

sa

SUMMER 2023

# Homeschooling

*and beyond*

*Homeschooling  
can improve  
your child's  
mental health*

**Maths  
vs maths  
literacy**

**15**

**films to watch on  
family movie night**

**A parent's  
guide to  
screen  
time**

**How to  
boost your  
child's  
brainpower**

**Preparing for a new  
homeschool year**

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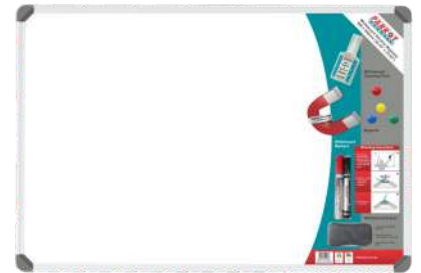


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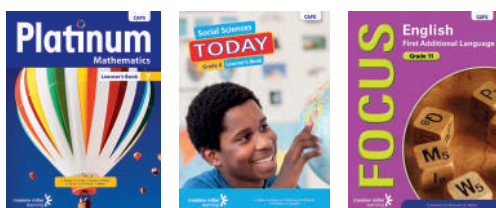
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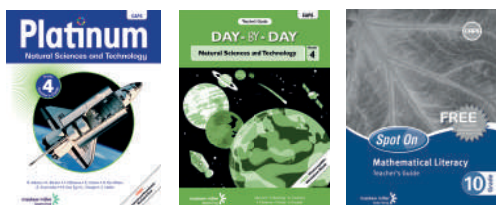
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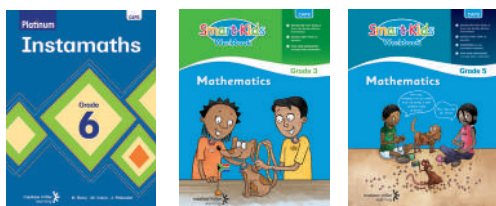
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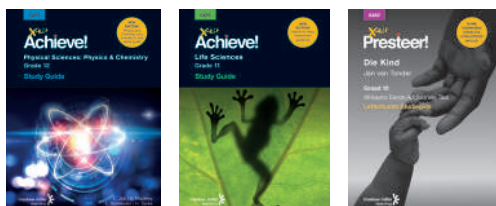
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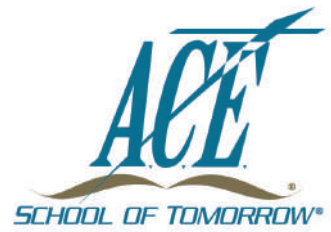
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# Contents

10

## Homeschooling can improve your child's mental health

Beyond academic benefits, many parents claim that online schooling benefits the mental health of their children

14

## Choosing the right career path

The transition from the structured environment of high school to the expansive horizon of what comes next can be a challenging one

16

## A parent's guide to screen time

With ample free time on their hands during holidays, children often turn to screens for entertainment and connection

24

## Preparing for a new homeschool year

Amidst all the joy and festivities of the holiday season, it may have slipped your mind entirely to prepare for the new year of homeschooling

26

## How to boost your child's brainpower

Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to change and grow in response to experience and is essential for learning, memory and adaptation







30

### Ask Dalena

Dalena van der Westhuizen answers questions and concerns from parents about learning, concentration, memory and cognitive development

32

### Cooking and bonding

These 30-minute recipes will show you that cooking at home doesn't have to be hard or time-consuming

36

### Maths vs maths literacy

Thousands of high school students in SA grapple with the difficult decision about whether they should pursue mathematics as a subject or do mathematic literacy instead



42

### Why early childhood care and education matter

No investment is more crucial than that in early childhood development

48

### Building bonds

We may all be trying to cut back on screen time, but there's one screen-based activity that bears protecting: family movie night





It's hard to believe that the year is coming to an end. After a busy 2023, nothing feels sweeter than preparing for the holidays and spending time with your loved ones.

Whether you'll be going away or spending the break at home, I hope you treat yourselves to a refreshing break from your normal routine and day-to-day life. I recently read an article

published in *TES* by Elizabeth Buie, in which she states that a staggering two-thirds of conversations between parents and children revolve around their daily routines. Holidays provide the perfect opportunity to break this conversation cycle and have more engaging exchanges with your children. They also give you more time to get to know your children's individual personalities and observe how they're growing, changing and developing.

Time away from work commitments and the constraints of day-to-day home life enables you to reconnect and simply enjoy hanging out with your kids.

Children spell "love" with a T, an I, an M and an E. The time we spend so hard earning money for them is often the same time they crave from us. Holidays are a perfect opportunity to give it to them.

So as the holiday season kicks into high gear, let's live in the moment,

put away our cellphones (unless it's to take a photo!), create fabulous memories and, in doing so, give our children the reassurance of how loved they are.

On a personal note, I find working with the *SA Homeschooling & Beyond* team on every issue an unforgettably enjoyable experience and I sincerely thank my colleagues and, above all, you – our readers, contributors and supporters – for making it possible. Going into the new year, we'll strive to continue providing parents with the support resources, skills, shared experiences and expert advice to homeschool your children with joy and success. Please continue giving us feedback on how we're doing.

Wishing you and your families love, safety and peace this holiday season and the happiest and most prosperous of new years!

Adri

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# Homeschooling can improve your child's mental health

Beyond academic benefits, many parents claim that online schooling benefits the mental health of their children. Louise Schoonwinkel, MD of Optimi Home, shares ways in which it can do this

According to the 2023 Unicef South Africa U-Report poll, 60% of children and youth in SA felt they needed mental health support over the past year. Of this group, 63% actively sought it. Those who didn't said they didn't know where to go to find it. Only 36% had ever spoken to their parents or caregivers about their mental health.

If you're the parent or guardian of a child or teenager, you might be experiencing these challenges first-hand. Sudden mood swings, trouble sleeping, unexplained weight loss or gain, social

withdrawal and poor academic performance are all signs that your child might be struggling.

As parents, educators and society at large seek to create safe and supportive spaces for our children, we must pay attention to their education and learning environment.

This doesn't exist in isolation, of course, and we still need to ensure that they have loving and nurturing homes, supportive mentors and access to therapeutic interventions, if necessary. However, their education shouldn't be ignored.

In many instances, home and online learning spaces can help children cope with their mental health challenges. Here's how:







## 2 Helps them feel in control of their time

According to the Sleep Foundation, teenagers need eight to 10 hours of sleep per night. As adolescents naturally start staying up later, the hours they must keep for school and extracurricular activities can negatively affect their circadian rhythms.

In homeschooling and distance learning environments, you and your child can create a unique schedule that works for you. You might prioritise getting enough sleep, rushing less, working

## 1 Decreases stress, anxiety and depression

There's a common misconception that shifting children from in-school to home or online learning environments is a stressful experience that makes them feel even more anxious. The reality, however, is often quite different. While the change may be disruptive at first, homeschooling often decreases children's stress levels in the long term.

Away from many of the triggers that can cause children to feel anxious and unhappy – such as class bullies and the expectations and pressures of schools – home and remote pupils often start to feel more relaxed and secure. Over time, this can help to build their confidence and even alleviate symptoms of depression.

**“To create safe and supportive spaces for our children, we must pay attention to their education and learning environment.”**



around the times of the day when your child's most alert and productive, and taking breaks when necessary, rather than when the bell sounds.

**3 Allows them to participate in the physical activities they most enjoy** Both deliberately and unwittingly, schools often place enormous pressure on children to participate in particular sports. All too often, this is gendered and boys, girls and non-binary children who go against the grain can find it difficult to play the sports they most enjoy. In worst-case scenarios, these youngsters can be bullied or excluded for their preferences.

Home environments offer greater freedom. More options are often available through external teams (which aren't necessarily affiliated to schools) or activities at local community and recreational halls. Your child might also be able to enjoy home-based activities not provided elsewhere, such as gardening and DIY projects.

**4 Helps them feel more emotionally free** Without the watchful eyes of their peers and teachers, children often feel more comfortable being honest and vulnerable in one-on-one dynamics. This helps parents, guardians or assisting teachers become more aware of and sensitive to the issues that



might be troubling the children under their care.

