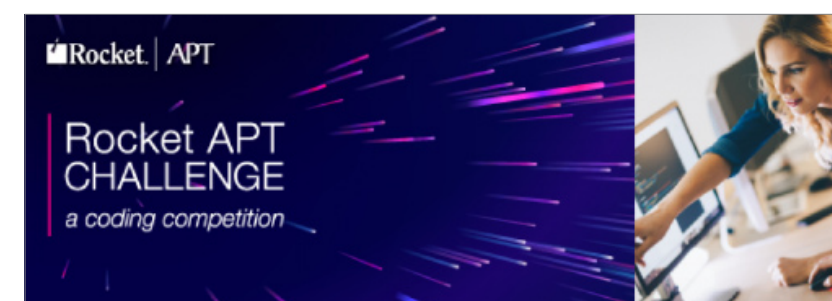
The nine developers will also be given an all-expenses-paid trip to Massachusetts, USA in June 2019 to participate in Rocket.Build 2019, where they will compete in teams of three to decide the global winner of the Rocket APT Challenge. The winning team will share a grand prize of \$24 000 (USD).

What is Rocket Software?

Rocket makes software that the world's biggest companies trust to run their critical infrastructure, business processes and data. Rocket solutions help speed the pace of digital transformation, making it easier for companies to take advantage of cloud and mobile computing, advanced analytics, and other innovations that pave the way to new and improved customer experiences. Rocket customers include:

Fortune 500 Customers

- 43 of the Fortune 50
- 10 of the top 10 commercial banks
- 9 of the top 10 aerospace/defence organisations



Forbes Global 2 000 Customers

- 7 of the top 10 discount and department stores
- 5 of the top 5 car and truck manufacturers
- 5 of the top 5 managed healthcare companies
- 4 of the top 5 healthcare services

And thousands more.

Becker says that this is the first year Axiz is participating and the company will definitely register for the 2020 challenge, recruiting of which starts in September 2019: "We are committed to grow the number of young coders on the Rocket platform. There is a global opportunity for students to graduate into a developing industry and support the growing shortage of MultiValue-certified coders. Participants also stand the chance of receiving an internship from participating partners across all industry sectors."

Students

The Rocket APT Challenge is open to undergraduate students 18 years of age or older who are currently studying engineering, science, or technology at an accredited college or university.

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Entering the Rocket APT Challenge is a great way to:

- Enhance your job prospects
- Build your resume and portfolio
- Access internship opportunities
- Win money

Once you register, you'll be able to follow our example application – Forage. This sample solution shows you how a finalist from our inaugural year planned and designed his application. These steps are provided to help you get started in building your own innovative solution.

How are the winning apps picked?

A panel of Judges will focus on the following areas of your solution:

1. Community – Does your solution provide a clear value to the Community? Improving the lives of those in the Community; connecting the Community in new ways or extending the reach of the Community beyond its current constraints or boundaries.
2. Innovation – Does your solution demonstrate an innovative way to solve a problem through its approach or implementation?
3. Design – Does your solution have an intuitive design making the solution easy to use and taking advantage of modern UX/UI standards?
4. Rocket – Does your solution make extensive use of the breadth of Rocket products supplied in the competition stack?

What if I need technical help?

Rocket has technical support teams around the globe and we in addition to APT, will make select support team members available to you via a Slack channel (coming soon).

Previous winner and runner-up

Winner George Christian is a second-year student at Sheffield University where he is studying for his BSc (Hons) in Computer Science.

George's brainchild is the app GeoJob, a route planning tool that plots efficient routes between geographically distributed tasks.



George was motivated to develop the project after a summer spent working for a company that required him to travel from one job location to another. He needed to make his journey times more efficient.

He created a piece of software that allows the user to assign a priority level to each job. It then applies this information to design the best possible route in order to complete multiple jobs on a single trip.

Runner-up Eddie O'Donnell is currently studying for his MSc in Computer Science at the University of Bristol.

For his entry, Eddie built a restaurant comparison website called Forage, inspired by the fact that his sister is a vegan who often struggles to find a dining spot that will keep both her and her friends happy.

