



Dear Parents,

FROM THE HEADMASTER

As you are aware, our St Peter's community has undertaken to be at the forefront of a South African initiative to understand our diversity, not only as a school community, but also as citizens of our country. To this end, the "Year of the Woman" initiatives continue, as do our "My Story" evenings. I thought that I would use this edition of the Keyhole to share another initiative that is taking place within our staffroom.

At the end of 2016, members of staff were given a book by Stanley Bongwe entitled "100 lessons in DIVERSITY." (2010. Johannesburg: *The Diversity Institute*). As part of our staff development, we have selected chapters of the book, which will be read and then discussed in terms of their impact on our classroom and the broader school environment. Each chapter of the book is only about two pages in length and the topics that are dealt with range from "A Few Tons of Baggage" to "Linguistic Diversity and Language Wars." The philosophy behind the development sessions is that practical examples are often the best way to stimulate open discussion and provide a context for creative thinking. In this, it is not unlike the "My Story" initiative, which has proved to be very effective for those who have attended the evenings.

St Peter's Boys Prep School sees the development of character as being as important as academics, sport and cultural activities. The boys are growing up in an uncertain world, with very few of the clearly demarcated boundaries to guide their choices which we took for granted in the past. Thus, the intentional development of an intrinsic set of values and morals has become an essential task of both the parent and the school. You may find it valuable to get hold of a copy of Stanley Bongwe's book or a similar resource and use it to intentionally create conversation within your home. The need for specific and targeted parenting in terms of character development is possibly more important nowadays than ever before due to the demise of the extended family and the culture of individuality and consumerism. I encourage all members of our community to take up the challenge.

As the well-known slogan says: "Life's a journey," enjoy traveling with your children.

Enjoy the long weekend.

Rob Macaulay

FROM THE JUNIOR PREP

YOUR KIDS BORED AT SCHOOL?

I read an article this week in the Washington Post, which created much food for thought and reflection. Although geared towards more senior pupils, the message needs to be instilled from a young age to ensure our children reach their true potential.

By Laura Hanby Hudgens: *Special to The Washington Post*

Any discussion about the problems in American education – and what is to blame for these problems – will likely include one or all of the usual suspects: inadequate and unequal funding, a lack of resources, underpaid and overworked teachers, over-testing, poverty and heavy-handed legislation.

As a teacher and the mother of four public-school-educated children, I can tell you that all of these things have negatively impacted our schools. All of these things are problems.

But there is another problem, one that is plaguing many of America's classrooms and jeopardizing the future of our children, yet it is rarely addressed – at least not as it should be. That problem is apathy. In classrooms all over the country, the teacher cares more about her students' grades, learning and futures, than they do.

Teachers are expected to combat apathy by continually finding new and innovative ways to reach students – through multimedia lessons, group work, games, alternative assessments or whatever it takes. To ensure student engagement and skill acquisition, we must teach to the individual learning styles, interests and abilities of each of our students. If a student can't learn the way we teach, we must teach the way he learns – times infinity.

Sadly, all attempts to dazzle and awe eventually wear some teachers down. They burn out. They leave a profession they are good at and once felt called to. However, the loss of good teachers isn't even the worst effect of the be-all-things-to-all-people mentality. The real danger is that this way of thinking has shifted the responsibility of learning, and of caring about learning, from the student to the teacher. Because it isn't just administrators and parents who believe that it is a teacher's job to make learning fun. Kids believe it too.

As a result we have a generation of students who think that if a lesson or an assignment or a class is not interesting, if it isn't engaging and fun and inspiring, then it simply isn't worth caring about. They are not obligated to care about it. It's a teacher's job to make all learning exciting. If the teacher hasn't lived up to her responsibility, why should the child?

In a workshop I recently attended, teachers were told that kids are so attracted to video games because of the constant feedback – the progress, praise and prizes. We were encouraged to design our instruction more like a video game. How else can we expect to hold their attention?

That is a frightening mentality because it has created a generation of consumer learners. Many students don't see education as a privilege. They see it as a product. And if they don't like the salesperson, if they aren't impressed with how it's packaged, they aren't buying.

But our kids have to learn to be self-motivated because at some point in every person's life, either at school or in a job or in a marriage, he or she will have to buck up and say "This is hard. This is boring. I don't want to do this. But I'm doing it anyway. And I'll do my best."

So how do parents and educators teach kids to be self-motivated? There are no easy answers. But there are two things that need to happen. First, we have to change the national conversation about education. This doesn't mean that educators should stop trying to improve instruction, but it does mean that there have to be more conversations about the role students play in ensuring their own learning. Teachers, parents, administrators and, of course, the students have to start making self-motivation an educational focus and priority. Self-motivation should be the new educational buzzword – every bit as prevalent and powerful as any we've seen shape our classrooms in the last few decades.

In the meantime, teachers and parents need practical strategies for encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning. That is the second thing that has to happen. On a basic level we need to help our kids develop habits and discipline that will lead to academic success.

Unfortunately in a consumer-orientated educational system, words such as habit and discipline have all but gone by the wayside. We emphasize concepts like differentiation, higher-order thinking, cooperative learning and data-driven instruction over student responsibilities like organisation, perseverance and hard work.

The good news (at least for kids) is that the best hope for developing any habit is to start small – especially when good habits need to replace bad ones.