Mental health – and children's specific experience of it – can even form part of their lesson plan. This can help them become conscious of their internal battles and teach them valuable tools to communicate and address these thoughts and emotions.

**5 Permits room for special needs** Of necessity, teachers in bricks-and-mortar schools tend

to cater to the median abilities of their pupils. This means that children who struggle to keep up with the pace of classroom environments or who need more time to understand a particular concept risk being left behind.

With homeschooling and online schooling, children are met where they're at. This helps dispel anxiety they might feel about blending in with other children and encourages them to be more vocal about their needs and interests.

There's no cure-all solution for mental health issues in children and teenagers. It requires deep attention and commitment from parents, guardians, teachers and others. As we seek to address these issues and give all children the support they need, we must ensure that they learn in an environment that best suits their needs. In this regard, home and online learning should always be an option.







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# Choosing the right career path

The transition from the structured environment of high school to the expansive horizon of what comes next is a challenging one, filled with excitement and anticipation. However, for Grade 12 students who're still unsure about their future moves, it can be an extremely anxious and perplexing time

"It's not just about securing a job or determining what your child will study next; it's about sculpting the foundation they'll build for the rest of their lives. Each decision has ripple effects, influencing their immediate years after school and potentially determining their satisfaction, success and well-being for decades to come," says Adrian Garden, Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning at the Independent Institute of Education's Rosebank College. "Through thoughtful, structured exploration and informed decision-making, school-leavers can carve out a path that aligns with their aspirations and the ever-evolving demands of the modern world."

(Above): Adrian Garden, Deputy Dean: Teaching & Learning at the Independent Institute of Education's Rosebank College.

## Self-reflection

Ask yourself: "What am I naturally good at? Which school subjects or extracurricular activities resonate with me? What are my core beliefs and values?" If you're unsure of who you are and what you want to do, there are a few structured assessments that can be illuminating. These include the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Holland Code and numerous other free career interest and personality assessments online.

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### Job market assessment

It's important to study the current and future job market so that you can view your options through a pragmatic lens. Research careers in high demand both locally in South Africa and internationally, potential income brackets in various professions along with

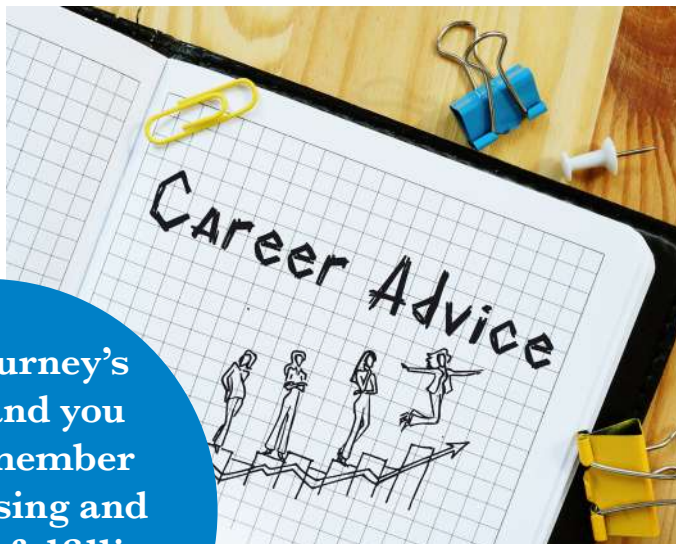
future earning potential and the expected longevity of the field and future growth prospects of specific sectors. It's also important to match your skills and subject choices with the careers which interest you.

### Study options deeply

Further study after matric is very likely a crucial stepping-stone to making your dream career a reality. However, remember that not all institutions and programmes are created equally. So if you have an idea of your area of interest, thoroughly investigate the reputation of the various institutions offering the qualifications within your field of interest.

### Research the real world deeply

To gain a real-world perspective on your prospective career, connect with mentors and professionals in the field who can give you a better understanding of what the field's like in reality, on a daily basis. If possible, ask to shadow someone doing that work for a week or two for a realistic idea of what it involves. Try to understand day-to-day experiences and potential challenges faced in the role, essential qualifications, skills and attitudes beneficial for that profession. What sounds great and glamorous in theory may be a lot more mundane in real life – and *vice versa*.



Your journey's unique and you must remember that choosing and pursuing a fulfilling career is a marathon, not a sprint."

### Deal with flux

While one's choice of study after matric is important, it's a misconception that one's first career choice is permanent. In today's dynamic world, many individuals change careers multiple times. The ability to pivot, adapt and build creatively on your experience is invaluable.

### Make the right choice for yourself, not others

While well-meaning parents, teachers and friends may inadvertently pressurise you to pursue a popular or lucrative career, it's essential to balance their advice against your real aspirations and interests. The most successful career is

the one in which you'll feel fulfilled and which allows you to continue growing.

"Your journey's unique and you must remember that choosing and pursuing a fulfilling career is a marathon, not a sprint," says Garden. "Every experience, be it a triumphant success or a challenging setback, will contribute to your tapestry of growth."



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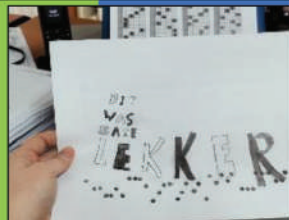


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If there's one area of parenting that consistently makes me wonder whether I'm doing what's best for my teenage son, it's screen time. Am I a bad mother for letting him play the online games he loves so much? Or are there actual benefits to his doing so? How much screen time should I allow?

If you, too, have sleepless nights over screen time, let's find answers by exploring what the latest research tells us.

Recent studies on screen time have created a nuanced picture for parents to consider. According to a comprehensive review published in the *Journal of Paediatrics* (Twenge & Campbell, 2018), moderate use of screens can have cognitive and social benefits for children. The key, however, is moderation. Screens can be valuable tools for learning and social interaction, but excessive use may have adverse effects.

Dr Jenny Radesky, a developmental behavioural paediatrician at the University of Michigan's CS Mott Children's Hospital, emphasises the importance of content and context in screen time. In a 2016 interview with the American Academy of Paediatrics, she

**"In contrast to what we often think as parents, online gaming and screen time can actually be beneficial!"**

# A parent's guide to screen time

With ample free time on their hands during holidays, children often turn to screens for entertainment and connection. Dalena van der Westhuizen, cognitive development specialist and co-founder of BrainAbility, explores the latest research on both the positive and negative effects of screen time on kids





# screen time

explained that interactive and educational content, used in moderation, can positively contribute to a child's development.

## A tool for learning and connection

Screens have become essential tools for education and connection. Many educational apps and online platforms offer engaging content that can supplement traditional learning methods and a study published in the *Journal of the American Association (JAMA) Paediatrics* (Primack *et al*, 2017) found that online gaming, played in moderation and with (known and trusted) friends, can enhance social skills and foster a sense of community.

Online games often require collaboration, strategic thinking, planning and problem-solving – all valuable skills that are transferable to real-world scenarios. The sense of achievement gained from successfully completing



a challenging level or working as a team can boost a child's confidence and self-esteem. In contrast to what we often think as parents, online gaming and screen time can actually be beneficial!

## Health risks and behavioural issues

While there seem to be clear benefits to screen time, excessive

usage poses risks. Prolonged exposure to screens, particularly before bedtime, can disrupt sleep patterns and lead to inadequate rest, impacting a child's overall well-being. The JAMA (Hutton *et al*, 2019) highlights a potential link between excessive screen time and delays in cognitive development in pre-school-aged children.

Behavioural issues such as increased irritability and difficulty focusing have also been associated with extended screen time.

Dr Dimitri Christakis, Director of the Centre for Child Health, Behaviour and Development at the Seattle Children's Research Institute, stresses the need for balance. In a 2021 interview with the Harvard Health Blog, he suggested that parents prioritise non-screen activities, such as reading, outdoor play and face-to-face interactions.



As parents, our challenge lies in striking a balance that maximises the benefits of screen time while mitigating potential risks. More importantly, we need to set clear limits on screen time and establish tech-free zones, especially during mealtimes and before bedtime.

Online gaming can be a positive experience when done in moderation and with an awareness of the content to ensure that it's age-appropriate and aligns with your family values.

