



ST PETER'S BOYS PREP SCHOOL

SERVING THE FAITH FOR 70 YEARS

THROUGH THE KEYHOLE #957

DATE: 16 July 2020 SENIOR PREP



FROM THE HEADMASTER

While a number of schools have been forced to close in the past week, we have been fortunate that our staffing and cohort structures have allowed us to remain open in the main, with only a small group of boys and teachers being affected when self-quarantining measures have been required. We have maintained a hybrid system that allows boys who are at home to continue to learn online and to ensure that none of their core skills acquisition has been affected.

Justin Attlee is a Housemaster and Grade 4 teacher who has a special interest in the development of grit and character in our boys. He recently completed his B Ed Honours in this field and took time to reflect on the learning opportunities that have been afforded by these unusual times in which we are living at present.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), there are ten core life skills. These are; self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision making, problem solving, interpersonal relationships, effective communication, coping with stress and coping with emotions. The time the children have spent learning at home, working through the St Peter's curriculum, has served to strengthen most of these characteristics.

Without extra-murals in the afternoon and with Fridays being catch up days, the boys have more time to think and reflect. Education's standardised systems, over time, have not considered the importance of reflection sufficiently. Teachers have been under pressure to complete curriculums and as a result do not give students the time or opportunities, nor have they taught them the skills, to actively reflect and gain personalised meaning from their work or their behaviours shown during a week. Reflection plays a vital role in developing self-awareness and without it, meaningful and long-lasting learning is left to chance.

Time management and organisation are essential skills in order for children to negotiate and cope in stressful environments. Learning from home can be difficult and requires specific skills. It takes self-motivation and discipline in order to work effectively when there are no strict timetables in place. Boys crave structure and search for it at every opportunity. By providing guided time tables, Zoom meeting times and tick lists with work to complete for each day, boys were able to create a sense of structure for themselves. Feeling safe and secure helped them to deal with their emotions more effectively and by doing this they were able to learn successfully.

Parent involvement in the learning process is a strong motivator for children. It shows the child that you are taking an active role and interest in what they are learning, which strengthens their purpose to produce their best. Another advantage of parent involvement is that when a child fails to reach their goal or expectation, parents are able to model the correct behaviour or react to the disappointment.

Working through these unprecedented times has helped equip our boys with skills, habits and behaviours they otherwise might never have developed at this stage of their lives. Going forward, these skills will help them to adapt and cope in changing circumstances, adapt to new classes at the beginning of a year, acclimatise to new high schools, be ready for a possible new business norm of working from home and most importantly to make good moral decisions under pressure.

The flexibility of our programme, coupled by the self-discipline and community consciousness exhibited by all of us will continue to work together to ensure that, while things are changing constantly, we will remain flexible and able to come out of the pandemic with new and enhanced learning structures. While there is certainly fear, inconvenience and a loss

of so much that we used to regard as natural and normal, there are also huge learnings and development that will make our boys stronger and better equipped adults as we come out of the pandemic and into the future.

Stay safe.

Rob Macaulay

FROM THE RECTOR

St Peter's – the Difference ...

Part 4

Last week I began dealing with the four elements that schools had at their disposal to educate children. Only Curriculum was covered. Methodology, Staff and Environment follow in this part.

1. Methodology

By methodology, I mean methods used to transfer knowledge to children or adults. Methodologies have developed and been created in response to developments in human psychology and neuroscience. There are consequently hundreds of named methodologies but it is interesting that those most in line with current research bear much in common with Aristotle's methods.

Many schools espouse a particular type, including the flipped classroom, blended learning, enquiry-based learning, Kip McGrath, Accelerated Christian Education, Montessori, Singapore Maths, Master Maths, Kumon, amongst others.

St Peter's is not wedded to one, single method. It recognises that each child is unique and learns differently. As such, our approach is non-sectarian and we use a variety of the best possible methods that we can find.

We believe that although children arrive with different levels of aptitude, they all have equal potential and no matter how any individual struggles, we continue to hold the belief that with more effort and different techniques, he/she has the potential to achieve alongside his/her peers. Thus, rather than give a child 56% for Maths and move on to the next concept, we would prefer that we say that the child hasn't grasped it **yet** and should continue to grapple until the concept has been mastered.

Our goal is to *personalise learning* as far as we are able for each individual pupil.

2. Staff

We've discovered that St Peter's often takes longer to appoint staff than our competitors. In the last decade, it has become commonplace to advertise three times for a post until we find the person we want. We think the reasons are as follows:

- 2.1. We seek staff whose track record demonstrates a genuine **empathy for children** and a delight in seeing young people develop. We want people who see teaching as a career and not simply as a job. No-one at St Peter's works half-day.
- 2.2. We seek **team players**. Traditional teaching, strangely, does not include the element of **team** as strongly as this occurs in other professions. Architects work in teams as do doctors involved in surgery and lawyers preparing for a case. In the main, teachers traditionally entered the classroom, closed the door and got on with it.

