

CATHOLIC

Education

Subsidiarity and Solidarity in Catholic Schools

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Forming an Image of
God

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Leave Your Print

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Boys and girls can keep each other safe



I'd like the boys in my group to listen to me as well as the girls do



Boys have feelings too



WE CAN
LOOK OUT FOR
EACH OTHER
KEEP EACH
OTHER SAFE
SAFEGUARD EACH
OTHER'S DIGNITY

HEY! Girls can be friends with boys



Girls can fix things



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PO Box 2083, Southdale, 2135

Tel: 011 433 1888/9

Fax: 011 680 9628

Email: info@cie.org.za

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From the Editor <

My five year old son told me yesterday that he's ready for big school now and doesn't want to spend another day at nursery school. I guess it's the time of the year when we have all had enough of this year and are looking forward to our December break. But before we get there we need to get through a few more weeks of hard work: exams, school concerts and nativity plays!

In this edition of *Catholic Education* Sr Melanie O'Connor writes about modern day slavery and the scourge of human trafficking. Carol Brenner is a speech therapist who provides tips for foundation phase teachers on how to encourage language learning in the classroom. Paul Faller shares examples of meditation gardens at two Catholic schools and how they have created sacred spaces for teachers and learners so that they can find silence in the busyness of school life. Frances Correia writes for *Catholic Education* for the first time and provides some advice on how to introduce learners to an image of God. Try it in your classroom.

Mark Potterton has been to the Netherlands this year and shares his observations about the Dutch schooling system. Kyle Lauf from Assumption Convent offers a reflection on the concepts of solidarity and subsidiarity and how they can be put into practice in a Catholic school.

The Digital Pathfinding Seminar was a highlight in the Catholic schools network this year. A range of speakers provided information on how to safeguard children in the digital domain. Ricardo da Silva SJ attended the conference and shares his reflections with us.

Enjoy the read and send us your thoughts and suggestions for future editions!

Kelsay Corrêa

 Catholic Institute of Education

 @CathEducation



Digital Pathfinding – Empowering Young People 2B e-safe

By Ricardo da Silva SJ

Young people need to earn a new kind of passport, the kind which gives them digital citizenship. They need to acquire the knowledge, skills and tools to become responsible citizens in the exciting landscape that is unfolding and presenting them with new possibilities.

There is no need to instil fear in parents and educators, or discourage young people from the advantages of modern technology, or to demonise technology. It is important to ensure that today's young are well-informed, protected and adequately equipped to deal responsibly with the world within which they've been born and have come to inhabit.

Our young people need to have roots of digital resilience and be aware of the possibilities and vulnerabilities of the digital world. They need to build the confidence to use digital devices more critically. They must grow wings of digital literacy that allow them to keep real, genuine and authentic relationships and connections.

These were the opening sentiments of the inaugural speaker at the Digital Pathfinding Seminar hosted at the Sierra Hotel in Randburg, Johannesburg this past September. The seminar was jointly hosted by Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) and Jesuit Institute South Africa (JI) as part of an initiative by the two Catholic organisations and took for its theme, Empowering Young People 2B e-safe.

Fr Hugh Lagan, Catholic priest of the Society of African Missions and clinical psychologist, was the first to address the almost 120 delegates attending the seminar and set the tone for the two days of presentations, discussion and reflection that ensued.

He quoted leading Canadian forensic psychologist Michael Seto, an expert in young people's online safety, who when studying the impact of technology on young people said, "We are living through one of the largest unregulated social experiments of all time."

Fr Russell Pollitt SJ, Jesuit priest and Director of JI invited those gathered to consider that the new digital world has brought us a new and uncharted commodity. "Data," he said "is like the new oil: there are massive opportunities that open up to us but it is also important to remember that pollution is possible."

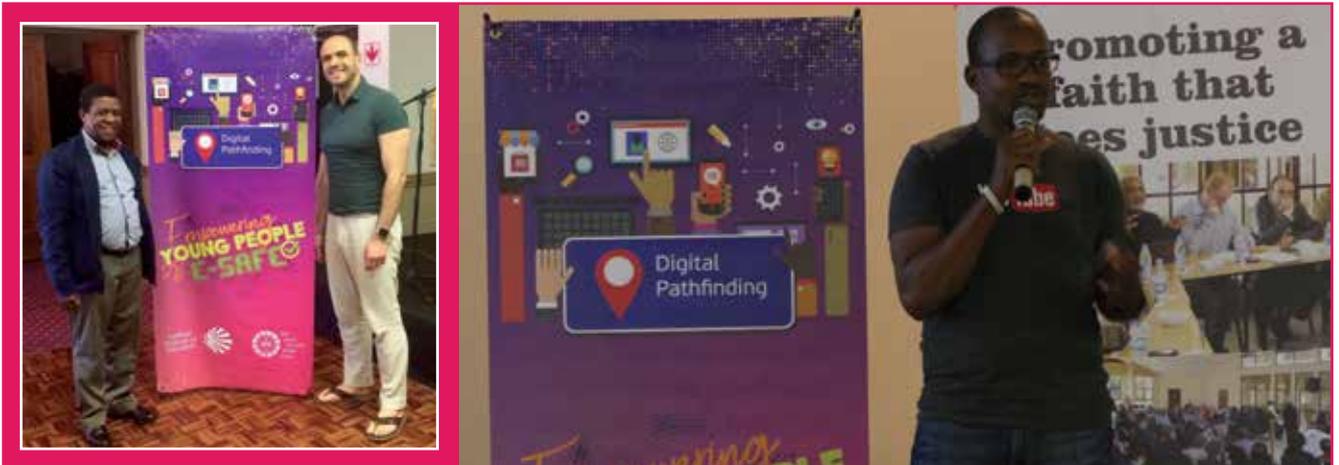
Fr Russell Pollitt has for a number of years been studying the impact of technology on our lives, especially the effects it has on our spiritual lives. He, together with Justine Limpitlaw, an law expert in electronic communications, who was also one of the speakers at the seminar, designed a training programme entitled Living with Integrity in the Digital World.

This programme is offered to schools by the Jesuit Institute and is intended for teachers, parents and learners. Through this programme with school communities Fr Russell Pollitt has amassed important experience which has led him to the conclusion that much more needs to be done to prepare children for the digital world.

In October 2017, he and Justine Limpitlaw were invited to attend an international congress on child dignity in the digital world at the Jesuits' Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. There they heard first-hand of the devastating effects that ignorance to online safety can have on young people.

The statistics presented were alarming and South Africa's abuse statistics were on average amongst the highest in the world. Pope Francis addressed the Rome congress leaving Fr Russell Pollitt and Justine Limpitlaw with a poignant reflection as they returned to Johannesburg.

