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ST PETER'S GIRLS PREP SCHOOL

FROM THE HEADMASTER

At last year's Prize Giving I spoke briefly about the 'Myth of Effortless Perfection.' The essence of the message was that many girls spend their lives trying to be effortlessly perfect. This article resonated with me, in this regard.

HOW EMPOWERING GIRLS TO CONFRONT CONFLICT AND BUCK PERFECTION HELPS THEIR WELL-BEING

(An adapted article written by Katrina Schwartz on Simone Marean, CEO of [Girls Leadership](#), a non-profit organisation working to help girls find and raise their voices).

Girls have always grown up with cultural and societal stereotypes swirling around them. Despite the unparalleled access to opportunities that young women have today compared with the past, many are still absorbing strong messages about how they should look, act and be. Many of the most powerful influences come from the media, but young girls could find relief among the real people in their lives. Social media has changed the game, requiring teachers and parents to also change strategies to help girls navigate complicated waters.

A growing percentage of girls feel pressure to please everyone in their lives. Studies show the rate of depression and anxiety increasing more rapidly among girls, and social media culture has heightened the sense among many girls that they must be perfect, presenting a pleasant, well-behaved, curated persona to the world.

While social media has the potential to amplify damaging messages about bodies, perfection and beauty that have long existed, it would be too simple to ban digital devices. Marean points out when educators and parents act from a place of fear they tend to go to extremes, alienating the girls they love in the process.

Instead, Marean advocates to navigate these spaces with a different script. She says it's crucial that adults start helping young girls to engage in productive conflict, acknowledge and grow from mistakes, develop emotional intelligence and take responsibility for the role they each play in social situations.

"Relationships are integral and foundational to mental health and wellness," Marean said. "When relationships are struggling there's no way to take care of the next level of thinking." Middle school teachers know this better than anyone -- when students are dealing with social drama, they have a lot less mental space for academics.

"Girls can't express how they feel effectively until they take time to notice and name their feelings". Marean says girls know they are supposed to feel happy, calm and confident, so they disrespect their other emotions. Many don't even have the language to talk about more complicated, nuanced and less sunny feelings. But when girls name how they feel in a situation, they can recognize that it's the situation, not them, that's the problem. That opens up a wider range of options for how they handle that situation.

One way parents can help girls to develop an emotional vocabulary and give permission to feel less than "perfect" feelings is with role modeling. When girls hear that the important adults in their lives also feel excluded or jealous or

hurt, it normalizes those complex feelings. And, when a girl comes home talking about a difficult social experience, adults can help her build empathy by asking how the other person might have felt in that interaction.

“Girls need to find their voice and say who they are. They need to talk and think about what choices they’re making on social media. They have choice in what they look at and what they put into the world.”

Girls need to see conflict as an opportunity for change. “What we see in our girls is they lack a script to have direct conflict,” Marean said. “They literally don’t know the words. They also lack the permission; they feel like something is wrong with the friendship if they have conflict.”

Girls from third grade through high school say the same thing about what it means to be a friend: like all the same things (or hate the same things), do everything together and never fight. That’s an unrealistic expectation for friendship and it doesn’t help equip girls for feelings of jealousy, anger or hurt that are regularly part of healthy relationships.

“Conflict is going to happen all the time,” Marean said. “Conflict is part of a normal, healthy, functional relationship. This is how we get things to change.” The challenge is helping girls to see it that way, to not be afraid of it. She cautions that if kids don’t learn how conflict can lead to positive change from the adults in their lives, they’ll learn about it from friends online. And online there’s no eye contact, no tone of voice, and things can get nasty.

“Role play is the only way to talk about the how of communication,” Marean said. When a girl comes home upset about something that happened at school, it’s a normal parental reaction to want to take away her pain and get angry on her behalf. But that doesn’t help her develop the skills to deal with the situation.

Instead, Marean suggests offering empathy and asking questions about what she wants to do next. At this stage, many younger girls aren’t good at immediately articulating the result they hope for; instead they often go straight for what they want to do. This is where an adult can help them think through how a gut reaction might play out. Role-playing the situation gives the girl a chance to try out the words and debriefing solidifies it.

“The number one fear I hear from parents around teaching their girls to have a voice is that what if she does it all and she doesn’t get what she needs? What if her voice is not heard?” Marean said. Her answer: that’s all right; her voice won’t always be heard. But the experience of expressing it can be empowering and it’s a first step.

Have a wonderful weekend! Nibe nempelasonto emnandi!

Darrel Webb
(Headmaster)

STAFF NEWS

Chris Tomsek

Chris Tomsek has been appointed as our Acting Head of Sport, on a fixed-term contract until the end of the year, at the Girls School.

Chris is passionate about sport and has even played some netball in the past! He has coached club and school teams, at the highest level in South Africa. His club-coaching career began in 2005 where he coached what until then had been, a badly performing Wits cricket team. This team had not won trophies in 12 years. They subsequently went on to win a Premier League, ‘Limited Overs’ title.

Chris taught Maths and coached the 1st XV rugby team at St Benedict's, from 2006 to 2016. He left St Benedict's in 2017 to pursue a business opportunity. He found that he truly missed the school environment during this time. When he heard about the fixed-term opportunity, as Head of Sport at St Peter's Girls Prep, he was extremely excited to take up the challenge.

Chris has been on several international tours with school teams. He has visited: New Zealand, Australia, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe - gaining a wealth of knowledge that he has integrated into his coaching techniques. He is in the process of obtaining his Honours degree in Sports Psychology and has a keen interest in applying it to his coaching.

'If our children are given the right framework in which to succeed and they are enjoying their time on the field, the necessary sports skills come quite naturally to them,' he says.