With this in mind, Eddie set out to create an original app that would make the whole decision process easier.

Forage works by identifying restaurants in a given area according to the percentages of different dishes available on their menu, be that vegan, vegetarian or dairy free; a calculation which multi-value databases lend themselves to perfectly.

For more information, contact:
colleen.becker@axiz.com or visit:
www.rocketaptchallenge.com



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Matric failure: getting back on track without losing hope

The future may look bleak and uncertain to the more than 170 000 Grade 12s who failed their 2018 National Senior Certificate exams, but it would be a huge mistake for them to throw in the towel and resign themselves to the idea that no Matric means no hope for the future, an education expert says.



Alvino Hartley, Team Leader at Oxbridge Academy

“Of course it is preferable to obtain your Matric certificate, and we will always encourage young people to continue working towards doing so, but that doesn’t mean your life has to stand still in the meantime,” says Alvino Hartley, Team Leader at Oxbridge Academy, which serves more than 20 000 South African distance learning students every year.

He says many people don’t realise that there are various study options, particularly vocational ones that are in high demand in the workplace, that don’t require a Matric certificate.

“If you can be resilient in the face of this setback, and vow to not put your education on the backburner but rather work hard towards a goal you can become passionate about, you have a recipe for success on your hands,” he says.

Hartley says that no matter what the outcome of one’s final exams were, there are always options, and sometimes finding the right way forward just requires some research.

“You may want to redo a subject or two, complete failed subjects via distance learning, redo Matric in a year or two, or perhaps even find a qualification that doesn’t require an NSC for enrolment,” he says.

“Find what you are passionate about, and then determine how you can still reach your goal within the next three to four years. Yes, it is not ideal if you didn’t pass, but it also does not mean that this ‘failure’ needs to define who you are and what you can achieve for the rest of your life.”

Hartley says that instead of allowing ‘failure’ to define you, the experience should be used as a learning opportunity and inspiration to do better in future.

“You can and must still dream big. If you didn’t before, do so now. Once you have a vision for your future, you start building it. Like a house – one brick at a time.”

For many who failed Matric, heading right back to school to redo the year may not be an option, for various reasons.

In these instances, the Matric goal can be pursued in parallel with other goals, or postponed until after achieving a vocational qualification, says Hartley.

“A vocational qualification makes you more employable, by providing the specific skills and theoretical knowledge required in fields such as, for instance,

project management, health and safety, logistics and supply chain management, and contact centre operations. All of the aforementioned qualifications can be completed without having a Matric certificate and via distance learning, which means that you can even start earning while you’re learning,” he says.

Another option is to do an Introductory N4

“Also called a bridging course, this will give you access to N4 National Qualifications. Students who haven’t completed Matric do the Intro N4 courses and, once they pass the examinations, they cross over to the N4 courses. Once they have passed N4, they can progress to N5 and N6, after which they can apply to the Department of Higher Education and Training for a National Diploma, provided that they have gained 18 months of relevant practical experience,” says Hartley.

Passing an N4 level qualification is comparable to Matric. And persevering through N4 to N5 will make you more employable than someone who only has a Matric certificate, says Hartley.

If you act now to start building your vision brick by brick, investing in your future and believing in yourself, the time will arrive when you look back at your Matric disappointment and see that it wasn’t a brick wall barring you from a successful life, but rather an unexpected door to new and exciting opportunities to turn your dreams into reality. ▲

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Hope for families and
friends of alcoholics

PROCESS FOR INFORMATION PRESENTATIONS AT SCHOOLS

Al-Anon Family Groups regularly give information presentations at rehabs, clinics, corporates, schools, and to groups of professionals such as doctors, police, social workers, educators and more.

Alateen, part of the Al-Anon Family Groups, also speaks, on request, at schools to learners, educators, parents and other family members.