### **Guidelines on striking the right balance**

Reputable organisations like the World Health Organisation and the American Academy of Paediatrics provide these guidelines to help parents manage their children's screen time:

- *Children younger than 18 months:* Avoid the use of screen media other than video calls.
- *Children aged 18-24 months:* If you choose to introduce digital media, go for high-quality programming/apps and watch the content with your child to help them understand what they're seeing.
- *Children aged two to five years:* Limit screen time to one hour per day of high-quality programming, co-viewed with the child to help them understand the content.



- *Children aged six years and older:* The emphasis shifts to ensuring an adequate balance between screen time and healthy behaviours. Establish consistent limits on the amount and type of media and ensure that it doesn't interfere with

adequate sleep, physical activity, studying and reading.

These recommendations consistently highlight the importance of age-appropriate content, parental involvement and maintaining a balance between screen time and other essential aspects of a child's development, irrespective of their age.

This holiday season and beyond, let's use these guidelines and the knowledge we now have about the advantages of online gaming and moderate screen time to harness its potential for growth and learning.

**“Ensure that it doesn't interfere with adequate sleep, physical activity, studying and sleeping.”**







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**ASK  
DALENA**



# Preparing for a new homeschool year

Can you believe it's almost 2024? Amidst all the joy and festivities of the holiday season, though, it may have slipped your mind entirely to prepare for the new year of homeschooling. Here's how to proceed

**D**on't get bogged down by all the things you think you need to have planned. Relax, start slowly and follow these simple steps:

- 1 Take time to reflect on 2023** Before you even start organising and planning for the new year, take some time to reflect on the past one. What went well in your home school? What could be improved?



- 2 Prepare your space** Having the right space is crucial to a successful year. It doesn't have to be big and fancy – what matters is that it's well lit (preferably with natural light), not too hot or cold during different weather, that your child feels comfortable in it and that it contains the things you and your child will need. This will be the space in your home dedicated only to schoolwork.



## 3 Stock up on essentials

Make sure you have the books, exercise books, stationery (pens, pencils, coloured crayons, rulers, erasers, Sellotape, Post-Its, etc) you'll need. A world map on the wall or a revolving world globe (updated to the present age!) is always advisable, as are a clock and some fun coloured posters on the walls.

- 4 Discuss extracurricular activities** While your child doesn't have to participate in extracurricular activities, these opportunities can hugely benefit them to gain knowledge and skills not covered in a typical homeschool curriculum.

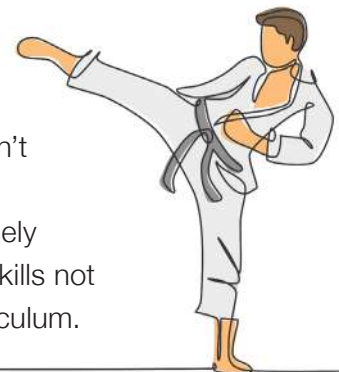
- 5 Draw up a schedule** In order to make sure you're meeting your goals, it's important to come up with a realistic schedule. If you have older children, consider letting them give input on how they'd like their day to look.

## 6 Delegate responsibilities through daily chores

Recruit the family, delegate responsibilities and win the war early on daily dirt.

- 7 Make the first day fun** The first day back at school (including homeschool) is a big deal for kids and parents alike. With a little planning and creativity, you can make it fun and memorable.

These tips will certainly help you get ready for a successful homeschool year. You got this – and we got you!





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**N**europlasticity means that the brain can create new connections between neurons, reorganise existing ones and even generate new cells throughout life.

“Research has shown that the better start a child has during their early years, the better their outcomes throughout their education journey,” says Desirée Hugo, Academic Head: ADvTECH Schools.

“This is why children should be exposed to opportunities not only to acquire greater knowledge, but to develop their thinking abilities and build the neuroplasticity around the brain. However, the window of opportunity to enhance this is limited, which is why best results are evident if it commences in the early years.”

Hugo says strategies for parents and guardians to employ to ensure that children develop neuroplasticity during the early years include:

**1 Encouraging curiosity and exploration** Children are naturally curious and eager to learn about the world around them. By exposing them to new and diverse experiences, you can foster their curiosity and stimulate their brain development. For example, take them to museums, parks, libraries or cultural events. Read books, watch documentaries or play games with them, continually asking

# How to boost your child's brainpower

Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to change and grow in response to experience and is essential for learning, memory and adaptation

them questions, listening to their opinions and challenging their assumptions.

**2 Providing a supportive and positive environment** Children need a safe and nurturing environment to thrive and grow. This can enhance their self-esteem, confidence and motivation. It can also protect them from the negative effects of stress, which can impair







(Left): Desiree Hugo, Academic Head at ADvTECH Schools.

neuroplasticity. Praise their efforts, not only their achievements.

3

### Teaching them new skills and hobbies

Children can learn new skills and hobbies that can enrich their lives and boost their brain power. Learning new things activates different regions of the brain and creates new neural pathways, improving cognitive functioning. Learning new skills and hobbies needn't be expensive – many opportunities for learning exist without needing to incur costs. Examples are learning a new language together through online apps, learning to bake or sew, gardening, drawing or developing a love for music.

4

### Promoting physical activity and healthy habits

Children need physical activity and healthy habits to maintain their physical and mental well-being. Physical activity



and healthy habits can improve blood flow, oxygen supply and nutrient delivery to the brain. They can also prevent or reduce inflammation, oxidative stress and toxins that can harm the brain. Encourage children to exercise regularly, play outdoors or join a sports club. As far as possible, try to maintain a balanced diet, with adequate hydration and quality sleep. Of course, it's also essential to limit non-productive screen time and junk food intake.

Hugo says teachers also have an important duty to develop neuroplasticity in children. This can be done through:

#### Active learning strategies

such as hands-on activities, interactive discussions and problem-solving games.

**Multi-sensory learning**, which includes plentiful visual aids, auditory learning and kinaesthetic activities that allow physical movement during learning.

**Mindfulness and stress reduction**, which includes practices that positively impact brain structure and function, promoting emotional regulation and reducing stress.

**The promotion of curiosity and exploration** by encouraging questioning and relating classroom lessons to real-life situations.

**Individualised learning** through differentiated instruction which recognises that each child learns differently, as well as feedback and adaptation that allow pupils to learn from mistakes.

**The incorporation of cognitive challenges** such as critical thinking exercises and the learning of new skills.





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**Mmakoto Letsoalo**

It's my daughter's second year with UCT Online High School. She is doing so well, don't regret taking that decision. It is really working for her.  
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Like Reply

**Raiz Lodewyks**

My daughter loves this concept and is doing very well with UCT Online High School.

Like Reply

**Desmaine Campbell**

My son started grade 10 this year and he is really thriving at UCT Online High School. I love the guardian app so parents can see exactly how their child is performing. Well Done.

Like Reply

**Adriaan Boshoff Jr.**

My son is very happy with UCT Online High School. He works independently during the day and we discuss challenges in the evenings. I like the weekly reports. This ensures we know immediately how much effort was put into his work and when he needs assistance/encouragement.

Like Reply

**Nontyatyambo Ntuli**

It's my daughter's second year with the school. We have never been so proud with her academic progress... From an average in the mainstream to be 1 of the top students with UCT Online High School system...