“From participants’ reviews of the seminar it is clear that a need has been met,” reflected Kelsay Corrêa, “We very much hope that this is the first in a series of initiatives that the CIE-JI partnership can offer to schools so that they can act confidently, responsibly and respectfully within this area which is so key in the lives of our children today.”



“To see children looking us in the eye is an experience we have all had. What are we doing to ensure that those children can continue smiling at us, with clear eyes and faces filled with trust and hope? What are we doing to make sure that they are not robbed of this light, to ensure that those eyes will not be not darkened and corrupted by what they will find on the internet, which will soon be so integral and important a part of their daily lives?”

After his trip to Rome, Fr Russell and CIE Communications Manager Kelsay Corrêa spoke about the possibility of offering something concrete to schools to help them navigate this rapidly evolving, exciting and fearful digital world.

The Digital Pathfinding Seminar was born with the intention to bring together schools and civil society to ask critical questions, to learn about our use of technology, its impact on our children and the many dangers that accompany life on the world wide web.

Delegates came mainly from Catholic schools across South Africa. Some also attended from other private and government schools and educational institutions. They represented a cross-section of those involved in school life. Heads of schools, members of School Management Teams, Computer Applied Technology and religion educators and

even a few parents and individuals from private organisations participated.

All came to see and hear the industry-leading respected professionals share their wisdom on this critical issue for our time. The speakers were specifically chosen and briefed to address the matters pertaining to young people’s use of and interaction with digital technologies.

Most of the speakers were invited to address the group in plenary sessions. Presentations ranged from psychosocial aspects to the physical and neurological effects that technology has on all – but especially on the developing brains of young people. Plenary sessions included also a practical element. These were focussed on exposing participants to tools that could be used to teach, regulate and design technologies to ensure young people’s safety and active critical engagement when online. Top tech-companies the likes of Google, Facebook, Apple and Microsoft lent their tech-education specialists and policy officers to upskill delegates in these more practical inputs during the seminar.

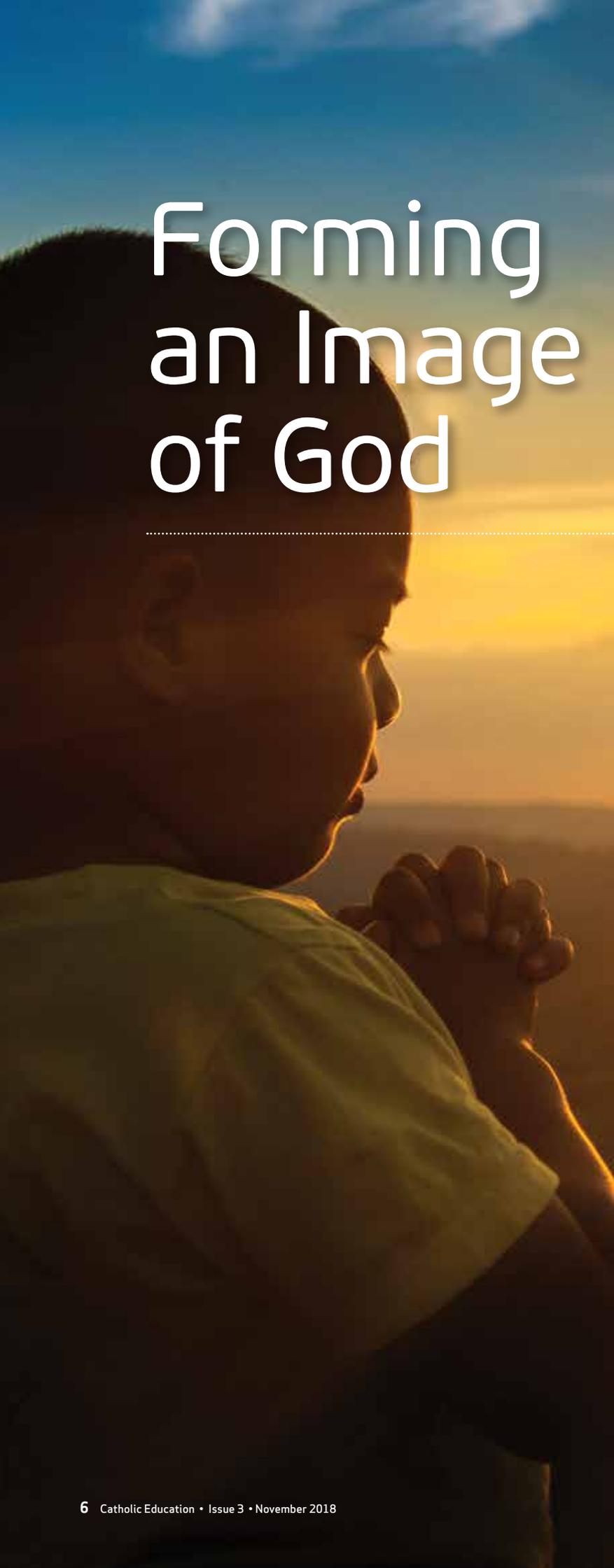
On the second day delegates were able to choose from a selection of breakaway sessions so that they could hone-in and get expert advice on the subject as it pertained to their particular areas of

responsibility or interest.

Sessions were offered to address the design of schools’ social media and electronic communications policies; to teach young people responsible digital literacy involving them as key players in their safety in the digital world; and to present the duties, responsibilities and the legal recourses available to schools to govern and enforce the responsible use of technology in the school environment.

The influence of technologies, especially internet-based technologies is a neuralgic one affecting us all. The seminar sought to draw special attention to the impact that these have on our young for whom we have prime responsibility. It also equipped those in attendance with some of the knowledge and skills that are necessary for them to brave this digital world responsibly, creatively and unfearingly.

“From participants’ reviews of the seminar it is clear that a need has been met,” reflected Kelsay Corrêa, “We very much hope that this is the first in a series of initiatives that the CIEJI partnership can offer to schools so that they can act confidently, responsibly and respectfully within this area which is so key in the lives of our children today.”



Forming an Image of God

By Frances Correia

I have spent most of my life working as a retreat director. One of the key areas that we work with in a directed retreat is helping people with their image of God. On the surface it can often feel as if all Christians have the same image of God. We all say the same creed, we all, if asked, know that our God is a God of love. We know God as creator and call him Father.

However if we start to scratch a little beneath the surface, we can discover a multitude of images of God. In reality we all have multiple ideas and images of God, projections if you like. Some of them are helpful, and some of them can be less helpful, a few might for some people be actively destructive.