St Peter's Girls Prep welcomes Chris back to Johannesburg. We are confident that his dynamic, vibrant and passionate attitude will make a significant difference to our Sports Department. He enjoys running, gym, golf and rugby refereeing in his spare time. Chris also enjoys the simple things in life and is never too far away from live sporting events, friends and a braai.

The process of finding the best possible candidate to take up the position of Director of Sport, on a permanent basis, will begin with immediate effect and continue until we find the right person for the job.

D. Webb

SPORTS DEPARTMENT

We have a team of professional and knowledgeable staff leading netball and hockey. They have the best interests of each girl, and team, foremost in their minds. Teachers in charge of the following winter sports are:

Keitumetse Makola - netball: kmakola@stpeters.co.za

Toni Clarke-Buchanan - hockey: tclarke@stpeters.co.za

ECO NEWS: CELEBRATING EARTH HOUR – SATURDAY, 24 MARCH

We suggest that the St Peter's Family joins millions of people across the world and switches off all lights, for an hour, on Saturday from 20:30 - 21:30 - to raise awareness for the planet!

Earth Hour is a worldwide movement for the planet organised by the WWF to encourage individuals, businesses and governments around the world to take positive action by turning off their lights for a designated 60 minutes.



At school, we will support this movement on Friday from 08:30 – 09:30. We have challenged all departments to turn off as many electrical devices that they can during that hour and find creative ways to avoid the need to use electricity during this hour. Use this event as an educational opportunity to discuss environmental issues as a family.

Cathy Linnell (*HOD: Science*)

ST PETER'S WINTER WARMERS 2018 – VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Due to popular demand, *Winter Warmers* is back on the St Peter's Prep 2018 calendar. We are looking for a group of parents to organise this function.

Please click on the following link to volunteer <https://goo.gl/forms/wQ54pY8AFIW4FmoD2>

There will be a 'kick off' meeting at 07:15 at the Mvukuzane Pavilion on Thursday, 29 March.

Many thanks.

St Peter's Prep Schools PA

GIRLS SCHOOL TRAFFIC FLOW

Please be advised that the traffic flow through the Girls School Senior Prep carpark, on the school side of the centre island, is for 'Drop and Go' only, during peak times.

If you are attending a meeting and need to park for some time, please do so either:

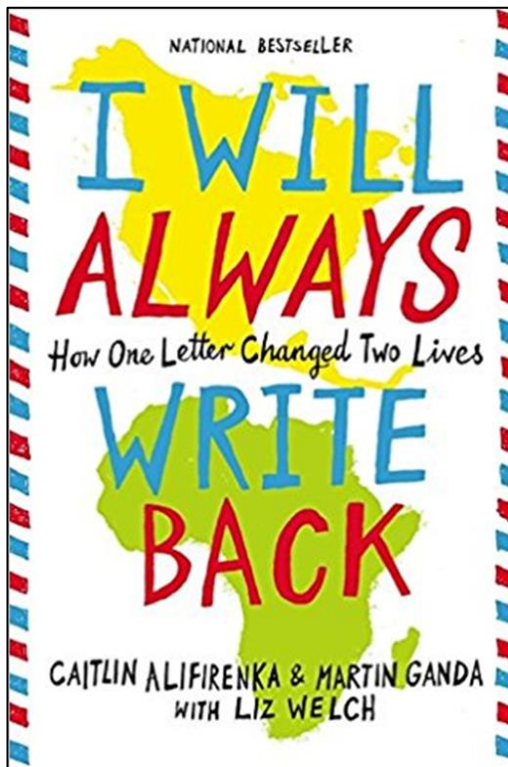
- on the freeway side of the centre island in the SP carpark
- or in the parking places - through the carpark and onto the ring road (there are parking places on the left hand side of the ring road, opposite the school house)

When leaving the school, you will be able to take a left turn as you pass the Aftercare facility in the JP carpark. (see map below – red beacons) This will mean that you can avoid the 'Bottleneck', which occurs on the narrow road past the JP hall. The left turn will take you onto Grieff Road where you will exit the main school gate, as normal.

Should Witkoppen Road be congested, Grieff Road could also still be backed up, however.



FROM THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT



The *New York Times* bestselling true story of an all-American girl and a boy from Zimbabwe and the letter that changed both of their lives forever.

On occasions, I have felt the necessity to endorse a novel, which strikes a chord with young readers, but never more fervently than with this particular book. In a world so often plagued with negativity and repression, it is heartening indeed to encounter a story, which is inspirational, thought provoking and stimulating. The Grade 7 girls at St Peter's have expressed, unanimously, their gratification and enjoyment, after having read this novel. We strongly recommend 'I Will Always Write Back' as a consideration for a Grade 6 or 7 class set work.

'It started as an assignment. Everyone in Caitlin's class wrote to an unknown student somewhere in a distant place. Martin was lucky to even receive a pen-pal letter. There were only ten letters, and fifty kids in his class. But he was the top student, so he got the first one. That letter was the beginning of a correspondence that spanned six years and changed two lives.'

In this compelling dual memoir, Caitlin and Martin recount how they became best friends - and better people--through their long-distance exchange. Their story will inspire you to look beyond your own life and wonder about the world at large and your place in it.'

The real impact of this story came alive for us at St Peter's, when one of my pupils said she had spoken to her parents about the book and her father said he knew Martin! We contacted him immediately and he is more than willing to arrange Skype Interviews to enable children in schools, around the world, to ask him about the book and his life experience.

Ron Thackwell (*Master Teacher: English*)

PYJAMA DAY – FRIDAY, 16 MARCH