Like Reply



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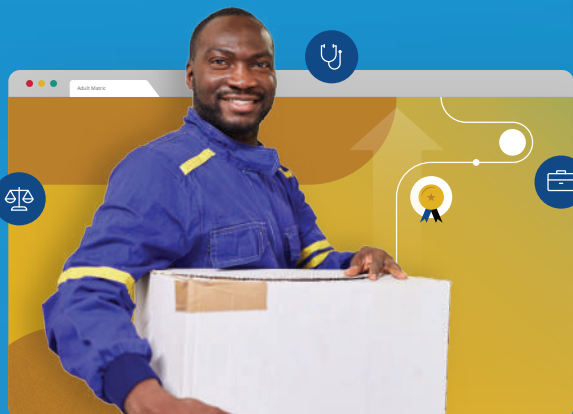


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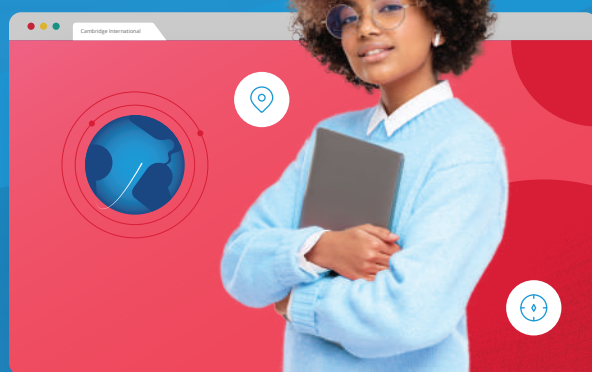
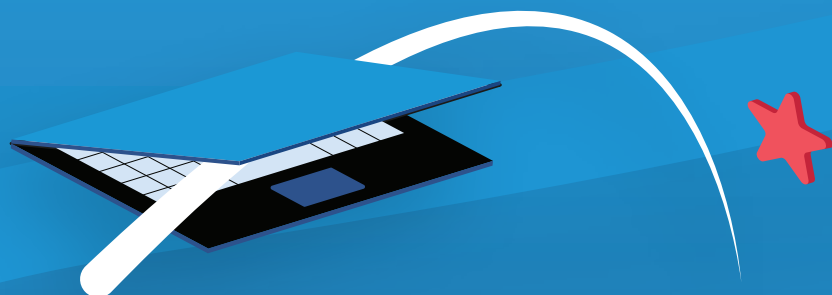
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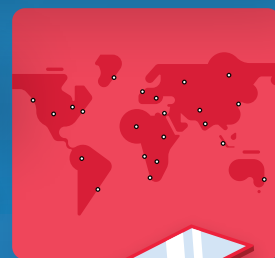
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# Ask Dalena



Dalena van der Westhuizen will answer any questions or concerns you may have about learning, concentration, memory and cognitive development – and, of course, the frustrations arising from these

**M**y 12-year old son will be starting homeschooling for the first time next year. What should his study environment at home look like? – *Debbie Els*

Hi Debbie

Here are four practical tips to create a productive study space:

- **Switch off your phone**

When working or studying, your phone can be the biggest source of distraction, affecting your focus and time management. So turn it off or switch it to airplane mode. Don't just leave it on silent mode, because you'll be tempted to keep looking at it whenever there's a new message or e-mail notice. Ultimately, it's best not to have your phone with you while you work or study.

- **Keep it simple**

Keep only the things you use daily within reach (no extras, only



what's really needed and used regularly). Store everything else away from your desk to limit distractions.

- **Keep your planning in sight**

Put up a visual calendar where you can write down important tasks, due dates for tasks/projects, etc. Knowing and actually seeing what's next make planning for it easier and reduces anxiety.

- **Put up a wall clock**

Before starting a task/studying, set a time for how long you plan

to be engaged in these tasks or decide what time you plan to finish, then use the clock to keep moving forward.

**How much should parents get involved in their children's education? I work full-time and struggle with feelings of guilt. My children's marks are good. – Daleen Barnard**

Hi Daleen

If your children are able to work (mostly) on their own and are doing well, you're doing something right, so forget the mom-guilt! Our end goal should





always be to help our children develop into independent studiers. It seems your children are at a stage where some guidance and assistance – as and when needed – are enough.

**My son's performing really well, but he spends a lot of time on his phone. Is there an impact of smartphone use on learning effectiveness? – Linda Knop**

Hi Linda

If your son's performing well, I wouldn't worry too much about the impact of his smartphone use on his current learning outcomes. The important thing, however, is finding a balance between screen time and other activities. Be sure to read more about this in the article *A Parent's Guide to Screen Time* inside this issue.



**My 11-year-old has absolutely no interest in schoolwork. How can I help him focus during school time? – Petrea Maass**

Hi Petrea

There may be a variety of reasons why your son has no interest in schoolwork. These may include having to sit still for periods that are too lengthy, finding it hard to keep up in the classroom, not understanding the work the first time round, struggling to break

down tasks, etc. To find a long-term solution to the problem and really get him focused during school time, it's important to dig deeper and find the cause of his disinterest. Start off the process with a simple (non-judgemental) conversation. Let him explain, in his own words, why schoolwork doesn't interest him. If that doesn't provide actionable information, consider getting professional assistance by means of a learning skills assessment.

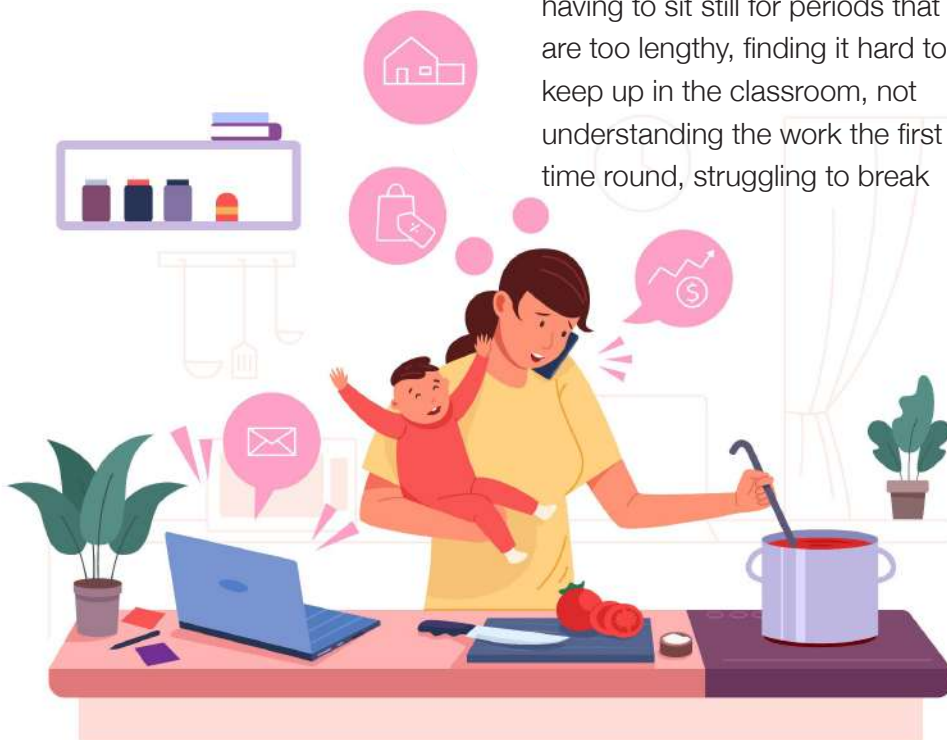
#### About Dalena

Dalena van der Westhuizen is the co-founder and MD of BrainAbility, a cognitive development specialist, a master brain coach and an internationally certified cognitive coach. She translates the latest international cognitive research and best practice into strategies that can be applied by parents and educators alike.

A mom and a self-confessed chocoholic, Dalena enjoys working with both kids and adults to improve the way their brains process information for better learning, reading and focusing.



Send your questions for Dalena to: [adri@isikhova.co.za](mailto:adri@isikhova.co.za).



### Pasta salad with basil pesto dressing

Preparation time: 20 mins

Cooking time: 10 mins

#### Ingredients:

500g farfalle pasta (pasta bows)  
1 red pepper, diced  
1 punnet cherry tomatoes, halved  
200g feta cheese, cubed  
175g sun-dried tomatoes (drained)  
3 sprigs spring onions, finely chopped  
1 small raw purple onion, finely diced  
125g (½ cup) basil pesto  
125ml (½ cup) mayonnaise

#### What else you will need:

A chopping board  
A knife  
A medium-sized pot

#### Method:

1. Cook the pasta in water for 8-10 mins, or until *al dente*. (You can add 5ml (1 tsp) of olive oil to the pot to prevent the pasta bows sticking together.) Leave to one side until cooled.
2. Add the rest of the ingredients and stir through.
3. Mix the basil pesto and mayonnaise together and stir through the salad.
4. Add salt and pepper to taste.