So where do we get our images of God from? I find it helpful to think of three ways in which our images of God develop.

The first comes from our earliest childhood. We internalise a sense of what love is, and who God is, from the experiences we have of our primary caregivers. As we grow, key adults can offer new aspects to our growing images of God.

The second are the things we learn cognitively about God. These are what we are directly taught about God. Firstly by our families, and then through formal catechesis, that is when we are at catechism, or in a religion class and we are learning about our faith.

Finally we learn about God through religious experiences. This is a critical part of the formation of people of faith. It arises most often from contemplation and reflection in prayer. If we look to the mystical tradition of the church, we see a long history of religious formation that facilitates encounters with God.

The result of these different sources of formation is that we often have complex and sometimes slightly schizophrenic images of God. For instance, I may say that I believe in an all-loving God, but I simultaneously feel that I need to earn God's love. Or, I may on the one hand talk of an almighty God, which means God should be felt in every part of my life, but simultaneously have a fairly narrow idea of who God really is, which may mean that I live a split life with God and faith in one box, and my work and entertainment in a completely different box. In my work of spiritual direction, I am often working with more damaging images of God that people integrated into themselves when they were young.

I have found that the most helpful way to allow greater inner freedom and a healthier image of God to grow, is to facilitate encounters for the person and God. Catholic schools, for many Christian children, may be the first place, and sometimes the only place, where they will experience such facilitated encounters. Ideally these take place during retreats, but they can also happen in the ordinary school day.

One simple way of helping to form a positive image of a loving God is to

teach children to pray 'The Act of the Presence of God.' This is not a rote prayer, but rather is a particular way of approaching God. It comes from the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola, and is rooted in a theological understanding that God is always aware of us and always waiting for us to turn our attention to God.

Depending on the age of the learners, we might use slightly different approaches to this style of prayer. However it is the sort of prayer that should take between 2 and 10 minutes depending on age and situation.

St Ignatius suggests that this is a helpful way to pray regularly. He even encourages us to use this approach at the beginning of other prayers, so that we are orientated towards God, and so that we begin with a sense of the God who attends to us, and loves us.

Act of the Presence of God for foundation and intermediate phase learners

For this age, the prayer should not take more than 2-3 minutes.

Begin by getting the learners to be quiet, it can be helpful to start with a breathing exercise.

Facilitator: Children, I want you to all close your eyes, and we're going to take a deep breath in (short pause...) then breathe out (short pause...), breathe in (short pause...) then breathe out (short pause....), breathe in (short pause...) then breathe out (short pause....).

Now keeping your eyes closed, I want you to imagine Jesus smiling at you. (Short pause 10 sec...)

Imagine Jesus saying to you, 'I love you, you are precious to me'. (Short pause 10 sec...)

Now I want you to put your arms around yourself and hug yourself, imagine Jesus giving you a big hug. (Short pause 10 sec...)

In your imagination, quietly, is there something you want to say to Jesus? (Short pause 20 sec...)

What does Jesus say back to you? (Short pause 20 sec...)

Now quietly I want you to open your eyes and look around, imagine how Jesus looks with love at everyone here at school with you now, even the teachers.

Act of the Presence of God for high school

For this age the prayer should take between 5 and 10 mins.

Begin by getting the learners to be quiet, it can be helpful to start with a breathing exercise.

Facilitator: Today our prayer time is going to be a form of prayerful contemplation. To get into it I want you to start by closing your eyes and focusing on your breathing.

Start by a deep breath in (short pause...) then breathe out (short pause...), breathe in (short pause...) then breathe out (short pause....), breathe in (short pause...) then breathe out (short pause....).

Imagine Jesus looking at you this morning with love. Take a moment to see how compassionately he looks at you. (Pause 30 to 60 sec... as the facilitator you will know when to move on when about 10% of the learners start to fidget)

Or it may be that you find it easier to imagine hearing God speaking to you, imagine listening to God say these words from prophet Isaiah directly to you this morning, 'You are precious to me and I love you'. How do you feel hearing God say this to you? (Pause 30 to 60 sec...)

Or you may find it easier to imagine Jesus putting his hand on your shoulder. How does that feel? (Pause 30 to 60 sec...)

Is there anything you would want to say to God/ Jesus this morning? Imagine talking to him (Pause 1 to 2 mins)

Imagine Jesus responds to you, what might he say? (Pause 30 to 60sec)

If you find it hard to hear his response, imagine he says to you, 'I made you, I love you, I understand.' (Pause 30 sec)

Gently come back to an awareness of being here at school, and quietly open your eyes.



Peacebuilding in Catholic Schools – A Process

By Cullen Mackenzie

Over the course of 2018, the CIE has been reviewing two key things - the Building Peaceful Catholic Schools (BPCS) programme, and restorative justice. Both of these things have been a part of the CIE's work since 2012, when we began to look at helping schools to be safe, just and caring spaces for all who are part of them. A programme was developed in response to what we heard the schools saying:

Corporal punishment is illegal - what do we do now?

Learners are at risk - how do we keep them safe?

We are a staff divided - what can we do to bring us back together?

The programme aimed first to build peace within each member of staff, then to help them to manage conflict in their lives, and finally to engage with others in a way that builds and strengthens relationships. These three foci - peacebuilding, conflict management and restorative justice - were designed to echo through the programme, and to be deepened over the course of the workshops that CIE staff facilitated in the schools. At the end of 2018, 20 of the initial 65 schools will finish the fifteenth workshop. The others are at different points of the journey, and each region of South Africa works differently with the programme.

The CIE needed to review what we had done, in a way that privileged the voices of the teachers, parents and learners in the schools. Twelve schools were selected, across all six of the regions currently working with Building Peaceful Catholic Schools. We interviewed and gathered stories from as many of the key people as possible in each school - twelve school principals, one hundred and two teachers, sixty learners and six parents, as well as two owner's

representatives. We asked them about their experience of the programme - what had stuck in their minds from it, what change they had seen, and how they had changed in themselves over the course of the workshops and other encounters with it. Their words and stories paint a picture of the programme and, more importantly, allow us at the CIE to see the changes that might happen because of this work.

How does the change look, and how long does it take? These are questions that we have grappled with, over the past few years, whenever we are asked to report on this work. And the answers have not been easy. In most cases, telling people that "change takes time" sounds like an apology or an excuse. Explaining that the change happens within each person first is very difficult when we can't see into each person's head and heart.

What follows is a look at the how, what and how long of the programme in a given school, portrayed from the perspective of a teacher.