In the notable experiment conducted by the evolutionary biologist, William Muir, in the 1990s, average laying chickens were grouped as were prolific layers. After two generations, the average flocks were still laying, while the prolific laying group was decimated having pecked each other to death. The results were applied to human behaviour and have subsequently been endorsed by other researchers and particularly by Martin Reeves, Simon Levin and Daichi Ueda. Essentially, the research demonstrates that groups which include 'rockstar' performers, will almost always be out-performed by groups with normal IQs, provided that they have a high degree of social sensitivity, give each other roughly equal time and are helpful to each other. A majority of

women in the group also has a positive effect. The adverse situation exhibits unhealthy competition, selfishness and adverse performance. Examples cited include well-known European soccer franchises and companies such as Amazon and Enron.

Lesson and curriculum planning are required to be done in groups at St Peter's. Unsurprisingly, the sharing of ideas results in better quality thinking, enhanced learning opportunities for pupils, collective accountability and continuous improvement for the individuals involved.

- 2.3. Traditionally, teachers were viewed as professionals and the 'font of all wisdom' and were consequently left to their own devices by Heads of schools. Other than checking that the curriculum was being followed, lessons prepared and marking of work was being done, teachers were free to adopt their methodology of choice. Moreover, despite the training they've had, many teachers revert to practices they experienced as pupils at school. Recent discoveries in the fields of psychology and neuroscience have allowed us to dramatically improve pupils' ability to learn.

It is our experience that many of the above developments have yet to be included in the curricula of university education departments. Consequently, St Peter's has a comprehensive training programme to educate new staff in the 'St Peter's Way'. Some of the topics in this programme are covered in this article. It comes as a substantial challenge for experienced trained teachers to have to unlearn some methods which were previously approved and to break habits. Many find our approach to positive discipline, encouragement and high expectations difficult to implement if they have been accustomed to enforcement of a list of 'rules'. Some are not used to tolerating pupil mistakes.

As a consequence, we seek teachers who are **open to growth**. In order to grow, one must receive criticism and be open to this. The attitude we require is that of a '**growth mindset**' as defined by the psychologist, Carol Dweck. Many teachers are 'soft-centred', gentle, loving and confrontation averse. It's just as well since they're looking after our children! We don't want them to change, this is exactly the personality required to encourage children. We do, however, want them to learn not to take criticism personally, but to see it as a means to improve in the same way we want them to demonstrate to children that it's fine to make mistakes, accept criticism and to learn from this.

3. Environment

Aside from our growing knowledge of the importance of environment, we also understand that the learning environment that suits children is often very different from that of adults. How is it that so many seem to be able to study while their ears are assaulted by deafening music!

As regards the classrooms, our preference is for as much space as possible and the freedom to use furniture to create dedicated areas e.g. for reading, group work, research and so on. These need to be changed from time to time and so the type of furniture is important. Tables on wheels, rather than desks, for different configurations. A choice between stools and chairs, also on wheels or sliders for easy movement. Boys like to move. Tell them to sit still and keep silent and their brains switch off! The colour Yellow stimulates alpha brainwaves and assists in learning.

The **mental environment** includes all those influencers which affect character, motivation and mental health. There are many conventions, protocols and traditions in the traditional schooling system which constitute the **school's ethos**. Some practices are disagreeable and even unacceptable and amount to psychological toxins. These include humiliating initiation rituals, narrow categories for recognition, over-emphasis of the importance of certain extra-murals and even subjects, racism, sexist and homophobic conventions. The danger exists that so many of these conventions have existed for so long that it does not occur to people to question them. It's simply the 'way we do things'.

Maslow's Hierarchy

An effective way of auditing the ethos is to gauge whether or not its practices meet the needs of Maslow's Hierarchy. If any failed to provide all pupils with an equal opportunity for recognition, development self-esteem or the opportunity to self-actualise, they should be replaced.

Since 'self-examination' of a vast, intricately woven and imbedded set of practices constituting the ethos is such a complex exercise, St Peter's has turned to Professor Martin Seligman's discipline of **Positive Psychology**.

