

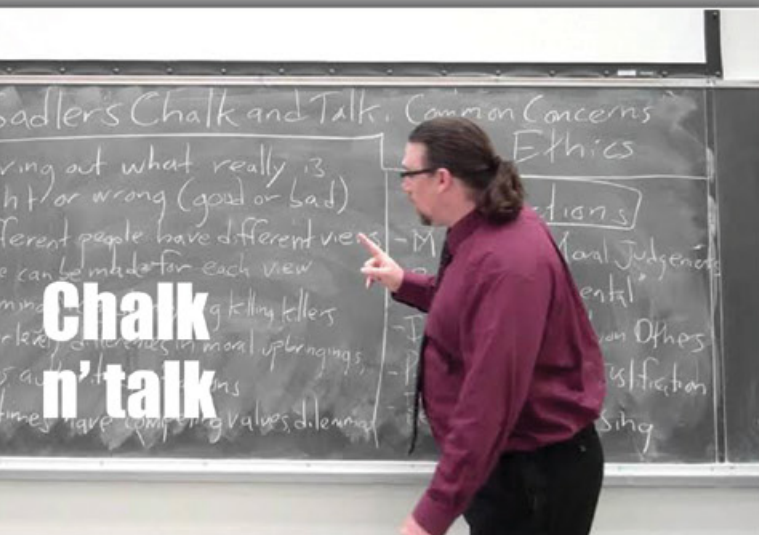
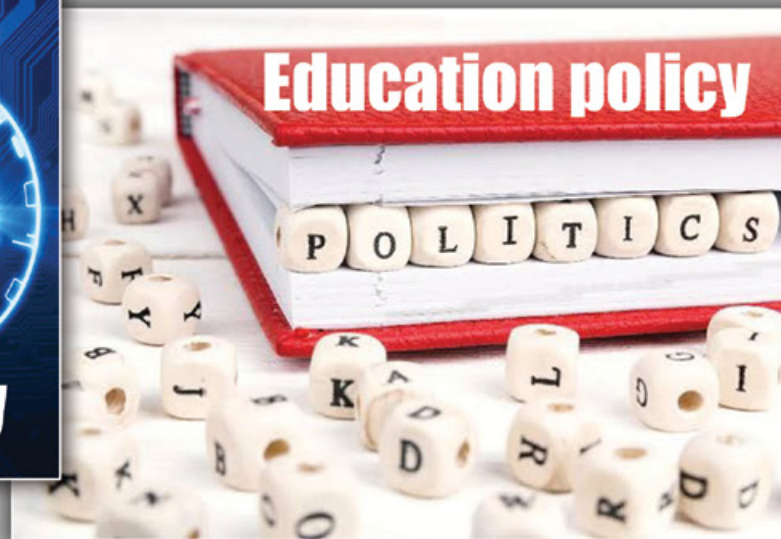
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Magazine

EDUCATION

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Editor's column

Learners from alcoholic families

Teachers are often not aware that many learners in their classroom go home to a dysfunctional family, with one or more of the parents being alcoholics. A child is incredibly susceptible to parental influence and neglect. As a result, growing up with an alcoholic parent can have serious consequences in both the short-term and the long-term.

Having an alcoholic father can have a significant impact on a child, putting them at risk for a multitude of problems during childhood and into adulthood. It is important for educators to promptly identify these situations and take proper steps to ensure the damage done to a child is stopped and future risk is mitigated.

Families dealing with alcoholism have been shown to experience problems, such as lack of communication, little to no structure in the home, increased conflict, subpar parenting and financial issues.

Living with an alcoholic father can change a child's day-to-day life quite a bit. The idea of "normal life" becomes somewhat abstract, leaving the child guessing what normal life should be like since they often don't experience it directly. Their ability to enjoy things also tends to be diminished, which is a truly sad factor when it comes to children.

Trust issues often arise in the children of alcoholic parents. Their experience with broken promises and their parent consistently chipping away at their ability to trust in the way a well-adjusted child would. This can also lead to trouble developing meaningful and intimate relationships as well as abandonment issues. Trauma in childhood also makes it more likely that the person will go on to develop issues with substance abuse, intimacy, and other mental health problems later in life.