A teacher's reflection

After the first intervention (four workshops and Six of the Best), I have been introduced to the three foci, and watched a DVD about Restorative Justice in schools. The methodology is still quite new to me, and I'm not entirely sure why this programme has been brought to my school. Over the course of the year, I've been practising better listening and speaking using "I messages". I'm not quite ready to use the method I've seen with my colleagues, so I decide to try it out at home. Maybe I have a conversation in a circle to resolve a family argument, or I use language differently with my children and spouse and see how positively they respond. I then begin to try it out with my colleagues - perhaps not the ones I fear, but the ones where there's a bit of friction.

By the end of the second intervention (three more workshops), I've had another look at the three foci, and gone a bit deeper into them. In particular, the workshop on Anger and Forgiveness stays with me - I start to look at the people in my life more deeply, and see that they are as complex as I am. My understanding of other people's experience is changing - I can see the learner in my class making a noise, and realise that all I need to do is take them to one side and ask them a simple question: "what's happening, my child?" I am beginning to realise how the change I need begins with me. My relationships with others at the

school are improving - I may have spoken to the scary colleague, or the difficult parent, or the problematic learner, and I'm seeing the problems improving. I am probably trying out the techniques more and more with the learners in class, and I may have been part of a restorative circle, among my colleagues. Classroom discipline is improving.

After the third, fourth and fifth interventions (8 to 15 workshops), I've been deepening my experience of the programme's three parts each year, and I used the ideas from the first seven workshops to help me in discussing three really difficult sets of topics. In the third year I sat with my colleagues and discussed gender - and while there were some awkward moments and shocking stories shared in the circles, I've gained an understanding of how power is linked to gender. I'm looking at the way people act in the staffroom, and in public, and seeing it all a bit differently. In the fourth year, I deepened my engagement with identity, looking at how affirming identity can challenge racism. I'm beginning to see more inclusion in the way I discuss things with colleagues and learners, and I am more aware of the larger dynamics at play. Finally, the programme invited me to practise hospitality as a way of countering xenophobia - I'm still a bit uncomfortable with some of the discussions, but I remember what I did in the very first intervention.

The techniques I've learned are slowly gaining more ground in the school - my principal uses them in difficult moments and more generally in staff meetings, and I've been able to resolve a problem between two learners that were fighting. Sometimes the parents complain that my way of doing things is not okay - "how can you sit down with both learners and ask them what happened? No man!" - but I know clearly that this is a fairer and more just way of dealing with the situation. I might have a set of rules in the classroom, agreed to by the learners, which help when there's a disruption of some kind. I am calmer, and shout less - and my learners are seeing this and copying me. My class is more peaceful, and so is the staff room.

It's not perfect yet, but it is a system that is moving towards building up rather than breaking down. When the person from CIE comes back to us with results from this survey thing they did with the learners, I'm a bit shocked - some of the children are still having bad experiences at school, and some are still scared or bored - but I react to it in a different way. Instead of being angry or blaming, I ask myself "What can I do to make this right?"

I can see now that this is a long journey I'm on, but it is one that is worth walking.

This is a journey for all of us - for the learners, teachers, school leaders and parents, as well as for the CIE. It is one that is ongoing, and nuanced by the different pressures and stresses of life in South Africa in 2018. In a society characterised by anger, misunderstanding and violence, this programme focuses on hope, forgiveness, empathy and peace.

If you have any stories you'd like to share about your experience of the Building Peaceful Catholic Schools programme, please contact Cullen Mackenzie at the CIE.

A young boy with autism is lying on a wooden floor, looking intently at a pink toy car on a road mat. He is wearing a dark blue sweater. The background is a light blue wall with a geometric pattern.

Beautiful Boy – Raising our boy with autism

By Janine Scott dos Santos

“Before you go to sleep say a little prayer. Every day in every way, it’s getting better and better. Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful. Beautiful boy.”

John Lennon

“These days, everybody has a label. When we were kids, there was no autism, or ADHD, kids just got on with it or got punished. It’s ridiculous really!” said the 42-year old man selling biltong in his mother’s kiosk. This was after my boy had had a meltdown at the sound of the slush machines – a sound nobody else could really hear. I politely smiled, paid for my biltong, and walked away... seething.

You see, the danger with saying things like that, is that it negates the real issues that we experience as parents of kids with special needs. My boy doesn’t need stricter parents, or more authority; he is not naughty, or “otherwise”. He is autistic.

Before OJ was diagnosed at three years old, we used to struggle every time we took him out. I have a large, Mediterranean family, and he would get anxious and cry every time we arrived at my mom’s house. It would kill me inside because I would feel so bad for my mom – she said she didn’t take it personally – but she must have. I would have! We used to make excuses for him, “He’s not feeling well” Or “He must be teething again”. I remember my aunt once saying, “Gees, this OJ is never feeling well.”

But, he was smart. Super smart. His memory was amazing. He could recite whole scenes from movies after only watching them two or three times. He knew all his nursery rhymes. He spoke way ahead of his peers. He could name all the flash cards in a large pack. My friends with kids of similar age would remark on how brilliant he was, and, as someone to whom language is important, I would preen and try to be humble about it.

But then, at about two and a half, it stopped.

He just stopped progressing. I remember being at a birthday party, and one of his cousins who is of a similar age, started having a conversation with his grandmother. He asked curious questions about salt, and why we have salt on the table and not other spices. It was cute, and clever and we all laughed at the curiosity of it. I felt a pit in my stomach. OJ wasn’t asking questions yet. OJ didn’t really converse. He would ask for things... but not about them.

I spoke to my wife about it in the car on the way home, and she told me not to compare. His cousin had older siblings and OJ had a much better vocabulary anyway. I rationalised that she was right. All kids are different. But I couldn’t stop wondering about it.

His first school report came. I was so excited to read it, and to hear all about the amazing progress he was making. It was not good. All the assessments were “Needs Assistance”. I sobbed myself to sleep that night. My wife told me I was being ridiculous and that it was not matric. I was too embarrassed to show it to our parents and families. And that nagging feeling that there was something wrong was still gnawing at me.

His third birthday came and we were invited to his birthday ring at school. I remember clearly watching all the kids shout at the teacher when she made a silly joke and participate in the fun. OJ stood in the corner and played with a drum set, as if the rest of the class wasn’t even there. I felt a massive lump in my throat and blinked back tears as I watched our boy be oblivious to the goings on around him. I called my wife from the car on the way to work in a ball of tears and she said, “Well, you’ve been saying you want to take him for an assessment. Organise it then!” It was her defence mechanism to act out angrily when she was upset. For the first time, she had seen what I had been questioning for months.