To request an information session at your school, a few simple steps should be followed:

1. Decide when – date, time – and duration of the presentation is required (we usually like at least 45 mins for a presentation)
2. Please put your request in an email and send to publicoutreachza@gmail.com. This goes to Bette, our National Public Outreach Co-ordinator. Please give at least 30 days notice. Otherwise we also accept a telephonic request to Bette at 082 576 9739, or our local Al-Anon Information office - alanontvl@absamail.co.za, or 011 867 0731 (the Office is open Mon, Wed, Friday)
3. We will confirm via email that your request will be placed in our calendar
4. Please also provide us with details of the audience (age spread), numbers, how many educators will be there & a contact person's details.
5. On the day:
 - a. The Alateen team will arrive 30 mins (at least) before the session to set up & test our laptop, audio & data projector, and to bring pamphlets for learners to take away
 - b. At start, one teacher should introduce us to the learners
 - c. We allow questions from the kids, but often find they are too shy to put up their hands. So we offer to stay behind for 30 mins or so to answer questions.
 - d. We will also bring a few small posters to display, and pamphlets for educators
6. There are no fees for any of the above

We are excited at this possible opportunity to speak at some schools and look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Bette Kun

Al-Anon Family Groups: National Public Outreach Coordinator, South Africa

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What is Alateen?



Alateen is:

...a fellowship of young Al-Anon members, usually teenagers, whose lives have been affected by someone else's drinking.

Purposes of Alateen

Young People Come Together to:

- share experience, strength, and hope with each other
- discuss their difficulties
- learn effective ways to cope with their problems
- encourage one another
- help each other understand the principles of the Al-Anon program

Alateen Members Learn

- compulsive drinking is a disease
- they can detach themselves emotionally from the drinker's problems while continuing to love the person
- they are not the cause of anyone else's drinking or behaviour
- they cannot change or control anyone but themselves
- they have spiritual and intellectual resources with which to develop their own potentials, no matter what happens at home
- they can build satisfying and rewarding life experiences for themselves

Sponsorship & Supervision

In order to be registered as an Alateen group, there must be TWO Alateen Group Sponsors at each meeting. These sponsors – Al-Anon Members in Alateen Service (AMIAS) – are experienced Al-Anon members, certified through the Alateen Service certification process, prior to serving, and are in possession of a SAPS Police Clearance Certificate, renewed annually.

2019 UPDATE

During 2018 we operated 2 Alateen Groups in Gauteng & 2 in KZN. Supported by our friends in AA, they brought their children to us and have reported amazing results both at home and in school through regular attendance at Alateen meetings.

For 2019 we are focusing on bringing our message to schools – to both learners & educators. We KNOW there's a need. We know families are in pain. If you'd like an information session at your school, call our helpline 0861 252 666

We believe alcoholism is a family disease because it affects all the members emotionally and sometimes physically. Although we cannot change or control our parents, we can detach from their problems while continuing to love them.



We do not discuss religion or become involved with any outside organisations. Al-Anon has but one purpose: to help families of alcoholics.

UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECT OF ALCOHOLISM ON CHILDREN

For nearly 70 years, Al-Anon Family Groups, globally, has helped the families who live with the disease of alcoholism.

The disease of alcoholism in a family member or friend affects children and teenagers in many ways that impact on their behaviour and ultimately, their school work.

Frequently, students and educators do not realise that a relationship with an alcoholic could be a factor in poor performance, disruptive behaviour and other problems.

Alateen helps young people understand how alcoholism affects the lives of all who are associated with a problem drinker.

Alateen in South Africa

We have learned that learners are very cautious about attending Alateen meetings at their schools.

In some areas Alateen meetings are held in the evenings in a nearby church hall, community centre or somewhere secure.

Parents/guardians must give written permission for Alateen attendance.

Alateen South Africa has groups across the country.