Children of alcoholic fathers also have the tendency to feel like they are different from most children, and this has an alienating effect. They may lie to cover up for their fathers' behaviour, often feeling embarrassed at admitting the truth about what's going on at home.

Even though these children have likely been greatly hurt by the actions of their alcoholic fathers, they often have an innate desire to protect them. As a result, a kind of role reversal often takes place in the relationship between an alcoholic father and their child, with the child "parenting" the father. The child may clean up messes made while the father was drunk or apologise for the father's actions if he acts poorly in public due to being intoxicated. As a result, the child is often robbed of the traditional protection of a parent.

While many behavioural issues may be present in school-aged children of alcoholics, as these children become adults, they remain at a higher risk for various problems.

If a teacher knows that a child is suffering due to their parent's alcohol abuse, it's imperative that prompt action is taken. The parent needs professional help in order to get well, and the child needs to be protected.

(Please see page 10 & 11 for the details of Alateen)

Yours in education

Janos Bozsik
Editor



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T-Systems upskills high school learners and teachers through the highly successful ICT Academy initiative

“Our ICT Academy has been offering practical experience and theoretical training to South African learners since 2003, bridging the skills gap and improving the employability of our candidates. For this specific initiative, we scaled down our extensive program offering to an appropriate level for high school learners and made it relatable to them. The aim is for each learner to gain skills and knowledge they can use and share with family and friends,” says Marcus Karuppan, T-Systems ICT Academy Manager.

“Cybersecurity and programming are two fundamental aspects of a digital world, and we believe they are therefore critical life skills. Everything is becoming software-based, so skills in programming are essential for a wide variety of career paths. Similarly, cyber safety and security are important not only for IT professionals but for everyone who uses an online device. Part of the course covers how to protect your information and identity online, as well as how to cope with and defend yourself from cyber bullying.

We are giving these learners a basic grounding in necessary digital skills that prepares them for a career in IT in the future,” he adds.

Cybersecurity modules that form part of the course include the need for cyber security, how to recognise an attack, how to protect data and privacy, how to protect an organisation and an exploration of cyber security as a career path. The programming skills component includes an introduction to HTML and how to create a basic website, an introduction to CSS and an introduction to programming in Java. It also incorporates an introduction to Python, which is a versatile general-purpose programming language that is becoming increasingly popular for its applications in machine learning.

T-Systems is also providing training for six teachers from the three schools and 25 teachers from Kattlehong Primary School. In partnership with CompTIA, these teachers are completing an IT Fundamentals program with T-Systems covering all of the cost of study materials and training resources. This course includes basic computer skills such as the Productivity Programs, and also cybersecurity and an introduction to programming in support and correlation to the learners. The teachers will also be given a voucher to complete the international IT Fundamentals exam in February 2020, as well as preparation and a course refresher to help equip them for the exam.

The idea is to equip the teachers with a broad introduction to prevalent IT topics to improve their own knowledge and enable them to pass the skills on to their learners.



One of the course graduates

“Our aim is to build South Africa as a nation by upskilling students exposing them to technology life skills at an early stage. While future employability is an important goal, our programs go beyond simply teaching children how to code. Through various initiatives we are providing opportunities for learners to not only improve their skills but also experience life in the workplace early on and understand what career paths are open to them. Education, skills development and life experiences are all critical components of developing our country as a nation and uplifting our citizens,” Shirley Vrnjas, Organisational Change Consultant at T-Systems, concludes.

The three-day course took place at the T-Systems ICT Academy in Johannesburg from 3 to 5 December 2019. Each learner was awarded a certificate on the final day for successfully completing the training. ▲

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SA's growing home education success

Last month, thousands of learners across South Africa received their final matric results.

It's traditionally a time when the top achievers across the country are in the limelight. However, there is a side to South Africa's education system that also needs celebrating – that of home education (also known as homeschooling).

Here too, there are several top achievers who have taken a different route to success. And they have bright futures ahead, with many set to pursue top academic programmes at universities.

Home education is a fast-growing space in South Africa with it being estimated that there are over 100 000 learners following this route. South Africa's biggest home education provider, Impaq, has over 18 000 learners. Impaq follows the national CAPS curriculum and is registered with the assessment body, SACAI, which is quality assured by Umalusi.

Listed below are some of the stories of Impaq's top achieving learners during the final 2019 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination.