That week, we took him to see a highly recommended speech therapist. We explained all his quirks, and she gave them names... “He repeats whole lines from movies and adapts these

to get a message across” – Mitigated Echolalia. “He has to do things in the same way and says the same things in certain situations.” – Scripting. “He sometimes flaps his hands when he gets his excited and loves spinning.” – Stimming. She asked questions about his diet, behaviour and other habits. And then she said, “He does display some aspects of autism spectrum disorder...” I am sure she said other things after that, but I can’t remember any of them. She referred us to an Occupational Therapist who told us that he has Sensory Integration Disorder. The speech therapist suggested we see a psychiatrist as it is easier to get medical aid funding if you have a diagnosis. She suggested a nursery school in our area specifically for “children like OJ with language difficulties”. It was a whirlwind three weeks in which we went from having a perfectly normal little boy to a son with autism.

It has been a year and a half since then and we know that our beautiful boy has so much to offer the world. We have had to mourn the idea of having a ‘normal’ or neurotypical child. We have had to accept that we may never be able to access all his thoughts and dreams. He teaches us things every day. He makes us laugh and cry and scream in frustration. But more love we could never have.

Modern Day Slavery

By Sr Melanie O'Connor

It is still widely thought that the transatlantic slave trade was abolished in 1807 and yet we discover every day how prolific human trafficking is. This pervasive and inhumane slavery is said to be on a par with the two most lucrative businesses in the world: weapons and drugs.



Human trafficking generates up to 32 billion dollars per year worldwide. Human trafficking, like drug trafficking, is difficult to police as it is illegal. Many of us may even find it incomprehensible that slavery still exists, that people become the property of others, are bought and sold, transported all over the world and their labour exploited.

Since 2000 the United Nations has officially referred to human trafficking as Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and see it as a process consisting of three phases: (i) Recruitment (ii) Transportation, and (iii) Exploitation. Human trafficking is often confused with smuggling of people across borders or equated with prostitution. However modern day slavery has two essential elements:

- The slave holder/trafficker has complete control over the slave/victim and
- The victim's labour is exploited. He/she receives little or no pay but rather is debt bonded by the trafficker. Debts keep increasing if the slave breaks the trafficker's rules.

Kevin Bales, Professor of Contemporary Slavery and Research Director of the Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom speaks of two variables he sees as unique to the modern period in that today's slaves are cheap and disposable. Children are sold for very low prices. Victims regularly

encounter health problems and are then discarded because they are no longer of use to their bosses. Latest accounts from the U.S Department of State reveal that Sub-Saharan Africa has reported the highest rate of child trafficking in the World – girls and boys equally. South Africa is said to be a hotspot for human trafficking and very often drug trafficking and human trafficking go together - as well as pornography. Government also suspects that an international child trafficking ring is targeting South Africa. In early 2017, 15 cases of attempted child trafficking were thwarted at OR Tambo International Airport.

Recruitment tactics of traffickers

- It is very important to know how traffickers operate and not to be gullible to empty promises. Methods of approach are many and varied. Some that are quite common include:
- False job offers in newspapers
- A personal approach to be interviewed for modelling or another career
- Using a friend of a person to lure him/her to visit the so-called friend
- Recruiting through social media e.g. if they find you are seeking a bursary, they will offer you one
- Using chloroform to kidnap a person

Pope Francis appeals for more action to be taken against human trafficking. Speaking to crowds in the Vatican Pope Francis said: "Every year thousands of men, women and children are innocent victims of labour and sexual exploitation and organ trafficking. It seems to me that we are so accustomed to this that we consider it a normal occurrence. This is ugly and cruel and criminal. I would like to draw on everyone's commitment to make sure this abhorrent plague, a form of modern slavery, is adequately countered".

A Pastoral Letter from the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference states:

.....
"We ask that the month of February each year be dedicated to the promotion of Human Trafficking Awareness and that 8 February be dedicated as a Day of Prayer for all who are or have been trafficked. The 8th of February is the feast of St Josephine Bakhita, the Patron Saint of Sudan, herself a victim of human trafficking at the tender age of 9."
.....



Caring for Teachers

By Suzy Bernstein

St Theresa's Primary School in Welcome Estate, Athlone, which has 640 learners is one of several Catholic schools in the Western Cape. The Principal, Rochelle Davids, arranged a wellness day in September. More than 40 staff members participated. On the day the hall was full of exhibitors including GEMS (Government Employees Medical Scheme) nurses, who measured blood pressure, checked cholesterol and did some basic health checks. There was also an optometrist who screened people's eyes.

Greg Vlotman, who is a facilitator and coach at SKCI Education and Development Solutions gave a talk. He spoke of the dire situation that the teaching community are facing, in areas like the Cape Flats. "Some teachers are going to school wearing bullet proof vests", Vlotman says. "We have tough jobs and it's not going to get any easier. Everything plays out in your classroom, and we have to find ways every day".

Vlotman showed the audience a video of Arianna Huffington's talks on the value of sleep (Huffington is the co-founder and editor of the Huffington Post). Huffington herself collapsed one day from exhaustion, burnout and sleep deprivation, and she says this was her wake up call. She says "When we are running on empty, we are also losing the joy of life. It's not just about productivity – we are also not fully present." According to her, she became more successful after learning that she had to take care of herself. She says that on no sleep she was making bad decisions.

It is more than likely that children and staff could benefit from better sleep. Teachers are often known to relinquish a good night's sleep, whilst trying to catch up on work. Then the next morning they have to function and so the vicious cycle begins again. As well as this, given the dire home situations that some of the children live in, it is probable that they are suffering from interrupted sleep patterns and possibly coming to school exhausted. Getting a good night's sleep is one of the many ways in which we need to learn to take care of ourselves. Given the tough job the staff are doing every day and managing children who come out of such difficult circumstances, a good nights rest could well equip them to better handle the environment they are in.

SLEEP TIPS

- Get between 7–9 hours of sleep per night.
- Create a nighttime ritual that allows a time of transition for bed/sleeptime.
- Leave your devices in another room before you go to sleep.
- Don't consume caffeine late in the day.
- Have a warm bath or do some relaxation exercises before going to sleep.
- Sleep in a quiet, dark room.



Thank you to all the schools who participated in the LEAVE YOUR PRINT CAMPAIGN for 2018

An amount of **R309 450.35** has been raised!

The money will be used to build toilets in Catholic schools that do not have toilets and/or renovate derelict toilet blocks.



Reflection from a learner

I remember the days when I used to cry that my shoes were not beautiful like my friend's until I realised that there was someone who goes to school barefoot every day. Having to undergo such pain made me realise how fortunate I am. I got experience just a taste of the pain felt by the needy every day, even on cold days.