I've used the start-small strategy with my kids. Maybe it's because he's the baby of the family, but I have somehow let 12 years go by without helping my youngest son develop good habits when it comes to keeping his room clean and taking care of his things. Now his room is a disaster. The solution isn't to insist he do one massive overhaul. If I do that, I am likely to walk into a seemingly spotless room only to discover 400 baseball cards, half his spring wardrobe and last year's Halloween candy stashed under his bed. Instead, I am encouraging him to take one thing at a time and do it little by little. Twenty minutes a day. First the closet. Then the drawers. Then under the bed. This keeps him from becoming overwhelmed and frustrated and allows him to experience several small successes. When the job is done, not only will he have a clean room, but he will have learned that perseverance pays off.

This is the same approach I take with my students who struggle with apathy. I encourage them to start small, to start with one class and to give 100 percent in that class. I talk to them about specific strategies: Sit in the front. Take notes. Ask questions. Be organised. Do all the work. Find a study partner. It might be difficult for a struggling student to take on that kind of responsibility seven periods a day, but often students are willing to commit to 100 percent in one class.

And when students experience hard-won success in one class, they will be empowered by that success and likely apply that newly learned work ethic to other classes and pursuits. Success breeds success, and success is an excellent motivator.

Not only does success motivate, but it can also inspire, and here is where we move from sheer determination to passion – the true goal of education. No matter how innovative the instruction, it's unlikely that a student will grow to love a class if he is just getting by. But the kid who started out just trudging through history might find that he has a passion for it once he applies himself. A student who once wrote half-hearted essays might find her talent and her voice when she begins to take writing seriously.

The fact is that it's rare (except in the movies) that even the most brilliant teacher can motivate an apathetic student to embrace a lifetime of learning. On a really good day, we can spark a child's interest in the lesson. But in the long term, the desire to learn and improve has to come from within.

The world isn't a video game. It doesn't always offer fun and exciting paths through the mazes of life. So unless we change the way we approach education to include an emphasis on student responsibility, and unless we give our students the basic tools they need to accept that responsibility, we really haven't taught them much at all.

Laura Hanby Hudgens is a part-time high school teacher, a freelance writer and a mom of four. She lives with her husband and children on a buffalo farm in the Ozark Hills.

LUNCH BOXES!

At prayers on Thursday I reminded the boys that the lunch box they bring to school needs to contain healthy food choices. A small treat is only allowed on a Friday. Please could parents assist in this matter.

They may not share lunches with each other unless the teacher asks them to do so because a child forgot his lunch at home.

I also explained the importance of a healthy lunch mid-morning and how this fuels their bodies and brains to work optimally.

SCHOOL SPORT

The Grade 1 and 2 cricket lessons during class have come to an end. The boys will now be learning the basic skills of basketball. After the long weekend our boys will no longer be swimming during the school morning.

BOOK WEEK 3-7 APRIL

The theme for Book Week this year is **The Wizard of Oz**. This choice was inspired by Year of the Woman and I would like to encourage parents to watch the following TED Talk; "How movies teach manhood/ Colin Stokes <https://youtu.be/ueOqYebVhto>

The boys will be asked to dress up as a character from The Wizard of Oz or a Rainbow on **Friday, 7 April**.

More details about Book Week will be sent after the long weekend.

GOLDEN MOMENT

I had my granddaughter at school and a boy was very excited that Mrs Melvill-Smith's granddaughter was a baby – a real baby!

Enjoy the long weekend!

Warm regards,

Kenda Melvill-Smith

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Monday 20 March School closed
Tuesday 21 March Public Holiday – Human Rights Day
Wednesday 22 March 7:30 Back to school 8:00 Chapel (birthday cards 20-26 March) 12:00-12:20 Grade 2 Choir OR 13:00-13:30 Grade 2 Choir
Thursday 23 March
Friday 24 March 19:00 Staff Variety Show: Dodson Hall
Saturday 25 March 19:00 Staff Variety Show: Dodson Hall

STAFF VARIETY SHOW

CHAPEL COLLECTION

Our Chapel collection this term supports the Friends of Free Wildlife. Their vision is to rehabilitate and release indigenous wildlife back into their natural habitat, whilst maintaining the highest ethical standards and furthering conservation by playing a role in the education of wildlife professionals, volunteers, school pupils and members of the public.

DIVERSITY - YEAR OF THE WOMAN

During our chapel service we commemorated **International Women's Day**, 8 March 2017.

There were *two* facts that we focused on which I found interesting and relevant. The *first* is that it will still take 176 years for there to be no discrimination against women in the workplace. The *second* is that 130 million girls are denied an education because of their gender. These facts are disturbing, but also remind us that we need to appreciate women more for who they are in society and, more especially, the roles they play in our lives. Our challenge is for the boys and girls to show their gratitude to at least two women in their lives and for them to understand their worth or value in their lives.

May God bless all the women who enrich our lives.

Father Richard (Chaplain)

PALM SUNDAY INVITATION

Palm Sunday is the day on which we commemorate and celebrate the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, prior to His crucifixion. Crowds of people welcomed Him by waving palm fronds and laying them on the ground before Him, in His honour. In the Anglican Church, we distribute palm crosses on Palm Sunday, to celebrate the day. We, as St Peter's Prep Schools, will be celebrating Palm Sunday and teaching the children the significance of the palm crosses.

We invite anyone who would like to learn how to make palm crosses, and those who already know how to make them, to help us make them on Friday, 31 March from 11:00.

Kamohelo Kotsi (Assistant Chaplain)