Ruan van Vuuren



Ruan van Vuuren hails from a remote farm in the Eastern Cape and he scored the highest marks among Impaq's home education learners.

Taking eight subjects, Van Vuuren achieved an average of 84% and seven distinctions. He started home education from when he was in Grade 1 and proudly says that he's never been in a traditional school.

His subject choices included the likes of Mathematics, Afrikaans, English, Physical Sciences, Agricultural Sciences and Agricultural Management Practices.

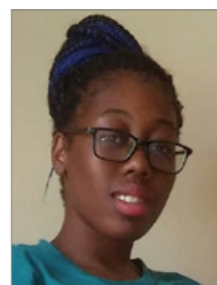
Ruan and his family will be moving to Georgia, Europe later this year, so he is still deciding what he will study at tertiary level. But he is adamant that his schooling success was tied to the flexibility of home education.

"The nice thing about home education is that if you struggle you can do your coursework again and again until you understand it," says Van Vuuren.

"I enjoyed the flexibility of it. If I wanted to go and work in the vegetable garden on our farm during the day, then I could go do that and come back in afterwards to finish my schooling."

Bridgette Vhengani

Bridgette Vhengani, from Gauteng, took eight subjects and scored a final average of 72% in matric. She



achieved two distinctions in Business Studies and Life Orientation. Her other subjects included Accounting, Physical Sciences, Geography, Mathematics, Afrikaans and English.

Bridgette started doing homeschooling in Grade 10 after previously attending a private school.

"I decided to do home education because my parents thought it would be the best way to prepare me for university and to teach me how to be independent," she says.

In 2020, Bridgette is going to start studying towards a BCom in Econometrics at UJ. She ultimately plans to do her honours, and then travel thereafter. Her future ambitions include entering politics.

When it comes to advice for learners who want to pursue homeschooling, Bridgette says: "You must start working from the first day because the year progresses very quickly. There is a lot of material to get through. If you don't do this, you might not cover everything you need for the final exams. You also need to work hard and commit to late nights."

Willem Barnard

Willem Barnard lives on a farm in the Western Cape, near Ceres, and he has also been a home education learner since Grade 1.



"We moved around quite a lot when I was little, so my parents decided that

home education was the best route for me to take in order to make learning comfortable for us," says Barnard.

"My mom taught all of her children; we never had a formal tutor. In high school, I used many resources such as the Quanta Books for Physical Sciences. Meanwhile, Impaq also launched its Guided Learning platform last year, and I used that quite a lot for Mathematics," he adds.

All the hard work paid off as he achieved seven distinctions with an average of 88%.

His subjects included Mathematics, Physical Sciences, Business Studies and Life Sciences. He plans to take a gap year and then study IT.

According to the Department of Basic Education

Home Education is a programme alternative to attending public or independent schools where a parent of a learner of compulsory school going age may provide education for his/her own child/ren at home.

The Policy on Home Education aims to protect, promote and ensure the rights of learners to basic education; recognise parents' right to choose the kind of education that shall be provided to their children; provide for registration, implementation and monitoring of home education in accordance with section 51 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) and to provide for matters incidental thereto; and provide uniform and manageable procedures for home education in provinces.

Through a rigorous process of four years of consultation with home education communities, including representatives of homeschooling associations, individual parents, education officials as well as organisations with interest in home education, the policy was developed. Amongst other topics, the policy introduces responsibilities and roles of officials and parents in curriculum provisioning and delivery, assessment, registration of learners, monitoring, social inclusion, education for learners experiencing barriers to learning and other key issues in policy implementation.

Do you prefer to teach your child at home? If so, apply to the head of your Provincial Education Department to register your child for Home Education. The lesson you offer your child must fall within the scope of the following compulsory phases of education.

- foundation phase (grades 1 to 3)
- intermediate phase (grades 4 to 6)
- senior phase (grades 7 to 9)

Records

After your child has been registered for Home Education you must keep the following records:

- record of attendance
- portfolio of the child's work
- up-to-date records of the child's progress
- portfolio of the educational support given to the child

"For me, home education just worked," says Barnard.

"I think home education is great, especially if you put the time and passion into it. Home education can work if you do it right and it offers an education just as good as any other school," he says.