It was painful yet educative for those who didn't know how other people are living, it was an eye opener. When we were first told about the Leave Your Print Campaign we thought to ourselves that we will never do such a thing, "I cannot go to school barefoot while my parents bought me shoes to wear" one of the grade 12s said. "It was the day before my mother told me that she gave the next door neighbour my shoes because his parents couldn't afford any. It hit me so hard when I started to realise that it is not a choice who walks barefoot because of some financial circumstances".

How foolish it is for him who cries for a large burger while others sleep hungry.

What touched me the most was to realise that the project was implemented by someone like us but the only difference is that she had a heart of justice. We were challenged by the words of our physical science teacher as she made us aware that as we take on this journey we are urged not only to sympathise but also to help those in need of our help. We were put in the same situation as those who are disadvantaged so as to develop some sense of compassion.

There is this saying that our Chaplain likes to use, "Compassion alone is a waste, but a treasure in the good soil of giving". We offered gifts with the hope that they may touch souls, not the hands but the hearts of the needy with more blessings. It was one of kind.

Indeed we have left a footprint, not on the soil of Pax College but on the hearts of those we helped. May this be the start of such projects because trust me they are educative, inspiring and helpful. The spirit of helping those who need our help shall ever be engraved on our hands and hearts. Through this campaign we have learnt nothing but to reach out to those who need our help and also to count our blessings because through that we are able to realise that we are blessed.

The day was one of its kind. It had marked the beginning of a journey of caring and love.





Subsidiarity and Solidarity in Catholic Schools

By Kyle Lauf



Catholic Social Teaching emphasises the value of each human being in the social context. Created in the image of God, humans, male and female, are endowed by the Creator with individual dignity as well as roles within social relationships.

As a person grows up they acquire more roles: sons and daughters are also siblings, cousins, acquaintances, friends, and pupils. They grow up to be students, employees, neighbours, life-partners; wives and husbands, citizens, tax payers, mothers and fathers.

Schools prepare young people for their future roles in society, and are in fact small societies in their own right. While teachers and the academic programme prepare students to pass examinations, schools are so much more than that. Schools as social contexts are microcosms of society where we are presented with the opportunity to build communities of social role-players who must learn to live together, not in isolation, but as fellow human beings and image-bearers of God.

Schools teach so much more than the curriculum. We meet new people, make friends, learn to co-operate with authority and with each other, we learn to manage our time, manage conflicts, and we learn resilience. School communities are places where we learn how to live and experience life together with people from other backgrounds and diverse communities. The sum total of learning in schools must contribute to the building of a common good for the benefit of society.

The concept of solidarity refers to the way people share their lives together in unity or fraternity. In schools this can be demonstrated in the unity of school spirit that is fostered by events like an inter-house sports day or a school singing contest. In South Africa, many schools observe Heritage Day by allowing pupils to wear traditional or cultural attire – this uniquely encourages unity in our country's diversity.

Besides the spiritual aspect which is central in religion, praying together and attending Mass are opportunities and expressions of solidarity where learners and educators alike are equal under God. Even non-Catholic members of the school community from other faith backgrounds are invited to participate in this solidarity.

The concept of subsidiarity refers to conditions in a Christian community where decision making and the exercising of power is encouraged at the lowest level compatible with the common good. This means that power must not be concentrated in the hands of the few – even if they are management or leadership. Subsidiarity is a participatory delegation of authority that activates people, allowing them to flourish in their various positions.

In many respects, teachers in our schools are empowered in this way. They act as educational role-players imparting knowledge, skills and life wisdom to their learners. They act within the requirements of the national curriculum and the school's ethos but make many independent decisions each day.

Subsidiarity applied to the educational staff of a school means that teachers must be empowered to innovate and adapt to their learners' specific learning needs by being relevant to each educational situation. Where teachers are restricted by overly prescriptive conditions, whether in the curriculum or school environment, they feel they are mere cogs in a machine without freedom to make essential decisions.

But the practice of subsidiarity in the educational context also means that schools must stimulate conditions for every learner to have opportunities

to exercise power. Not haphazard or unplanned power, not power that must be fought over and hoarded, but power in love and freedom to exercise rational and careful planning and decision making within school policies and ethos. It also means that we hold each other accountable.

Conditions to exercise power include student representative councils and learner driven school activities but should extend beyond those things to the very teaching and learning situations. Learners are engaged and active agents in the process of their own education.

Similarly, teachers do not need to live up to the false expectation that they alone are the all-knowing source of subject knowledge. Professional educators must be encouraged to keep learning how to teach their subjects and their pupils, and how to be present in the lives of their students in this unique role as educators.

Our role model in this is of course Jesus Christ, whose disciples called him rabbi – teacher. The gospels describe how the Lord taught and lived among those he came to save – teaching through parables, healing the sick, raising the dead and dwelling among us (Emmanuel – God is with us). Christ's incarnation is God's solidarity with the fallen human race; growing up in a human community and culture, breaking bread, sharing redemption stories, sacrificing himself in his passion, death and resurrection. It is also our model in the social context as the human form he took, his poverty on earth, his sorrow and humiliation in life and death teach us what it means to practice subsidiarity.



Meditation Gardens

By Paul Faller

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. [Genesis 2:2]

Sabbath

What does it mean to say God rested? Is it an anthropomorphism that recognises our need for Sabbath? Perhaps in God there is no difference between work and rest. As Eastern wisdom has it:

The Way is ever without action, yet nothing is left undone. [Tao Te Ching 37]

Whatever the truth, our busy, sometimes frenetic, lives need a break from work. The need for the seventh day rest or Sabbath predates Judaism and according to some commentators was even known and practiced in ancient Babylon. In fact, the word 'Sabbath' or close variations thereof appear in many of the oldest known languages.

We usually think of 'Sabbath' in terms of time but there is an equal need for Sabbath spaces to which we can retire for conscious or prayerful rest. And there is no place more conducive to rest than a garden. Jesus promises one of those crucified with him: "Today you will be with me in Paradise," and the Qur'an repeatedly promises the believers that they will be "the Companions of the Garden, remaining in it timelessly, for ever."

