

Lavender Hill Grade 1s celebrate International Literacy Day with Coronation at the Norval Foundation

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In celebration of International Literacy Day today, Coronation and its literacy education partner Living Through Learning hosted over 60 Grade 1 students from Hillwood Primary in Lavender Hill at the Norval Foundation, where they experienced the joy of books, art and nature in richly stimulating surroundings.



Love of literacy: This International Day of Literacy, the Grade 1 class of Hillwood Primary in Lavender Hill was treated to a special day of book reading, arts explorations and sculpture garden walks at the Norval Foundation in Steenberg. The day was hosted by Coronation CEO Anton Pillay and Coronation's literacy partner Living Through Learning, because of their long-term commitment to uplifting early childhood education in South Africa. The country has a decade of catching up to do in terms of its childhood literacy efforts, considering that the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) of 2023 found that only 19% of South African children could read for meaning in any of the 11 official languages by Grade 4, which is considered a vital foundation for all children's future academic success. Picture credit: Jurie Senekal

The children and their teachers were treated to an interactive guided tour of the Norval Foundation art museum, which is currently showing a Maggie Laubser exhibition, and were guided through the foundation's beautiful sculpture garden. This was followed by an interactive reading session of the book "How Vincent a Western Leopard Toad Found His Croak", an activity that was inspired by the art seen on the guided tour, in the Norval Foundation Learning Centre. Each child received a "Making Art History" book, pencil cases and pencils, and an eco-bag to take home.

Coronation CEO Anton Pillay and CFO Mary-Anne Musekiwa accompanies the children on their art and literature tour.

"We hosted the Grade 1s from Lavender Hill today because of our long-standing commitment to early childhood education and because we wanted to show the children a world of possibility through literacy and art today as we celebrate International Literacy Day. There is a pressing need to address the significant deficits in primary school literacy in South Africa, which is why reading is a central aspect of Coronation's CSI programmes, and why we have been supporting literacy initiatives in underserved local schools for more than a decade," says Pillay.

Childhood literacy is burning issue in South Africa. As [literacy](#), [youth unemployment](#) and [school dropout](#) rates rise, in the current recessionary economic climate, Coronation considers it more important than ever to investment in disadvantaged

children's long-term education – including their literacy, numeracy and [arts](#) educations, says Pillay.

South Africa has some significant catching up to do in terms of its childhood literacy efforts, according to the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) of [2023](#), the definitive international childhood literacy study. PIRLS found that only 19% of South African Grade 4 children (in 2021) could read for meaning in any of the 11 official languages. SA essentially lost a decade of progress in reading for meaning due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This corroborates other recent research that primary school children in non-fee schools learnt 50%–75% less in 2020 than normal – in fact, Grade 4 learners in 2020 learnt a quarter of what their peers learnt in 2019.

“It is for this reason that Coronation actively engages in various literacy-focused events throughout the year, directly benefiting disadvantaged children. These events are strategically designed to provide opportunities for young learners to enhance their reading skills and ignite their passion for learning,” says Pillay. Living Through Learning, a registered NPO operating in the education sector, complements Coronation's literacy mission, by ensuring that thousands of learners, educators, and parents are well-supported on their educational journey every year.

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