It's clear that more than ever, home education is a strong alternative for learners and parents in South Africa.

- evidence of the continuous assessment of the child's work
- evidence of the assessment and or examination at the end of each year
- evidence at the end of grade 3, 6 and 9, that shows whether your child has achieved the outcomes for these grades

What you should do

Apply electronically, using the applicable application form, to the head of your Provincial Education Department and attach the following documents:

- parent/s certified ID copy
- In case of foreign nationals certified copies of passport/study permit/work permit/Asylum document is required
- last copy of school report (if the child was in school before, but if the child is only starting school now you must attach an immunisation card)
- weekly timetable which includes contact time per day
- breakdown of terms per year (196 days per year)
- learning programme
- certified copy of child's birth certificate

Timeframes

It may take up to 30 days for your applications to be processed.

How much does it cost?

The service is free. ▲

Social investment specialist says **corporate SA continues to play a leading role** in improving education

The next decade needs to see that funding into education starts bearing positive results

Reflecting on the National Senior Certificate (NSC) results for 2019, Sibusiso Lukhele, a social investment specialist at Tshikululu Social Investments, South Africa's leading social investment manager, says that while there are ongoing challenges within our education system, it is important to celebrate the achievements of the 2019 class.

"They achieved a pass rate of 81.3%, an increase from 78.2% in 2018. The number of students achieving a bachelor's pass rate also improved," he says.

Another achievement is that the performances of quintile 1 to 3 schools (which cater to the poorest learners in the country) has also improved, with more learners from these schools achieving bachelor's passes compared to schools in quintile 4 to 5, which are the schools catering to the more affluent areas.

"Challenges still remain though", Sibusiso says and cites the fact that the actual number of students who wrote the NSC last year declined. In addition, the number of learners enrolling and writing gateway subjects such as Mathematics and Science also decreased in 2019. "The declining number of learners taking these subjects and the decrease in the quality of passes in gateway modules means universities may have to lower their qualifying criteria for STEM (Science, Engineering, Technology and Mathematics), which doesn't bode well for the country," he explains.

Corporate South Africa is already playing a critical role in improving the quality of education in the country. In fact, 50% of CSI funding in 2019, which equates to R 5 billion, was spent on different education initiatives by corporate SA. The drive in the next decade should be on impact and ensuring that the funding in education starts bearing positive results. "Of the key improvements that needs to happen is that corporates need to ensure that there is monitoring and evaluation in the programmes they fund and implement," he says.

Looking at the areas that the government will focus on over the next decade, Sibusiso says that early childhood development is key and that ECD and critical grades in basic education (grades 3 and 6) will become even more of a focus. "The reason why government will spend more resources in these areas is that it will ensure that the development of learners takes place from a younger age and decrease the number of learners who dropout during the 12 years of schooling," Sibusiso says.

"Early childhood education is critical to the success of a child's development, we have been getting it wrong as a country over the last two decades and the lack of investment has resulted in a number of young people being in the NEET (neither in education, employment or training) category. If learners are not

equipped with literacy and numeracy skills from a young age, then it will be difficult to develop these skills in high school," he says.

He also says that government will also seek to invest more resources in TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) Colleges so that the country's skill gap for artisans can be addressed.

The bottom line is that government cannot fix the education system alone. "Corporate SA and NGOs have skills which government don't. There are a number of partnerships already between government and the private sector which have yielded good results thus far. There has to be an increase in the development of these partnerships in the next decade to improve education in the country. Corporates can also get involved through the continuous upskilling of teachers and education officials," Sibusiso says.

Tshikululu focuses on the entire education spectrum and believes that all sectors, from early childhood development (ECD) through to university level, are linked and that addressing issues needs to be done systemically.

Tshikululu has assisted The FirstRand Foundation with a partnership which is playing a pivotal role in addressing the challenges in the education system. This involves systemic investments being made from ECD to tertiary education level which will continue to yield positive results and see real changes made in the education system and further enable young people to become active economic participants. ▲

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Password

Account

Login Forgot Password Change Password New User

← Click on the **New User** button

STEP 2

User Registration

E-mail Address

Username

Password

Re-type Password

Create User Cancel

Complete the User Registration. Please save your Password in a safe place
Password is case sensitive
Must be 8 or more characters
Must include upper and lower case
Must include a number
Click on the **Create User** button.