<https://positivepsychology.com/positive-psychology-an-introduction-summary/>

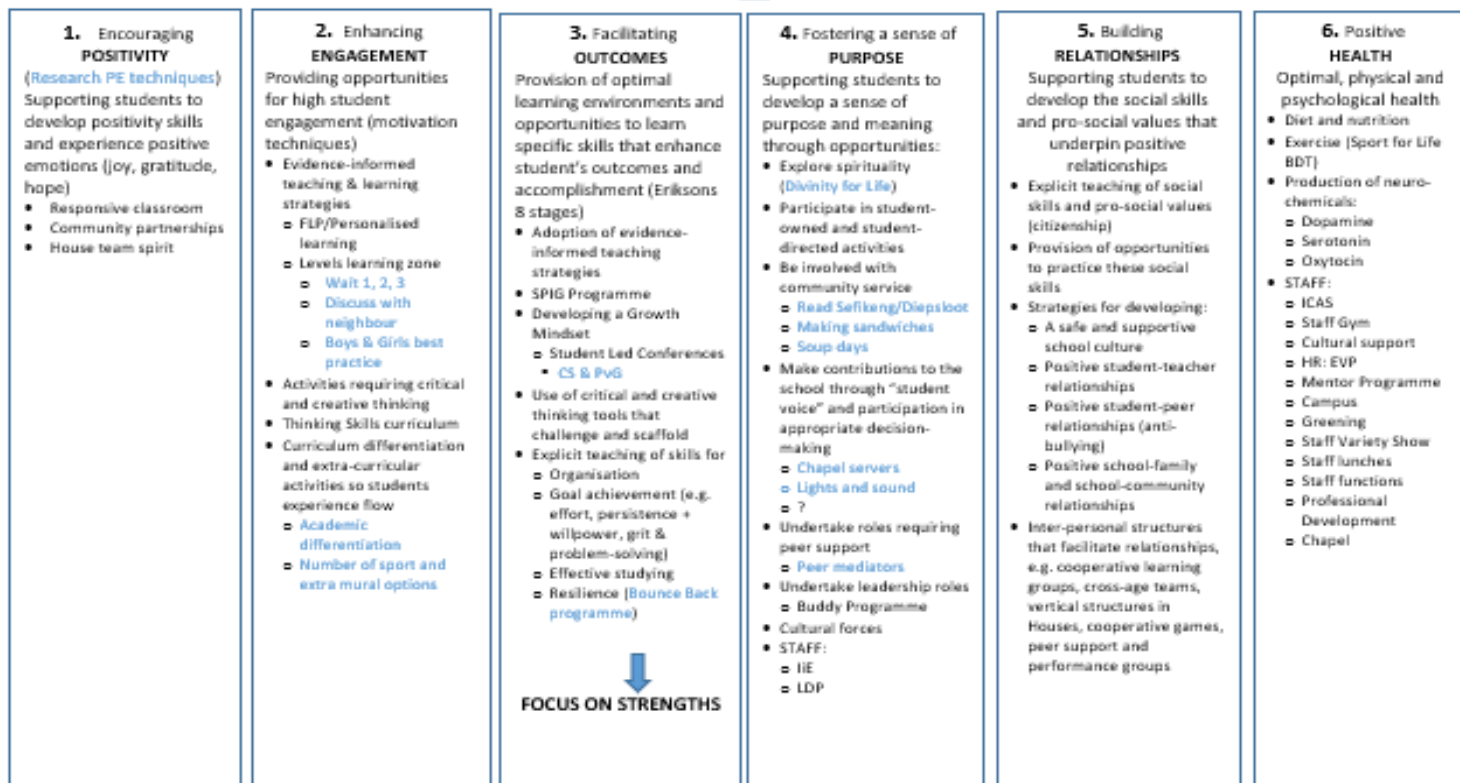


This school of thought seeks not merely to treat mental illness, but to make life more productive and fulfilling and to identify and nurture talent. We use the 6 essential elements to evaluate all aspects of our ethos. This is a work in progress and a summary is set out in the table below.

Greg Royce

St Peter's Positive Education (PE) Model

Flourishing
St Peter's staff & pupils feeling and doing good
Leading meaningful lives



May 2018: GWR Updated: 15 May 2018/21 June 2018

DIVERSITY

For 67 years, Nelson Mandela devoted his life to the service of humanity — as a human rights lawyer, a prisoner of conscience, an international peacemaker and the first democratically elected president of a free South Africa. On 18 July, the Nelson Mandela Foundation calls on people around the world to devote 67 minutes of their time to helping others, as a way to mark Nelson Mandela International Day.



This year the essence of Mandela Day is

“Take action, inspire change, make every day a Mandela Day”.

Communities across the world are affected by the spread of Covid-19, which has hit every economy, causing new social and economic challenges and exacerbating old ones. But, there is hope. On a scale never seen before, individuals and groups are finding ways to help those in need of support.

A call is being made to us to be active citizens in our community, individually or as part of one of the millions of groups getting together to start initiatives around delivering food parcels, making masks and protective gear, teaching online or making donations towards these efforts. Let us make it a day we share the successes we have achieved and the lessons we have learned as we battle this pandemic, and its effect on those less fortunate than ourselves.