A list of Alateen meetings may be found on our websites:

<http://www.alanon.org.za/meetings/>
<http://www.alanongauteng.co.za/>
<https://al-anon.org/newcomers/teen-corner-alateen/>

**alanongso@iafrica.com –
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Al-Anon Family Groups
Help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics

The top performing district for Matric 2018

KST congratulates the Fezile Dabi District Grade 12 Class of 2018 for their remarkable achievement in the 2018 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations. They achieved a 92.3% pass rate; an improvement of 2.1% from 90.2% in 2017; placing the district as the top performing district nationally for the second consecutive year. The Free State Province attained a 87.5% pass rate; an increase of 1.4% from 86.1% in 2017, placing the province at the number two spot nationally. KST, in partnership with the Free State Department of Education (FSDoE) has been implementing the District Whole School Development (DWSD) model in selected Quintiles 1 to 3 primary and secondary schools in the Fezile Dabi and Motheo districts for the past five years.

On Saturday 19 January 2019, the Fezile Dabi FSDoE hosted its “Well-done function” at Kahobotjah Secondary School in Sasolburg. The aim of the function was to acknowledge and celebrate, through award categories, the hard work and contribution made by the district’s officials who include the District Director, Subject Advisors, Circuit Managers, Principals and Educators.

Of the 59 schools in the district that wrote the 2018 NSC examinations, nine attained a 100% pass rate, 32 attained between 90% – 99%, 14 attained between 80% – 89% and four attained between 60% and 79%. The district attained an overall 40.1% bachelor passes, whilst 36.9% was attained for Diplomas and 15.3% for Higher Certificates. These results are a bare testament that the DWSD model is indeed successful and sustainable. At this function KST also introduced the KST Revolving Trophy Award as a token of appreciation to the best performing district in the Free State Province.

“In 2009, I had made a promise and commitment that we would turn around the district performance and propel Fezile Dabi to be the top performing district in the province; and the country, I had a lot of critics who were very sceptical that we would not be able to achieve this milestone; and we did it not only once, but

twice and we will continue to grow and sustain these good results. I would also like to congratulate my fellow District Directors in the other four districts for their hard work, as a collective all five Free State Province districts are all performing above 80%,” said Dr V Chuta, Fezile Dabi District Director.

Firmly embedded in its Sustainability Strategy, the main objective of KST’s DWSD model is to ensure sustainable learner outcomes and school functionality beyond KST’s intervention. “This outcome draws its foundation from the theory of change which states that ‘If the educator is capacitated through professional development and training, and the school environment is improved through investing in infrastructure, curriculum development and leadership support, and the district office is strengthened to better support the schooling system’, then we can expect to see significant and sustainable improvement in learner performance,” said Themba Mola, Chief Executive Officer of KST.

Delivering his keynote address at the Fezile Dabi Well-Done function, the Free State Department of Education MEC Dr PHI Makgoe said “We are proud that our partnership with KST works so well that it produces these sterling results; and continues to prove that with public-private partnerships, rural learners can also be beneficiaries of decent and quality education.”



(From Left to Right) Nathan Pillay KST Fezile Dabi District Manager; Adv Tsoarelo Malakoane HOD FSDoE; MEC DR PHI Makgoe FSDoE; Kaya Nyati KST Stakeholder Relations Manager; Dr Chuta Fezile Dabi District Director FSDoE (award recipient) and Mr Mthombeni, retired senior official of the FSDoE

So you have to repeat a grade, now what?

When babies are learning to walk, they fall (or fail) many times over. Babies need to repeat the process (of learning to walk) over and over again, until they get it right and are able to move on to greater movement such as running, jumping and skipping. According to Cindy Glass, Owner and Founder of Step Up Education Centres, “These ‘failures’ are normal and natural processes in the act of learning to walk. In fact, they are expected and hailed as signs of effort and future success.”

She adds that as we grow older, our fear of failing and falling down tends to slow our progress and in some cases, even stop it altogether. “Children who ‘fail’ a grade, for example, often feel humiliated, ashamed, embarrassed and depressed. Their self-worth plummets and they often find it difficult to accept the fact that they will not be moving up to a new grade with their classmates.”

Parents, too, struggle with a ‘failed’ grade as, so often, they see it as an indictment on their parenting. Teachers are often in the same self-deprecating position. “And yet, if you think about it, ‘failing’ a grade is not all that different to trying to walk for the first time. Some skills need more time and attention to master and not all children learn at the same rate or even in the same way.”