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Recent Timetable Successes

	Parallel Medium	Primary	High	Combined	Academic	Technical	Special	Government	Independent
Carel de Wet High School, Vanderbylpark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hoërskool Jan van Riebeeck, Cape Town	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kingsway High School, Amansimtoti	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lady Gray Arts Academy, Eastern Cape	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Florida Vaardigheidskool (ELSEN), Cape Town	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Orban School, Melville, Johannesburg	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meredale Primary School, Johannesburg	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

LEARNERS WHO BENEFITED FROM THE ALATEEN PROGRAMME

Below are some comments from school children in the Alateen programme

(Names are changed to protect members' anonymity)

My daughter has changed so much in the past year since attending Alateen. There's a new confidence, a renewed happiness, and more openness. She has the courage to share in AA meetings, and to engage with people outside of them. She's growing into an amazing person, and I couldn't be prouder of her.

"Proud Mother".

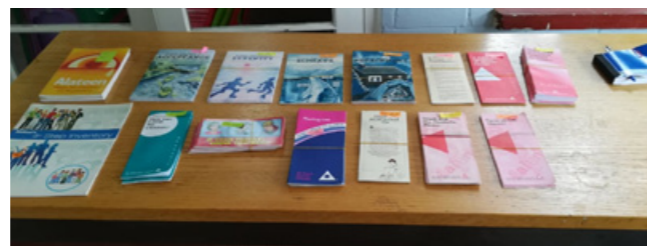
It's amazing how much honesty there can be in Alateen when alcohol is full of lies. **"Maria" age 11.**



Alateen has relieved me of the stress in my life. I have more focus on my schoolwork and I have stopped overthinking everything. I have serenity in my life for the first time as I have stopped worrying about my Dad's drinking and am more confident.

"Jabulani", age 11.

I have been told by my friends & family I am much more relaxed, calmer and more mature. I have been going to Alateen for nearly three years and I don't worry so much about my Mom and am not so negative. **"Lucy" now age 13.**



Alateen has helped me stop worrying about what might happen at home if my parents are drinking and fighting. **"Ray" age 12.**

Alateen has helped me deal with the stress at home and my school marks have improved. I didn't want to go to meetings at first, but now I look forward to the weekend meeting and seeing my friends there. **"Rebecca", age 15.**

Before Alateen I found it very difficult to talk to other people at school. Now I feel freer, am much more confident, and understand it's not only my family that has this problem. **"Mark" age 14.**

I used to bottle up my feelings about everything, until my anger would explode. At Alateen I learned a better, calmer way to share discuss any problems with my group. **"Jay" age 16.**



FOR EDUCATORS & PRINCIPALS

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 –
 24 hr Helpline – 0861 25 66 66**

Literature & more information is available. Just call us.

Al-Anon Family Groups
 Help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics

2020 matrics: procrastination is the enemy of performance

Drawing up a Matric Roadmap at the start of the year is an essential step towards achieving success in Grade 12, an education expert says.

“Looking at the year from the vantage point of January, Matric finals seem a long way down the road, and eight months feels like ample time to get to grips with your work before you have to sit for your finals,” says Natasha Madhav, Senior Head of Programme: Faculty of ICT at The IIE.

“However before you know it, the days would have turned into weeks and the weeks into months, and if you are not vigilant, you may find yourself less prepared than you thought you would be,” she says.

Madhav says a more effective approach is to view the year as a series of milestones, and then work towards and build upon each one as they arrive.

“There are so many great things worth celebrating in your final year of school, and they must be embraced for the achievements they are, but you must at all times keep a firm focus on your biggest goal – to achieve to the best of your ability and lay the foundation for future success in the months to come,” she says.

She advises learners and their parents to take some time out to reflect and strategise in coming weeks, and to draw up a year-plan as follows:

Break it down

“Draw up a year-at-a-glance calendar which notes all tests, exams and other assessments, as well as Matric-related events and functions. Also note down administrative tasks which may take up your time, such as Higher Education application deadlines,” says Madhav.

She says once they have a year-at-a-glance view of what lies ahead, learners should break down the year into sections, and treat each section as a milestone on the road to achievement.