**Serving suggestion:**  
Serve with  
garlic bread.



# Fam





# Family-friendly 30-minute meals

Summer evenings call for delicious dishes – without having to spend hours in the kitchen. These 30-minute recipes will show you that good home-cooking needn't be difficult or time-consuming

## Chicken cous-cous salad

*Preparation time: 20 mins*

*Cooking time: 10 mins*

### Ingredients (for chicken and marinade):

- 1kg skinless chicken breasts, sliced into strips
- 75ml (¼ cup) olive oil
- 5ml (1 tsp) salt
- 5ml (1 tsp) ground cumin
- 2,5ml (½ tsp) ground coriander
- 2,5ml (½ tsp) ground turmeric
- 2,5ml (½ tsp) ground ginger
- 1ml (¼ tsp) ground cinnamon
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 10ml (2 tsp) paprika

### What else you will need:

- A medium-sized pan and spatula
- A knife
- A small mixing bowl
- A medium-sized salad bowl
- A cheese grater (for the lemon zest)

### Method:

1. Mix all the ingredients together.
2. Add the chicken and set aside for 10 minutes to marinate.

### Ingredients (for cous-cous):

- 1kg (4 cups) cous-cous
- 1L (4 cups) chicken stock (heated, but not to boiling point)
- 5ml (1 tsp) oil
- 30ml (2T) melted butter
- 1 raw purple onion, finely chopped
- 350g sun-dried tomatoes (drained and chopped)
- 200g feta cheese, cubed
- A handful fresh basil, chopped
- A handful pomegranate seeds (optional)

### Method:

1. Pour the cous-cous into a bowl.
2. Add the same volume of heated chicken stock.
3. Cover and allow to rest for 5 minutes until it has a soft consistency.



4. Stir with a fork to separate the grains.
5. Add salt, pepper, oil and butter.
6. Stir in the rest of the ingredients and set aside.
7. Heat the chicken in a medium-sized pan.
8. Add 10ml (2 tsp) olive oil and fry the chicken until cooked through.
9. Add the chicken to the cous-cous and stir gently.



## Quesedillas with mince and cheese

Preparation time: 20 mins

Cooking time: 10 mins

### Ingredients:

- 15ml (1T) olive oil
- 1 large onion, finely diced
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 500g minced beef
- 15ml (1T) oregano
- 100g (2 sachets) tomato paste



- Salt and pepper to taste
- Chopped parsley for garnishing
- 6 large tortillas
- 500g cheese
- Guacamole (2 ripe avocados mashed, with 15ml (1T) lemon juice added, plus salt and pepper to taste)
- Sour cream (optional)

### What else you will need:

- 1 medium frying fan
- 1 large frying pan
- A chopping board
- A knife
- A cheese grater

### Method:

#### For the mince:

1. Heat the oil in a medium pan.

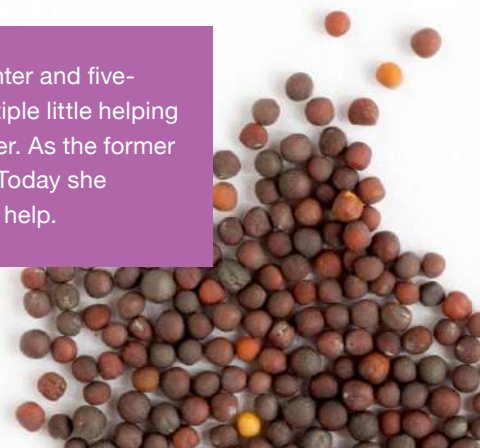
2. Add onions, garlic and mince and fry until brown.
3. Add the oregano and tomato paste and mix well.
4. Add 75ml (¼ cup) water and cook for 15 minutes.

#### For the tortillas:

1. Place one tortilla in a large frying pan. Cover with grated cheese.
2. Add bolognaise mixture on top of the cheese.
3. Add a little more cheese and top with the second tortilla.
4. Leave in the pan for approximately three minutes and flip over, so that both sides are golden-brown.
5. Cut into triangles and serve with sour cream and guacamole.



Anri Fourie, owner of two guesthouses and mom of a nine-year-old daughter and five-year-old triplets, cooks meals that are quick and easy to make – with multiple little helping hands. In the Fourie household, family time is a great time to cook together. As the former owner of a coffee shop, Anri used to share the kitchen with skilled chefs. Today she shares it with her four busy little offspring, who're all eager to pitch in and help.





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# Why it's worth giving pure maths your best shot

Every year, thousands of high school pupils in SA grapple with the difficult decision about whether to pursue maths as a subject or do maths literacy instead

**M**aths or maths literacy? It's a tough question, with real-life consequences; some immediate (in the form of improved marks and a less stringent workload), but also some which will impact one's options throughout one's life. It therefore needs to be considered very carefully and the decision should be made only after weighing up all considerations, says an education expert.

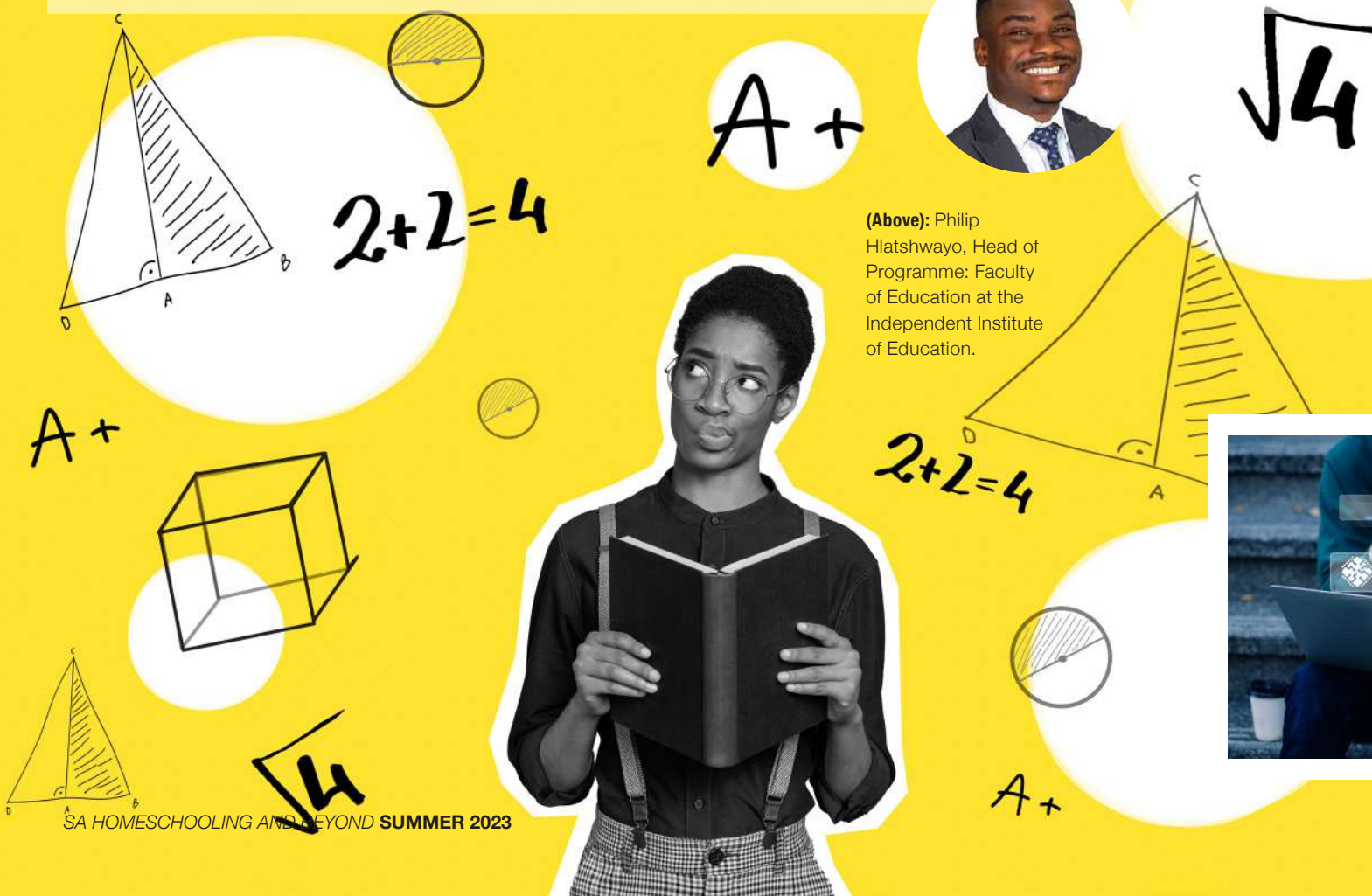
"South African students are increasingly opting for maths literacy without having thought through all the consequences," says Philip Hlatshwayo, Head of Programme: Faculty of

Education at the Independent Institute of Education, one of SA's leading private higher education providers.