Vijay Maharaj (Deputy Head: Campus Compliance)

MANDELA DAY

“Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice. Like Slavery and Apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. Sometimes it falls on a generation to be great. YOU can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom.”

— **Nelson Mandela**



Our current world has never been challenged like it is being right now, for people to stand together as communities and to support each other. This is the challenge all our St Peter's children will invest in. The privilege of noticing other people and how they can honour them in their own actions. Our children will notice at all levels, from those people who are close to them to communities that support them and that they could support. This helps us as St Peter's in becoming a great generation as we learn how to honour people in our lives. **For 67 minutes we will recognise all who need to be honoured in our lives as we decide on strategies on how to honour them. Love in action.**

Furthermore, in not only challenging our character we are also going to challenge ourselves in how we respond to our communities in giving and assisting them. **Honour in action.** As Nelson Mandela stated, especially now with the added pressure of COVID-19, poverty can be dealt with. St Peter's is supporting an organisation called Ikemeleng Soup Kitchen that is taking soup into Diepsloot to feed the hungry mouths of children at schools and crèches.

We will be celebrating Mandela day on Friday, 17 July. We are asking for non-perishable food items, to be used in making the necessary soup, to be dropped off in the week of the 13 to 17 July.

The drop off points are as follows:

- Chapel carpark
- Boys JP: entrance to reception

- Boys SP: collection field for Grade 3 & 4
- Girls JP: entrance to reception
- Girls SP: Grade 7 drop off zone

We are a generation who can blossom as we remember all the people in our communities and how we can help enrich their lives.

Love and Blessings

The BigFutures Team

JUST FOR LAUGHS

**AN EXTRA STUDENT
DECIDED TO JOIN THE
CLASS THIS WEEK!**



BEKABEE AND ST PETER'S – IN PARTNERSHIP FOR A GREENER FUTURE



GARDEN MAINTENANCE AND CLEANING SERVICES

The two BEE companies which St Peter's Prep Schools set up to manage the grounds and clean the School will lose 50% of their business at another institution at the end of this month. Muchachari Garden Services (MGS) and Ntjilo's Cleaners have been contracted to the School for over 15 years. Both have provided a standard of service which easily outmatched that of the larger companies which they replaced. Ntjilo's now also provides expert Covid-19 sanitising, while MGS not only manufactures high-grade compost, but also provides expert treatment of Shot Hole Borer.

If you are able, please help them to save the jobs of the workers that they will be forced to retrench at the end of the month. Their services and contact details are below:

**SUPPORT
LOCAL
BUSINESS**

**MUCHACHARI
GARDEN MAINTENANCE**
Since 2008

SERVICES

- TURF MAINTENANCE
- CRICKET PITCH MAINTENANCE
- COMPOST PRODUCTION (100% ORGANIC)
- TREE FELLING AND PRUNING
- SHOT-HOLE BORER CONTROL
- ALIEN WEED CONTROL
- FIRE WOOD

NO JOB TOO BIG OR TOO SMALL

Contact me for a FREE no obligation quote.
083 381 0809
mmuchachari@stpeters.co.za

**NTJILO'S
CLEANING SERVICES**

We provide the following services:

- Cleaning ● Sanitising ● Pest Control
- Supply of all hygiene equipment
- Maintenance of Swimming Pools
- Functions Set-up

Get in touch with us on:
082 777 6637 or intjilo@stpeters.co.za

MID-MORNING SNACK

Parents are reminded that at a small cost you can purchase a mid-morning snack for your son. Should you wish to make use of this facility, please follow the link on the Communicator St Peter's under NEWS. Please note that the menu changes every week and orders have to be done on a weekly basis for the following weeks snack meals.

Sharon Rabilal (Catering Manager)

READY MADE MEALS

ST PETER'S KITCHEN

SERVES READY-MADE MEALS!

ORDER ONLINE

ORDER FORM AVAILABLE ON THE COMMUNICATOR ST PETER'S

ST PETER'S PREP SCHOOLS

READY MADE, FRESH AND DELICIOUS MEALS PREPARED BY OUR VERY OWN STAFF IN THE ST PETER'S KITCHEN.

ORDERS TO BE PLACED ONLINE AND TO BE COLLECTED BETWEEN 12:00 AND 13:30 FROM THE LOWER CAR PARK, KITCHEN DELIVERY ENTRANCE.

srabilal@stpeters.co.za or 011 377 6631

FORTHCOMING WEEK

PLEASE NOTE: DEADLINE FOR NEWS SUBMISSIONS IS 08:00 ON WEDNESDAYS