If your child or learner is repeating a grade in 2019, Cindy gives you some tips to help him/her in understanding and embracing the gift of being given this opportunity to learn more effectively:

1. There is no such thing as failing a grade. It is time to speak a different language. Your child has not yet mastered the building blocks needed to move on to a new grade. He/she is being given an opportunity to REPEAT a grade in order to master these important skills.
2. Address the elephant in the room through open and honest communication. Speak to your child about them having to repeat the grade. Find out how they feel and what they will need from you in order to move forward with a positive outlook. Non-judgmental conversations are essential at this time.
3. Help your child to own and embrace the repeat. Help them to see it as a learning opportunity. Senior learners who may not have worked to their



potential (resulting in having to repeat) need to identify and OWN the mistakes that they had made and look to the future knowing that they can and must make better choices for themselves.

4. Extra tuition at this time is highly recommended. Choose an environment that focuses on building self-esteem and emotional intelligence skills as well as academic skill.
5. Teach your child that they are not LESS of a person for having to repeat their grade- they have simply taken a different path to their classmates. Keeping your child’s self-esteem intact while still teaching them to take responsibility for their learning is going to be your biggest challenge as a parent.

“Having to repeat the grade can be a tough experience for parents and learners, but it need not be the end of the world. YOU are your child’s greatest teacher. How you choose to move forward will set the tone for how well your child is able to adapt to the situation,” concludes Cindy.



Media Works' new programme takes adult education in SA to the next level

Adult Education and Training (AET) specialists Media Works have launched **Accelerate Pro**, an update of their flagship Accelerate programme – the leading and most widely used AET programme in South Africa.

Equipping adult learners with vital communication and numerical skills, **Accelerate Pro** is a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 1 programme that uses a combination of computer-assisted and face-to-face training methodologies designed to meet the literacy needs of adult learners in our country.

The programme is an update of Media Works' groundbreaking Accelerate programme, which has been used as an educational training tool for adults, throughout South Africa, for over 22 years.

"Since first launching our Accelerate programme, we have constantly been making adjustments and improvements to meet the needs of South Africa's adult learners. **Accelerate Pro** is an exciting and important next step, which takes AET learning material – both the content and the way it's presented – to a whole new level," says Jackie Carroll, CEO of Media Works.

Accelerate Pro harnesses and fine tunes best-practice solutions in blended learning. Through implementing new Quick Response (QR) code technology, called 'Bubbles', within the textbook pages, learners now have access to short multimedia lessons via their mobile phone.

The textbooks are also now in full-colour and boast an engaging new layout. The computer-based course material has also been redesigned and formatted to include rich and vibrant graphics, making the course material more interactive than ever before.

There have been curriculum updates across all areas, to make the content pertinent to today's adult learners. And, what's exciting is that the **Accelerate Pro** South African language textbooks – isiZulu, Sesotho, Setswana and Afrikaans – now have 'Bubbles' technology within their pages. This is a first for adult education in South Africa.

"There is a need for updated and improved AET material in South Africa, and we are proud to be leading the way in this regard. Our target audience is ever-changing, and the content needs to adjust to keep relevant to the modern learner. Gone are the age-old traditional ways of teaching and learning. A learner will not be a passive passenger, but will rather be able to drive their own learning experience," Carroll continues.

The new Accelerate Pro programme includes

1. High quality computer- and paper-based course material delivered to learners through a combination of innovative media and technologies
2. QR codes within learner workbooks that link to 'Bubbles', which contain short, well-contained lesson summaries and overviews, which learners can easily access on their mobile devices

3. Dedicated Accelerate Pro facilitators who expertly guide and support learners through the course material
4. A dynamic learning management system (LMS) equipped with clearly outlined lesson plans, outcomes and objectives to help facilitators prepare for and facilitate learning
5. A Facilitators Guide that provides facilitators with ideas for remediation and extensions to help challenge learners where necessary

Serving South Africa for over two decades, Media Works has a national footprint and track record of developing and delivering education programmes in line with industry and employer needs.