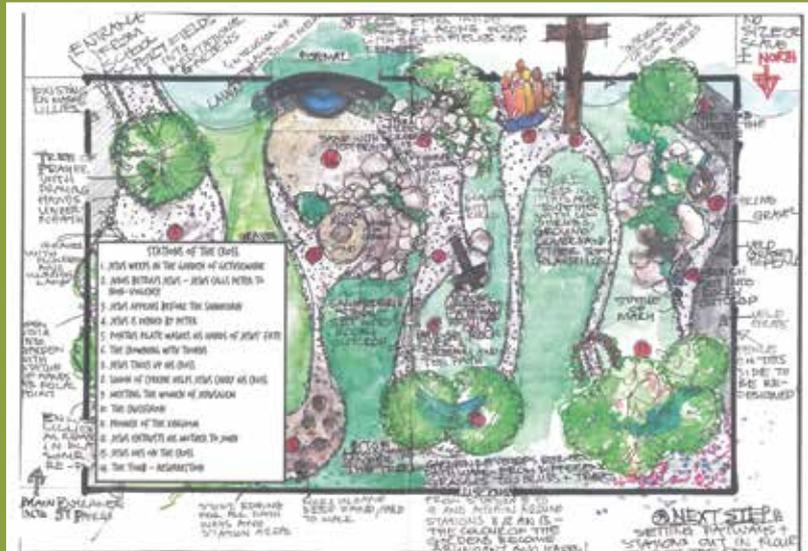
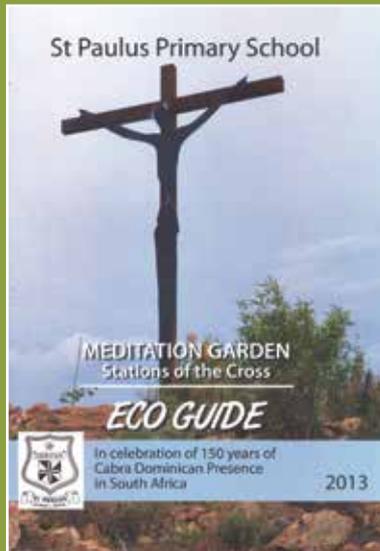
What about your school does it have any Sabbath spaces? The chapel or prayer room are such spaces, but some of our schools have developed a further place for restful contemplation – the meditation garden. I recently visited two of these gardens, both in Pretoria, but varying markedly in their character and intention – hence the subtitle of this piece.

The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. [Isaiah 58:11]

St Paulus Primary School Meditation Garden

The garden at St Paulus is situated on an outcrop in the school grounds and forms a Way of the Cross inspired by the Good Friday Stations of Pope Benedict XVI. The large iron crucifix that overlooks the Way utilises a no-longer functioning Telkom pole. Specially selected plants with religious significance, both indigenous and exotic, illustrate each station. The nature of the surface on which one walks changes to symbolise that particular part of the Way.

The layout of the Way shown here is taken from the 24-page Eco Guide to the garden produced by St Paulus. For further information, contact Myriam van der Wielen, the HOD for Pastoral Care.



Assumption Convent Meditation Garden

While the Garden at St Paulus takes us from Gethsemane to the Cross, the one designed and curated by Carl Kruger, a landscape designer at Assumption Convent School in Pretoria North, has quite a contrasting character. It is more like the rooms in the Father's house that Jesus tells his disciples of. In fact, covering an L-shaped piece of formerly unused ground, it is divided into a number of 'rooms' including an entrance hall, and places for meeting and relaxation. A walk through the garden culminates in a shrine – a place for intentional meditation, prayer or worship.

Colours in the garden, including those in the sculpted objects, have a significant connection with a set of values that the school fosters and upholds: respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and good citizenship.



Your School?

Do you have any Sabbath spaces in your school such as the ones featured above? I encourage you to give some thought to creating a meditation garden. The presence of such will have a marked effect on your environment. It will be a place for students, teachers, parents and visitors alike where silence is the language spoken, and peace the gift to all who enter there.



Supporting Language Learning in the Classroom: The Role of the Teacher

By Carol Brenner

We live in a linguistically and culturally diverse country. Many countries have one or two official languages, some have three or four. South Africa has 12, including South African Sign Language.

Our reality is that many of our learners begin formal education, the start to their academic careers, learning in their second or even third language. Furthermore, many children, due to circumstance or developmental predisposition, begin formal education without a solid language foundation which is the basis upon which metalinguistic language concepts, phonological skills, academic vocabulary as well as abstract thinking

and reasoning skills are built. And it is these language and cognitive skills which are acquired on top of that language foundation, that are a requirement for successful progression through school. Thus, the need for teachers to understand how language is acquired and to ensure that the classroom is an environment that is supportive of the acquisition of language given the challenges many children face.

Language is typically learnt by hearing the spoken word. It goes without saying that a child with a hearing impairment will struggle to acquire language due to a lack of exposure to spoken language. In the same way, if a child hears few words and is not engaged in conversation and discussion, if a child is rarely read to, sung to, or talked with, he or she cannot be expected to have advanced or even average language ability.

Research has shown that children from verbally and cognitively impoverished settings are greatly at risk for speech and language delays and in more extreme situations, children neglected by their caregivers and rarely spoken with can have completely underdeveloped speech and language skills. Fortunately, these delays can be reversed by ensuring a stimulating language environment which is the task of the teacher and the school in many situations. The role the teacher plays, given the significant number hours the child spends at school during the day, cannot be underestimated.

The role of the teacher when working with families:

- **To educate parents on the importance of talking to their children.** Talking about daily routines, discussing the events of the day at a family dinner, planning and preparing meals together ... these are all opportunities to build vocabulary, model the grammatical skills of a language, develop sequencing and coherence in language and develop pragmatic language, i.e.: how to use language in different social contexts. Even if the home language of the family is different from the language of instruction, a good model of language should be encouraged. Parents should speak the language in which they feel comfortable and competent.
- **Encourage parents to ask their children open ended questions** to engage in discourse such as narratives and descriptive language. For example: “tell me about the most interesting part of

your day?” rather than “how was your day?” or “tell me how you made that beautiful craft in art today” rather than “what did you make in art today?”

- **Set homework tasks where children have to find out about culture or ancestry.** Where families can engage and discuss family traditions, recipes etc. Where parents and grandparents can tell stories about their childhoods and develop narrative skills. These stories can be supported with photos, drawings, or artefacts and the children can use them as material for recall and story retelling within the classroom.
- **Encourage reading.** Ensure there are frequent opportunities to read for leisure during the school day, for example when classwork is completed. Build a reading corner. Allow children to make their own books for the reading corner. Make books which can be enjoyed by all, as a class project.
- **If parents are literate, it should be expected that they read to their young children daily.** Being read to even beyond the foundation phase when children are able to read to themselves, develops vocabulary skills, helps children learn to listen, improves focus and concentration, expands general knowledge, encourages imagination and results in better written language abilities.
- **Discourage screen time in the home.** This includes TV, iPad, play stations and cell phones. Statistics show there is an increase in expressive language delay (not to mention concentration difficulty) with the increase of screen time in the developing brain.