“So if you do this, the idea of eight months until your final exam quickly makes way for the reality that every month or two will bring new demands requiring your full attention. Understanding this, and the fact that action every day is the only way to approach this year in a sustainable way, is the strongest antidote to procrastination – the enemy of performance.”

Schedule

Madhav says now that learners understand the various milestones and the limited time available for preparation, they should draw up a daily/weekly/monthly action plan.

“Consider how your average productive day will look – how much time you are allocating for non-academic activities such as sport and relaxation, how much time for homework each day, how much time for additional revision, what your weekends are going to look like, and so forth.

“While concentrating on academics, you also need to make provision for time to ensure your post-school plans are sorted. If you are going to apply for a qualification where entrance



requirements also look at your non-academic contributions and achievements, is there something you should budget for, for instance volunteer work or holiday internships?

Do you still need to investigate and pin down what you want to study and where?

“These are not bridges to be crossed only when you get to them. You should consciously consider what you need to do when to avoid unnecessary and avoidable stress in months to come, so that you don’t spend precious time completing application forms when in fact you should be putting the final touches on your Matric exam preparation,” Madhav says.

Commit to your milestones

Madhav notes that having a plan is a great start, but that sticking to the plan with small actions that compound each day is where the tyres hit the road.

“Don’t postpone what you need to do today, to tomorrow. Because tomorrow may – and probably will – bring challenges you haven’t bargained for, and then you’ll start falling behind. You must use your time wisely and productively – more so than ever before during this year – and strengthen your learning and productivity muscles.

“This will not only develop your abilities and potential throughout this year with the focus on your final exams, but will also stand you in good stead next year as you enter higher education, where the demands that will be placed on you will increase exponentially.”

Review

The benefit of staying on top of things from the start of the year and throughout until you put down your pen after your last paper,

is that you can adjust and correct your strategy if any red flags arise, says Madhav.

“If, for instance, you find that you are really struggling in a particular subject or with particular sections of work, you will have enough time to pull in extra assistance, for instance from a tutor or a teacher at school,” she says.

“You might also realise that you need to incorporate new study methods or ways of blocking time to get to grips with everything, and constantly reflecting on where you are in relation to your year plan, as well as where you need to be, will help you adjust where necessary.”

“The greatest weapons in your arsenal right now are time and discipline,” says Madhav.

“As the saying goes, hard work beats talent if talent doesn’t work hard. So whether you are top of your class, or not yet the strongest academically, the effort and focus you put into your final year of school will have a direct effect on your performance, and right now there is still a lot you can do about it – with the right strategy and unshakeable commitment.”



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Teach your child to learn independently with these useful tips

The human baby is born with an innate curiosity and a seemingly insatiable need to learn. Toddlers and young children seem to find anything and everything interesting and they never run out of questions! Why is that...? How does...? Where is the...? What is...? They are also determined to 'do-it-by-myself!' In fact, they insist on it!

Cindy Glass, Owner and Co-Founder of Step Up Education Centres says that as children grow and experience the world around them, they seem to lose this love of learning and worse, they begin to resist it. "Learning resistance as well as a need for dependence in learning is actually a learned behaviour. In fact, it is simply a defense mechanism that our children develop over time to protect themselves from negative learning experiences! Our children develop a fear of making mistakes as they experience negative reactions and feedback to their efforts in mastering new skills and concepts. Children develop a negative sense of self and convince themselves that they are flawed and incapable of achieving success independently and if at all," Cindy explains.

So how do you turn back the hands of time?

Cindy offers 6 top tips for supporting your children in becoming independent learners:

1. The art of making effective mistakes: Perfection does not exist on this planet. Mistakes are simply opportunities to practice and learn. Children who are not afraid to learn are more likely to trust themselves when tackling new ideas.
2. Flexibility is a fundamental: Teach your children the art of resilience which is the ability to recover quickly from challenges and obstacles.
3. Develop a growth mindset: A growth mindset, will ensure that your children believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work – brains and talent are just the starting point. Learning is hard work and there are no shortcuts.
4. Encourage and praise your children: Celebrate every success in independent learning, no matter how small it may seem. Little successes, acknowledged, will grow.