"The general trend across schools is that pupils who perform poorly in maths are encouraged to drop it in favour of maths literacy. The obvious downside of this is that maths literacy doesn't provide access to many post-school study and career paths. Additionally, we're currently seeing a lot of critical thinking-based jobs emerging which increasingly require a set of skills that can only be developed through rigorous engagement



(Above): Philip Hlatshwayo, Head of Programme: Faculty of Education at the Independent Institute of Education.





with complexity. This means that in addition to currently closed doors, there'll also be more career options inaccessible in future to those who went the maths literacy route."

Opting for maths literacy is often the result of pupils struggling with maths, coupled with the belief that they won't need maths for the qualification they intend pursuing after school.

"Besides the career paths and knowledge engagement that come with studying maths, one of its greatest benefits is its ability to develop character. Beyond the technical, sticking with maths during challenging times builds tenacity and resilience," says Hlatshwayo.

"Working patiently on subject matter that fires up all your cognitive cylinders is a worthwhile undertaking. It isn't an easy subject, but the back-and-forth process of trying to solve maths problems builds the ability to see situations through multiple lenses and process information in diverse ways.

**"South African students are increasingly opting for maths literacy without having thought through all the consequences."**

"The essence of the exercises involved in the study of maths isn't only the answer you get after a procedural completion of an equation, but the process it takes for you to arrive at that answer.

Building an understanding of the process, the reasoning behind the choice of methods and why certain procedures don't work helps the mind to organise information, analyse problems and select the best solution to address them. As such, these skills have the ability to filter into other areas of an individual's life."



He says choosing between the two subjects shouldn't be about immediate convenience, but about the future implications of that decision.

"In trying times, instead of increasing their efforts, pupils often question the relevance maths will have for them in the long run. However, the skills derived from it aren't necessarily about quantifiable outcomes, but rather about the development of cognitive abilities and overcoming immediate, but temporary challenges. This is why, if at all possible, pupils should consider the benefits of pursuing the more complex route."

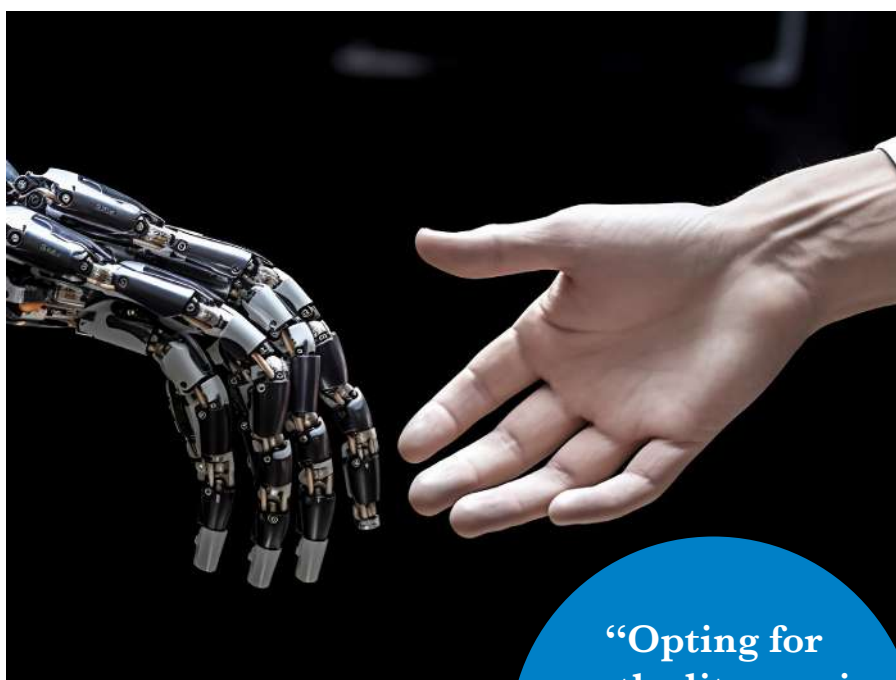
Hlatshwayo notes that instead of centering the school maths conversation on the potential skills it can develop, pupils, parents and teachers often make the mistake of stressing the secondary career implications of the subject choices.

"In an era when artificial intelligence [AI], for example, determines the transmission and management of information, we're obliged to develop an acute sense of mathematical knowledge to understand the manipulatives of AI and other technologies that make information fluid.

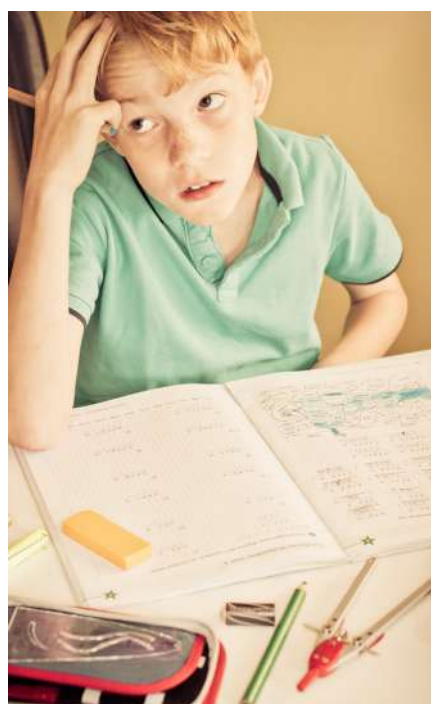
"School maths is the perfect place to build this capacity

and catch up with fast-moving technological advances and information management developments. The narrative about school maths needs to put mathematical skills at its centre. Pupils and teachers need to be reminded of the transcendental

powers of engagement with maths. Unlocking the possibilities of skills for cognitive development and enhancement is our best shot at securing a future for generations to come. Maths places us on that path," he says.



**"Opting for maths literacy is often the result of pupils struggling with maths."**







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# Who is Educ8 SA?

**A**s we have discussed previously, Educ8 SA is a leading online school that offers a range of educational programs from preschool to high school. Our curriculum is carefully designed to cater to the needs of homeschoolers, making it an ideal choice for those who are looking for quality, flexible, and affordable online schooling.

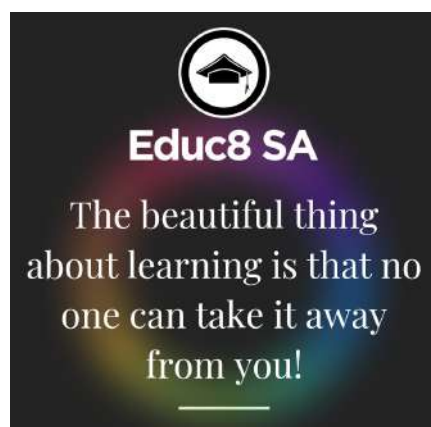
Our primary school levels cover preschool to grade 8, while our high school program offers the American High School Diploma for grades 9 to 12. Our online learning program is tailored to provide teaching excellence and a broad curriculum at an affordable price, ensuring that students receive the best possible education.

## What does a day in the life of a student look like?

At Educ8 SA, students have the freedom to start their day at any time, although we recommend starting early, around 8 am. A typical day includes 3 subjects, a break, 4 subjects, lunch, and 2 subjects. However, parents can choose to schedule the day as they see fit or follow our recommended calendar. Our online program consists of lessons that are 10 to 30 minutes

long, and the curriculum is well-structured and easy to navigate.

Our American High School Diploma program is designed to give students a competitive edge in the global job market. It offers Varsity subjects,



enabling students to start some university-level subjects in their second year. We also offer the GED curriculum, which is equivalent to a grade 12 Matric. Students can work at their own pace and schedule exams once they have completed the pre-

readiness testing. Exams are written at any Boston College closest to their location.