Media Works looks forward to enhancing AET learning in South Africa through **Accelerate Pro**, assisting companies to upskill and empower their workforce. The holistic learning approach ensures that learners become equipped with the necessary literacy and mathematical skills to succeed in the workforce – while also developing the life skills needed to be and feel their very best. ▲

If you are interested in accessing Accelerate Pro for your workforce, please contact Media Works on 011 209 0900 or visit www.mediaworks.co.za. A Media Works representative will get in touch to setup a meeting.

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The link between emotional challenges and poor academic performance

Have you ever considered that your child's struggles at school may be because of emotional challenges?

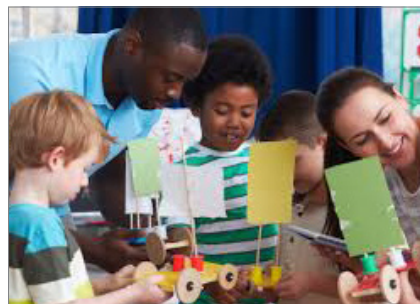
The academic year, as we are already aware, hold many stressors for children. What we are not always conscious of is that a child's emotional state can directly affect the need to perform academically. In fact, according to Kerry De Jager, Head Franchisor at Step Up Education Centres, South Africa says, "Children who are experiencing emotional challenges (pain, uncertainty, family challenges, low self-esteem and fear) are more likely to struggle with the academic demands of formal schooling."

Think of a time as an adult, for example, where you have had an emotional challenge. "It is incredibly difficult to focus on our jobs and careers when our emotional state is one of pain, blame or demotivation. As an adult we have developed the skills needed to cope with stress and anxiety and yet our emotional state sometimes hinders our ability to function in the workplace," Kerry explains.

She adds that developmentally some children are not yet ready to deal with these stresses and furthermore an emotionally immature child will not have the coping skills to deal with the way their emotions make them feel. As the stresses of the year creep up on them, their emotional state will have a greater and greater impact on their ability to concentrate on their academic work. "An emotionally stable learner is able to take in and retain new information more effectively. Concentration skills are better and social relationships are a great deal more positive."

Kerry gives the following tips to parents who you have a child who is struggling at school:

1. It is important to look at your child as a unique individual and realise that academic performance cannot be looked at in isolation. If your child has not performed as well as what you expected, try and find out why. Aim at honest non-judgemental conversations that will enable you to understand the emotional state that your child has been in during the academic year. Are they emotionally able to cope with the grade that they are in? Has it been a particularly difficult year at home? Has your child had a significant change in their lives like a new sibling or perhaps a divorce? Has there been a change



in friends at school or at social clubs? All these questions may provide some insight into why they have not performed as well as you anticipated. They will also afford you an opportunity to work together to find positive solutions.

2. Remember that everyone wants to achieve success, whether they are willing to admit it or not. It is not in their nature to want to fail. Our role as parents is to guide, support, encourage and motivate our children to rise above the challenges of life to achieve the best version of themselves.

"Each child is unique and their needs all differ. If you take the time to try and understand why a child is performing the way they are, it is a huge step in the right direction. Be patient with your children as they navigate the world with you at their side," Kerry concludes. ▴



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Matric 2019 roadmap

Take control of your year right from the start

The first few weeks of a learner's final school year is like a rollercoaster ride – lots of excitement, a little bit of fear and a good dose of disorientation. The start of Matric can be overwhelming, but learners would do well to get things under control as soon as possible by devising a roadmap for the months ahead, an expert says.

“Matric is a short year compared to previous school years, and before you know it, you'll be sitting down for your final exams. The good news is that in January you still have time on your side to put in place a strategy for not only working harder than before – which you definitely should be doing – but also working smarter,” says Dr Gillian Mooney, Dean: Academic Development and Support at The Independent Institute of Education, SA's largest private higher education institution.

Mooney says that in addition to the demands of preparing for the most important exam in their school careers, Grade 12s also have a plethora of once-in-a-lifetime events coming up.