5. Age-appropriate expectations: A Gr 1 learner needs more support in learning than an older learner. Never expect a young learner to tackle tasks that are overwhelming. Little steps will lead to leaps. Build that confidence over time.
6. Accept help when needed: Seek remediation and learning support services if you notice that your children need a helping hand. Mastering the skills needed for effective learning to take place will go a long way in helping your children become more independent learners.

"It's important that we support our children in becoming independent learners in order to increase motivation and confidence. Children who learn independently feel a greater sense of accomplishment and are more likely to explore challenging topics with confidence. And finally, independent learning prepares our children for the world beyond school. They develop critical thinking and emotional intelligence skills which are essential for success in life," Cindy concludes. ▴



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Graduates: getting in gear for your first job search

Your first job search after graduation can be both exciting and terrifying, particularly in South Africa where many qualified people compete for a limited number of vacancies. But the experience can be made much more rewarding, and the chances of success greater, by following a few simple guidelines, an education expert says.

“You have to approach the job search with a plan, rather than falling into it haphazardly, as the latter can quickly lead to frustration and disappointment,” says Wonga Ntshinga, Senior Head of Programme: Faculty of ICT at The Independent Institute of Education, SA’s largest and most accredited private higher education institution.

Ntshinga says when the economy is constrained, as it currently is in South Africa, finding a job can be hard even for those with experience, but that it can be especially daunting for first-time job seekers who are not yet familiar with the processes related to searching for work.

Follow your opportunities

“First of all, recent graduates must keep an open mind and stay alert for potential opportunities. Don’t get stuck on the idea that there is just one specific kind of job for you and that if you don’t find the exact role that you intended stepping into after graduation, you need to keep looking until you do.



“Understand that you may need to get a foot in a door first, and that once you’ve done so and proved yourself, you may start encountering more desirable opportunities in the environment you find yourself,” he says.

Ntshinga says it is very important for graduates to use their time as productively as possible, and go searching for opportunities rather than waiting for them to come knocking.

“By following the steps below, you will be in a much better position to realise success on your job search journey,” he says.

1) Lay the groundwork

It may sound obvious, but many don’t realise the importance of getting the slog out of the way before they start submitting applications, Ntshinga says.

“You have to make sure that all your paperwork is in order, such as copies of your ID, academic transcripts, your degree, and so forth. Depending on your field, you may need additional documentation specific to your industry. Ensure that you have these in hard and digital format, ready to submit when required.

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“Then, of course, you need to get your CV in tip-top shape. It can’t be stressed enough that it needs to be neat, concise and without any errors such as incorrect dates or grammatical slip-ups. It’s always a good idea to get a set of expert eyes on your CV before sending it off, so approach your graduate institution’s career centre for assistance in this regard,” he says.

2) Set goals

Ntshinga says one should spend a few hours every day on the search, and not leave it for when you feel like it.

“Inspiration may never hit, so don’t wait for it. Set out each day with the aim of finding and applying for a certain number of opportunities. Scour online job listings, widen your net to related vacancies even if not a 100% match to your preferred position, and cold call companies’ HR departments.

“When you send in an application for a vacancy, or your CV to the HR department to keep on file, remember to tailor your covering letter and experience to the specific company and position. And very importantly, keep a detailed and updated spreadsheet indicating where you applied, what you applied for, date of application and contact details of the person to whom you submitted the application. This may be useful later when you need to follow up on an



application, or even when you want test the waters in future about potential vacancies.”

3) Rope in the experts

The job search will feel lonely at times, but you don’t have to go it alone, says Ntshinga.

“Join forces with recruitment agencies and approach your graduate institution for help with your search,” he advises.

“A good institution will have specialist resources to help you prepare your CV, practise your interview skills, and assist you in identifying where you might need to strengthen or alter your approach.

“There are also many public, private and online resources dedicated to assisting job-seekers, so identify and connect with those in your area.”

4) Grow professionally while you wait

Ntshinga says it is vitally important not to stagnate professionally, particularly if the job-search takes a while.

“You absolutely must stay on top of developments in your profession, by networking and developing your relevant skills. Spend some time every week honing your professional skills by applying what you learnt during your studies. Volunteer your services in your community, go to industry networking events, and stay sharp.

“Also consider gaining a complementary skill to boost your CV and your range of competence. If you keep going and keep growing, the doors of opportunity will start opening for you.”



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