## Can you register anytime?

Yes, you can register with us anytime, and start your program at any time of the year. We offer a range of registration options, including contacting our office, emailing us to receive our informational pack, or signing up on our website. We also offer a 14-day free trial period to help students get started.

## What are the highlights of using Educ8 SA?

Our online educational programs are affordable, and flexible, and have been tried and tested by many students. Our curriculum covers grades from preschool to grade 12 and is of the highest quality. Our reviews speak for themselves, highlighting our excellent program and great service.

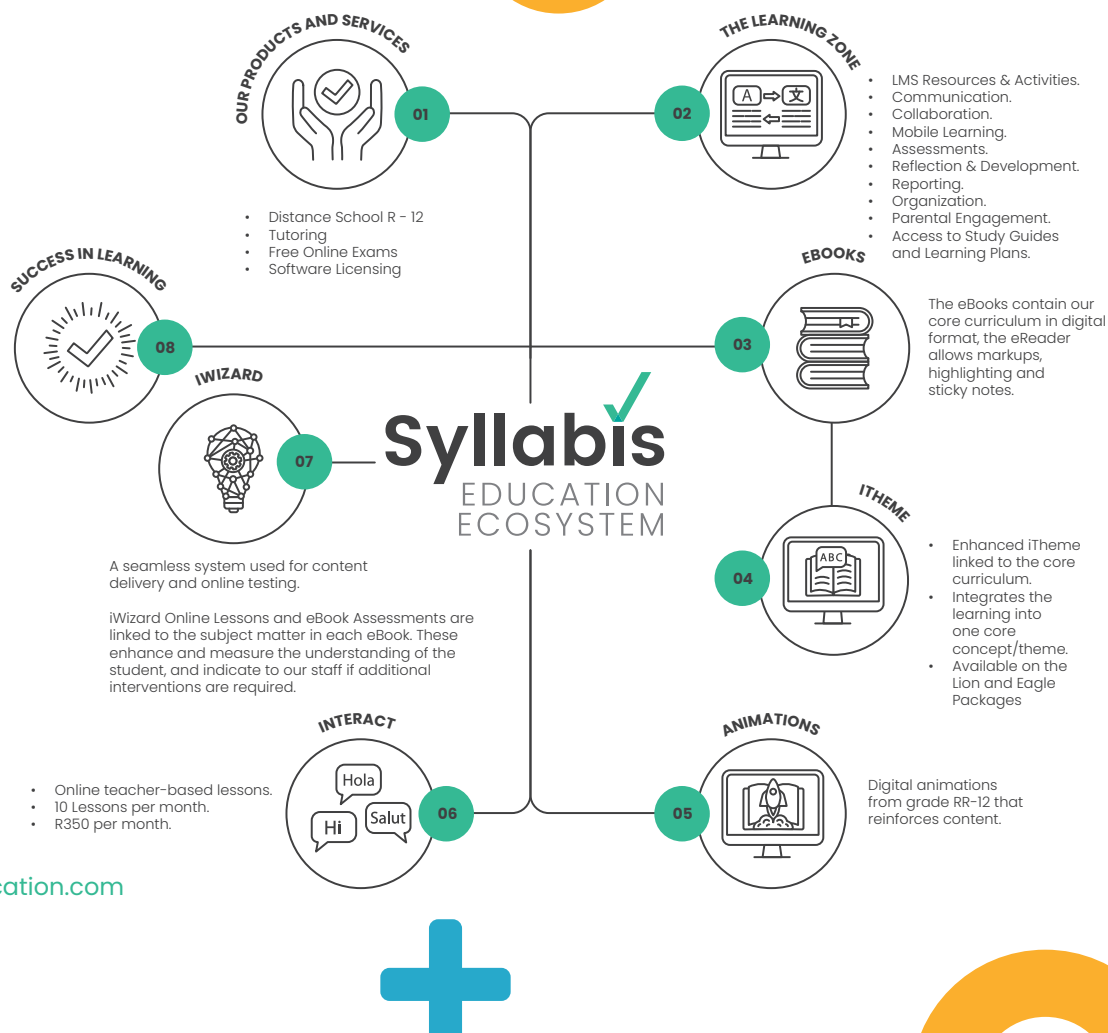
In a nutshell, Educ8 SA offers an affordable, quality curriculum that caters to the needs of homeschoolers.

You can find us on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. You can also call us on 084 685 2138, email us at [info@educ8sa.net](mailto:info@educ8sa.net), or visit our website at [www.educ8sa.com](http://www.educ8sa.com) to learn more about our programs, and get started on your educational journey with us.



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## CHAT TO US!

Your **feedback is essential** in helping us put together a magazine which delivers on-point content relevant to your homeschooling experiences and support needs and **helps you navigate** your child/children's education with ease and confidence.

You are the **core** of the publication, so let's live and learn together.

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**R**esearch has shown that the first 1 000 days of a child's life could hold the key to unlocking their lifelong potential. By age five, almost 90% of a child's brain is developed, making these formative years pivotal in shaping their future.

### South Africa's literacy

**statistics:** Like many nations, SA faces the challenge of ensuring quality early education for its youngest citizens. Shockingly, an international report reveals that 81% of Grade 4 pupils in the country can't read for meaning in any of the official languages. This stark statistic underscores the urgency of addressing early childhood development.

### The impact of quality early

**education:** Early childhood programmes that are sustained and of high quality can have

# Why early childhood care and education matter



In a world where investing in the future is paramount, no investment is more crucial than that in early childhood development, stresses Ursula Assis, Country Director at Dibber International Preschools

long-lasting impacts on children. These programmes prepare them for formal schooling and set them on the path to lifelong success.

### BENEFITS INCLUDE:

#### Improved academic

**performance:** Quality early education lays a solid academic foundation, allowing children to excel in reading, maths and language skills throughout their school years.

#### Enhanced social and emotional development:

These programmes focus on building crucial social and emotional skills, such as co-operation, communication and empathy, which are vital for positive relationships and emotional well-being.

#### Long-term educational

**achievement:** Children who receive quality early education







are more likely to graduate from high school and pursue higher education, leading to better career opportunities and economic stability.

**Reduced special education placements:** Early childhood education identifies and addresses developmental delays or learning difficulties early on, reducing the need for special education services later in a child's school years.

**Economic and social benefits:** Quality early childhood education programmes contribute to a more skilled and productive workforce, lowering crime

rates, decreasing reliance on social welfare programmes and benefiting society as a whole.

### Everyday moments are golden opportunities

There's great importance in tiny everyday moments that leave

Today  
is your  
day



lasting traces, influence relationships and shape culture, so we strive to make each moment "golden" by actively building trust with the children and nurturing their sense of self-worth.

Investing in early childhood development not only sets children on the path to success, but contributes to the overall well-being of society.

A warm and inclusive atmosphere fostering positive and supportive relationships is vital in early childhood development. Jack Shonkoff, Director of the Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard, highlights the importance of these relationships, which are the roots that allow all children to thrive. They need to feel valued, know how to form relationships and understand their role in a greater community and the world.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ursula Assis is the Country Director at Dibber International Preschools. "Our approach goes beyond traditional education. The Dibber Childhood places an emphasis not only on a child's learning achievements, but on their future health, happiness and growth. Through the Dibber Heart Culture and customised approaches to learning, children become keen explorers who love to learn and develop the competencies needed for everyday life. The emphasis is on developing all aspects of a child, from the cognitive and physical to the emotional and social," she says.

# Unlocking social potential: helping homeschool students develop holistically

(Right): Colin Northmore – Principal of Evolve Online School



**H**omeschooling offers numerous benefits, including personalised education, greater accessibility, safe environments, and flexibility, but concerns about social development persist among parents. Colin Northmore, Principal at Evolve Online School, suggests proactive steps to address this.

## Homeschooling Groups:

Local homeschooling groups or co-ops provide valuable opportunities for social interaction. Active Facebook groups like Homeschooling in South Africa facilitate family connections, organising events and activities for students to develop friendships and social skills. Parents can also look up the following social media groups: SA Home Schooling Group, Socializing Home schoolers South Africa, Homeschool South Africa, KZN Homeschooling and Cape Home Educators.