“So right now you need to consider everything that will require your time and attention this year, and figure out exactly how you will make provision for all these demands.”

Mooney says taking care of the life and academic admin now, will free up precious energy allowing learners to focus on the task at hand when the time comes.

“Remember that the better you perform, the higher your chances of landing a spot in the higher education institution and programme of your choice. This will in turn have a knock-on effect on your career prospects. Competition is tough, and every mark that you can earn this year could be the difference between going the route you want right away, or having to spend more getting where you want to be,” says Mooney.

She says in the next few weeks, learners should create a single calendar incorporating all the important matters they need to attend to in the coming year, which include the following:



Academic year

Note down the dates of all the important tests and exams, and draft your study and revision timetable.

“A year sounds pretty long, but in Matric, the year is shorter and the final exams sooner than you are used to, so the best time to start revising is right away. Consistency is key, and by doing your bit every day, you won't need to deal with a seemingly insurmountable volume of work ahead of your exams. Instead, you'll be able to use revision time to solidify concepts and complete old papers,” says Mooney.

Social events

“While it is obviously exciting to look forward to and plan your Matric dance, 40 days-celebration and so forth, you can't afford to spend too much time and energy on this during the year,” says Mooney.

“So note down the important dates, note down when you will take some time out to plan for them, and then let it go until the time arrives.”

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Future plans

On top of all the academic, social and life demands Matrics will face this year, they also need to decide what they are going to do after school.

“The world of work today looks completely different to the way it looked when your parents, guardians and teachers left school, so you have to do your own research. New jobs are being created all the time, and by the time you finish your studies, there will be careers that we can’t even predict right now,” says Mooney.

“Leaving the decision about higher education until later, means you won’t have time to properly research your options. This is why we suggest learners do a bit of work on their future plans every week, so that they can thoroughly investigate what is on offer at both public and private universities, by doing online research, visiting campuses, and speaking to people who work in their prospective fields or who have studied at one of the institutions on their shortlist.”

If learners timeously narrow down their options, they can avoid the rush when everyone else wakes up.

Extra-curricular activities

Sport and cultural activities, volunteering and part-time work are important for maintaining balance in your Matric year, but can take up a lot of time. Try not to add more to your plate this year. Take these activities into account in your start-of-year planning, and if you find yourself too squeezed for time later, consider lightening the load on your schedule.

Other milestones

Many learners will turn 18 during their Matric year, which means there is some additional life admin to be done. For instance, those who turn 18 before the country’s general elections in May, need to ensure that their ID is in order and that they are registered to vote if they intend to do so. Some may also wish to obtain their Driver’s Licence, which means some time needs to be factored in for lessons and the actual test.

The importance of study skills

Study skills, academic skill, or study strategies are approaches applied to learning. They are generally critical to success in school, considered essential for acquiring good grades, and useful for learning throughout one’s life. Below are some tips:

- Pick a place and time. Everyone has their own idea about the best place and time to study . . .
- Study every day . . .
- Plan your time . . .
- Discover your learning style . . .
- Review and revise . . .
- Take breaks . . .
- Ask for help . . .
- Stay motivated

Remember, this year can only get better. ▲



“Think about which other issues you want or need to sort out this year, and note that down in your year-at-a-glance calendar as well,” says Mooney.

“When you look back at your school career, make the memory one of having taken charge of your future on the cusp of adulthood. Too many learners arrive in Matric and think they’ve reached the finishing line. What will set you apart from your peers – when applying for further study and applying for your first position, when Matric marks are still very important – is if you resolve to keep your head in the game now,” says Mooney.

“There is a lot to be said for choosing an approach of delayed gratification during this year. If you use your time wisely and maturely, you will be able to both enjoy this significant period in your life, as well as optimally position yourself for future success.”

