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The West Australian

Leap of faith helps retrain boy's brain



Bethany Hiatt Education Editor

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Marcus Broad with mother Krystyna. Picture: Steve Ferrier/The West Australian

Two years ago, Ardross teenager Marcus Broad felt humiliated when his school said he should switch to an easier curriculum because he was struggling academically.

TRENDING

Marcus, 17, who returned from Vancouver last month and is studying digital animation at TAFE, said the program made a "massive difference" to his ability to read and write confidently.

"I just felt this work was like no other work I'd ever done before," he said. About 30 other Australian students attended the school while he was there.

Founded by Canadian Barbara Arrowsmith-Young, the program is designed for children of average intelligence who have difficulty with sequencing, understanding relationships between concepts or remembering words or symbols. It uses specific cognitive exercises.

Author of the book *The Woman who Changed Her Brain*, Ms Arrowsmith-Young created the program based on her experiences of overcoming her own severe learning disabilities.

More than 40 schools offer the program in Canada and the US, with another 15 working towards accreditation, including some in Australia and New Zealand.

Mrs Broad said Marcus was diagnosed with severe global language impairment when he was eight and changed schools four times in the quest to find help.

The move to Canada had been hard on her family and financially draining but worth it to see the changes in her son. "I didn't want to leave Marcus with no hope for the future," she said. "Now this is the happiest he's ever been."

An Arrowsmith spokeswoman said the organisation would be interested to talk to any WA school interested in offering the program. Ms Arrowsmith-Young will speak at the University of WA on Thursday night.

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