Neuronauts has been continuing to grow over the last months, with many new members joining us through school newsletters. Welcome to all our new members! We currently have many studies your kids could take part in, so check our listings. Below we would like to share with you the results of recent studies that our members helped to make possible.

**The relationship between reading and coping with difficulties**

As part of the holiday research program held in October 2013, Nic Badcock, Mark Boyes, and Bree Tebbutt investigated the relationship between reading and coping with difficulties. We asked children to complete a questionnaire related to the strategies they use when faced with difficulties, especially related to schoolwork.

Children with poorer reading skills reported more worries and avoidant strategies than children with better reading skills. For example, when faced with difficulties with their schoolwork, poorer readers were more likely to report doing nothing or wishing that the problem had never happened. They also reported more emotional reactions such as worries and somatic symptoms like headaches and stomach pains.

These results are preliminary and we are following them up currently in a joint project with Mark Boyes, Suze Leitao, and Mary Claesson from Curtin University in Western Australia as well as Mandy Nayton from the Dyslexia-SPELD Foundation in Western Australia.

Nic and his team would like to thank all of the children who were involved with the research as well as their parents.

**The Reading Fluency Training project**

The Reading Fluency Training project aims to improve the treatment of poor text-reading fluency.

In our first study as part of this project, we investigated if making children aware of syllables would accelerate their reading fluency progress. Children received our computerised training program ‘Text-highlighter’ at home with their parents. The training consisted of 20 sessions of 15-20 minutes over 4 weeks. One group of children were made aware of the syllabic structure of words by dynamically highlighting syllables in texts (“syllable training”). The children were encouraged to read along with the speed of highlighting, which was increased as they practiced. A second group of children received “letter training”. Both syllable and letter training improved the children’s:

(1) reading fluency (average increase of 6 months in reading level within 3 months of training),

(2) regular and irregular word reading accuracy and speed and

(3) rapid naming of letters.

So we succeeded in increasing reading fluency for poor readers, but this success depended on simple external encouragement to read faster, rather than increased awareness of the syllabic structure of words.

We are currently in the process of implementing the Reading Fluency Training program in the Macquarie Cognition Clinic for Reading. In addition, we are looking into options to convert the training program into a web-based application.

Thank you to everyone who took part in this research!

*Eva Marinus, Huachen Wang, Saskia Kohnen & Genevieve McArthur*