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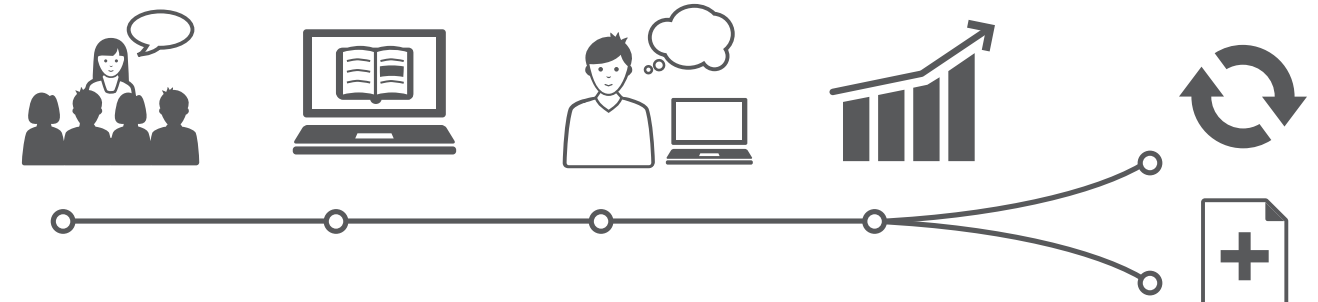
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Consider all the costs before committing to a tertiary course

Deciding to get a tertiary qualification is a big commitment, both financially and in terms of the time and effort you'll need to invest to get your degree or diploma.

According to a Department of Higher Education 2015 report 47.9% of South African university students do not complete their degrees. This high drop-out rate is not only due to poor academic performance but also because many students run out of money before they graduate, even with government funding for some students.

Starting a course if you can't afford to complete it, makes it much less likely you'll ever go back and get the qualification.

Whether you're able to obtain a NASFAS loan or bursary or your parents or relatives apply for a loan to help you, here are some things to think about:

Can you afford the university or college you want to attend?

You may have your sights set on a particular institution, but it's worth doing some research. First year university fees for a BA-degree in 2017 varied from R34 254 to R49 440 – a difference of over R15 000.

Also, bear in mind that in South Africa only public institutions can call themselves universities. Private higher education institutions can offer exactly the same range of qualifications up to doctoral degree level, but may not use the term 'university' even though they are subject to the same regulation and quality assurance.

Other than tuition fees, what other costs should you consider?

Remember that in addition to the course fees you'll have to pay application and registration fees. Some bursaries and funders do not pay these costs.

If the institution is far from home you'll have to budget for food, accommodation and possibly even data or wifi connectivity. If you're staying at home, you may be lucky enough not to have to worry about rent, food or data, but may need to pay for transport to and from campus.

It's a choice that television and radio personality, Carissa Cupido, faced. Her dream university was Rhodes, but because she could not afford the tuition and student accommodation, she chose UCT so she could stay at home and save on some costs.

She says that even if you save on accommodation you will always have to pay for books, other course material, stationery and possibly a laptop or other electronic device. Most reputable institutions will provide information on what you'll need, where to get it and what it will cost. If you can, it's also worth speaking to students or lecturers to check this information and find out if you can buy second-hand books or other equipment you'll need.

Carissa was able to save money by downloading textbooks that were available online or finding second-hand copies.

Her other tips for managing your finances while you're studying are:

- Get a part-time job. Ideally look for options that fit your studies, such as tutoring school children or your fellow students.
- Keep an eye out for student discounts. Many shops have student specials and discount days. Take advantage of these whenever you can.
- Work out a budget and stick to it. Ask someone with experience to help figure out a weekly or monthly budget and then make sure you stay within it.

To find out more about Carissa's university experience click here: <https://www.directaxis.co.za/direct-talk/how-to-save-money-as-a-student>

Are you getting value for money?

There's more to tertiary institutions than just academic life, particularly if you're planning to spend three or more years of your life earning a qualification. If you can, visit the campus beforehand to get a feel for it and to check out the facilities.

Ask about student support such as tutoring, guidance or career counselling.

You won't spend all your time studying, so also consider what non-academic activities and facilities are provided. Find out what sports are offered and if there are other clubs and societies that interest you. ▲



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