

SA must get kids reading for Tata - NECT

The National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) has called on parents and children from all walks of life to read together in honour of Mandela.

On Saturday, 18 July NECT volunteers, Limpopo Department of Education and the Mookgophong Local Municipality visited Dikubu Primary School in Mookgophong and spent the day reading.

"The NECT has partnered with the Department of Basic Education in an initiative aimed at promoting the culture of reading. Effective reading is key to children's achievement in school and meaningful participation in the economy later in their lives. We encourage the private sector, parents and communities to provide additional books in schools, community libraries and households in order to improve reading nationally," Sizwe Nxasana, Chairman of the NECT said.

SA lacks a culture of reading

It is generally acknowledged that South Africa lacks a culture of reading, with fewer than 5% of South African citizens being effective readers compared to over 60% in countries such as Russia.

More adult South Africans need to take up reading for knowledge and enjoyment and this culture should be inculcated in our children from an early age, says the NECT. The aim of the reading event this Mandela Day was to showcase the importance of a culture of reading as a critical aspect of

learning.

In fact, according to Shelley O'Carroll, Director of Wordworks, "Oral language skills are critical for learning to read and write and it follows that children who enter school with poor oral language are at risk of not achieving academic milestones."

"Reading with children from a young age helps to build a solid language foundation that is so important for academic learning. Research has shown that it is not only the text in a book that is important."

"Parents and caregivers should spend time talking about a book with children before, during and after reading", says Shelley.

By inviting parents and members of the community to take part in, or simply attend their event, they hoped to demonstrate the power and importance of reading and the role it plays in the education and development of youngsters and the ways in which it can enrich the lives of parents as well.

Parents and community members play a crucial role in inculcating the culture of reading in children, says the organisation.

Godwin Khosa, CEO of the NECT, remarked that: "We ask all South Africans to make the time to pick up a book and read, sharing stories with youngsters."

"It is only when everyone does their part that we will be able to look back in 25 years and call ourselves a nation of readers; empowered by the written word."