## Sports and

## Extracurricular Activities:

Enrolling homeschoolers in

sports, music, or art fosters social interaction, teamwork, and communication skills. Choosing activities aligned with the child's interests enhances motivation to connect with peers. "If they use an online curriculum, you must carefully manage screen time. Getting your children to participate in Green-Time, Team-Time, and Dream-Time is crucial to their health and directly impacts their academic performance."

## Playdates:

Organising playdates with neighbours and friends helps children develop creativity, imagination, and social skills. Play encourages curiosity, problem-solving, and the ability to function in groups.

## Community Involvement:

Volunteering in community events exposes children to diverse groups, teaching empathy and leadership skills. Engaging in local initiatives creates a supportive environment for homeschooled children.

## Local Events & Classes:

Exploring local events, workshops, and classes aligning with the child's interests enhances learning experiences and provides opportunities to interact with other kids.

## Open Communication:

Encourage open communication with your child about their social experiences. Actively listening and offering guidance helps them navigate social situations and build self-confidence.

Building social skills in home-schooled students is essential for their complete development, concludes Northmore.

"As a homeschooling parent, you can provide your child with a rich social life by leveraging local resources, online communities, and extracurricular activities. Through these strategies and your support, your child can thrive academically and socially, forming meaningful connections with their peers while benefiting from the advantages of homeschooling."



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# Joining UCT Online High Schools' Leadership Squad

The UCT Online High School (UCT OHS) Leadership Squad is a select group of matric pupils whose role is to model behaviour, represent the online school to other pupils, run events, portfolios and virtual clubs. Three of them share their experiences

*Lethabo Mogakane (17) has been enrolled at UCT OHS for almost two years now.*

## Why did you apply to be part of the Leadership Squad?

I wanted to help create a safe space for pupils at UCT OHS because I know how lonely it can be. I wanted pupils to realise that there's a community ready to meet them and create wonderful moments. I also joined to be an intermediary between the school and the pupils, to help address some of the challenges and concerns that we/they have regarding the school system.

## What's expected of you as a member of the Leadership Squad?

We're expected to help with guidance regarding career



choices outside of school decisions, to help build a community among the pupils and to help create a sense of unity for marginalised individuals, but most importantly, to speak up for pupils who aren't confident about expressing themselves and being a voice for the voiceless.

## What events does the Leadership Squad run?

We run the school virtual clubs, the school assembly, welcome events for school grades and the learnership squad-led meeting with students.

*Nils van der Merwe (17) is currently in his second year at UCT OHS.*

## Why do you think it's important to have this type of leadership initiative at UCT OHS?

There's a quote from American novelist Jennifer Lynn Barnes:

**"I wanted pupils to realise that there's a community ready to meet them and create wonderful moments."**

**"Without order, there is chaos."**  
I believe that if there's authority and guidelines, it puts a constructive structure in place in the





learning environment. I really like the idea of pupils led by pupils, as I came from a traditional private school where prefects weren't a "thing" and the learning environment wasn't very positive or engaging. I feel that there's better accountability when pupils take action to lead and help each other.

### **How does UCT OHS equip you to be a leader overall?**

We all lead by example. As UCT OHS, we're all part of our respective leadership "squads" per grade headed by our Squad Champions. They facilitate a professional and organised platform for us leaders to engage with each other in order to improve our communication, critical thinking skills, assertiveness and teamwork.

### **Is being part of the Leadership Squad something you'd recommend to other pupils?**

Yes, I'd recommend it. Some people are born to be leaders and the Leadership Squad is a great space for them to learn and express their abilities as leaders in a safe, inclusive and supportive environment, where peers work towards the same goals and a brighter future for all.

*Kamogelo Matlhogonolo Pule (17) has been a pupil at UCT OHS for nearly two years.*

### **Why did you apply to be part of the Leadership Squad?**

I wanted to use my leadership skills to guide and support fellow pupils, because we're all still finding our steps. In an evolving space such as the online world, it's easy for them to lose themselves in society's definition of "what makes a good scholar". Sometimes a pupil and productivity aren't best friends – and that's OK. I wanted to be part of a platform where I could voice the reality of online students and build a space where pupils are able to relate, feel heard and

be inspired to grow. The aim isn't to filter out imperfections or challenges, but to use those as stepping stools towards the next big win, improving as they go.

### **What's expected of you as a member of UCT OHS?**

Leading with responsibility, accountability and honesty are key expectations. They play a significant role in shaping a good leader and creating a healthy leadership team. By aligning with those expectations, we set a good example to fellow pupils and the many Leadership Squad members coming after us. Above all, we're expected to be ourselves. We're a combination of different personalities, so we all bring something different, yet equally valuable to the table, which allows for a creative and innovative flow of ideas.

### **Is being a part of the Leadership Squad something you'd recommend to other pupils?**

Definitely. I believe this role enables one to grow emotionally, mentally and academically. It also creates a safe space for growth with other individuals, which is something many pupils need right now, especially in the online space.

**"I really like the idea of pupils led by pupils."**

**"Leading with responsibility, accountability and honesty are key expectations."**



**For more information, visit [www.uctonlinehighschool.com](http://www.uctonlinehighschool.com)**

The magic of family-friendly movies lies in their ability to bring everyone together, irrespective of age, to share moments of joy, laughter and valuable life lessons.

However, finding a film that satisfies every age group represented on the couch is no easy task.

To make it easier, we've rounded up our top 13 movies that families will love watching together.

- 1 Matilda (1996)**  
A girl gifted with a keen intellect and psychic powers uses both to deal with her crude, distant family and free her kind teacher from a sadistic headmistress.



# 13 films to watch on family movie night

**2 The Goonies (1985)**

A group of young misfits called the Goonies discover an ancient map and set out on an adventure to find a legendary pirate's long-lost treasure.



We may all be trying to cut back on screen time, but there's one screen-based activity that bears protecting: family movie night

**3 Bridge to Terabithia (2007)**

A modern fantasy adventure that views imagination through the eyes of children and deals with real-life issues to which everyone can relate.



**4 Good Burger (1997)**

A dim-witted teenager and his new co-worker try to save the old burger joint they work for from failing after the opening of a new burger restaurant across the street.

**5 Simon Birch (1998)**

Even though Simon Birch is the smallest kid in town, deep down he knows that he was born to do something big.





**6 Free Willy (1993)** A 12-year-old street kid and a three-ton killer whale form a magical friendship they could never imagine and embark on an adventure they'll never forget.



**11 The BFG (2016)** The talents of three of the world's greatest storytellers – Roald Dahl, Walt Disney and Steven Spielberg – unite to bring Dahl's beloved classic about a young girl and the giant who introduces her to the wonders and perils of Giant Country to life.



**12 Doctor Dolittle (1998)** John Dolittle seems to have the world by the tail, until a long-suppressed talent he possessed as a child, the ability to communicate with animals, is suddenly reawakened with a vengeance.



**8 ET The Extra-Terrestrial (1982)** This is a story about friendship, loyalty, and family. However, most of all, it is about how powerful love is.

**13 Fly Away Home (1996)** The story of a 13-year-old girl who solos in an ultralight aircraft to lead a flight of pet geese from Canada to the American south.

**7 Cool Runnings (1993)** When a Jamaican sprinter is disqualified from the Olympic Games, he enlists the help of a dishonoured coach to start the first Jamaican bobsled team.

**9 The Parent Trap (1998)** The story of identical twin sisters, separated at birth and unaware of each other's existence, who coincidentally meet at summer camp and devise a scheme to reunite their parents.



**10 Casper (1995)** Casper is a kind young ghost who peacefully haunts a mansion in Maine when specialist James Harvey arrives to communicate with him and his fellow spirits.



All images courtesy of IMDb



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2023 DRAWING  
COMPETITION

**EXTENDED!**

Good news homeschoolers!  
We have decided to extend the  
entry deadline for our Drawing  
Competition until after the holidays.

**Theme: Why I love  
South Africa**

**5-8 years, 9-12 years,  
13-17 years and 18-21 years**

Entries must be e-mailed to:  
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Title of drawing**

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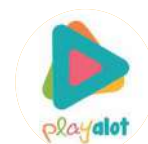
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