In the Classroom:

- **Use different senses and modalities to teach.** People all learn through different senses. For a child who learns through the auditory channel being able to talk or recite what has been learnt will allow opportunity to solidify new material. For a child with difficulty

processing spoken language however, visual, tactile and kinaesthetic learning will ensure better retention and application of concepts.

Visual learners should be allowed to draw pictures, diagrams and maps while listening to the teacher or they may do well given reflection time after a lesson where they can stop and visualise or draw what they have just learnt. Visual input to support learning is useful in teaching concepts such as before, after and between. Visual representations can also be used to teach comparisons and similarities, using charts and grids.

Visual material and pictures to support language learning are plentiful in the form of advertisements, old calendars, magazines, recyclable materials etc and are easily incorporated in the classroom with schedules and calendars.

Children who are tactile-kinaesthetic learners learn through touch and movement and do well to take breaks during lessons and move around. They should be allowed to write down their own notes and may do well if allowed to stand or move while reciting information or learning new material.

Through movement the understanding and use of prepositions is made tangible, e.g.: moving through a tunnel, standing behind, in front or next to a chair etc. Through touch, properties such as hot, cold, rough, smooth, silky, hard, brittle etc are solidified.

- **Teach and encourage learning through rhyme and song.** Speech and language is rhythmic and there is natural stress on certain syllables which makes retention and recall easier in rhyme. Think of nursery rhymes learnt as a young child, these stay with a person for ever.



- **Make use of acronyms and stories to remember facts, sequences, dates and spelling.**

For example:

Naughty spelt with the first letter of every word in the sentence:
Nancy And Uncle Gary Have Tried Yoga.

Friend - Remember that there is an 'i' in "friend". I will be your friend to the end. OR I have to be a friend to have a friend.

Five long vowel sounds in English are remembered from the story about a boy who owed his friend named "E" money and only remembered to pay it when he saw him walking on the opposite side of the road, so he shouted: Ay E, I Owe yoU...money [A E I O U]

- **Ensure there is opportunity to play games for learning.** Games allow opportunity for repetition, have order and sequences and add meaning for the child.
- **Assign conversation buddies.** Encourage children to have conversations with each other during the day. They can be facilitated to discuss various topics with their conversation buddies.

Topics might include what they did over the weekend, what they thought of a story, who they know that reminds them of a character in a book etc.

- **Work in themes.** Using a theme across subjects and over more than a few days allows time for the revision of new vocabulary which is introduced at the beginning of a theme and provides opportunity for concepts and ideas to be explored more deeply and extensively. The chance of extending and expanding the themes across subjects ensures a richer and deeper understanding.
- **Create vocabulary walls or trees** which can be placed in the classroom and added to as new words are learnt. This provides an easy reference and opportunity for revision and integration of new words
- **Engage children in listening exercises.** We often forget that language is both receptive and expressive. Make sure that children don't just mimic words and learn to say things. It is essential that children are listening, receiving accurately and processing effectively what they

hear. Introduce exercises where children are asked to repeat back what they heard you say (you may be amazed at how varied and sometimes inaccurate their interpretations can be).

Games such as broken telephone are entertaining and hone in on these skills. In this game one child whispers a message into another's ear and the message goes around the whole class before it is said out loud.

The foundation for literacy skills is language (speaking and listening) and the task of the teacher is to teach literacy (reading, writing and thinking). While a class of children of the same age is composed of children with varying degrees of language ability, background and knowledge it remains the task of the teacher to ensure a stimulating language environment with language support for children with different learning styles and varied language ability. Furthermore, the teacher is at the front line as a role model, thus it is important to help families understand the value of language exposure at home and assist in encouraging the further development of these skills. ■

THE GUARDIAN



ANONYMOUS INCIDENT REPORTING & INVESTIGATION

The Guardian has assisted many schools across the country in acquiring their criminal clearances (police clearances), and have screened numerous teachers, ensuring that employees have been fully vetted and align themselves to the school's policy.

The Guardian can conduct these checks for you at your school for all teachers and support staff.

The service includes: -

An affidavit (which we provide) must be completed by all employees. (no queuing in the Charge Office);

Biometric/Electronic fingerprinting done for all employees (no ink or waiting in queues)

Capturing of fingerprints takes a maximum of 5/7 minutes per/ person.

Regular follow up with the necessary authorities until certificates are received by Employer (approximately 2 to 3 weeks) (not 4 to 6 months)

All the above is done at your premises and each staff member would be away from their classroom/workstation for +- 5mins.

Contact us for information

Nick Ram/Cherese

031 001 0104

nick@theguardian.co.za or

cherese@theguardian.co.za



Schooling in the Netherlands

A brief overview of the Dutch
education system

By Mark Potterton

Dutch schools take pride in having significant autonomy. The education system is based on the principle of freedom of education which is guaranteed by the Dutch Constitution. Each resident in the Netherlands has the right to establish a school, determine the principles on which the school is based, and organise instruction in that school. Public and private schools (or school boards) may decide how and to a large extent, when to teach the core objectives of the Dutch curriculum based on their religious, philosophical, or pedagogical views and principles.

Two-thirds of schools at the primary level are privately run. The majority of private schools are Roman Catholic or Protestant, but there also are other religious schools and schools based on other philosophical principles. The educational approach of a small number of public and private schools is based on the ideas of educational thinkers such as Maria Montessori, Peter Petersen, Célestin Freinet, and Rudolf Steiner. Almost all public and private school types are funded by the central government and by the municipalities. Only a small number of schools (offering primary and/or secondary education) are fully financed by parents.

There is almost no educational provision for children under the age of 4. There are day nurseries or crèches for children between 6 weeks and 4 years old. These nurseries are for working parents and don't have a formal role. There are also play groups which are open for a few hours a week.

Compulsory education begins on the first day of the month following a child's fifth birthday and either concludes at the end of the school year of the student's 16th birthday, when she or will obtain a diploma, or at the end of the school year of the student's 18th birthday.



The basics of reading, writing, and mathematics usually are not taught until the first year of primary education. Together, pre-primary and primary education consists of eight grades, so most children are 12 years old when they begin secondary education.

Stevenshof School, Leiden

There are three separate primary schools located on this one site, radiating from a central hub. One Protestant, another Catholic and the third a Community school. They are all autonomous and only share the same gym building. The buildings are well kept and brightly coloured. The design allows light to fill the classrooms and the high ceilings provide a sense of generous space and airiness. The building is welcoming and there is a feeling of quiet busy-ness

I visited a class with five-year-olds who

were working in different groups on a range of activities. The teacher explained what they were doing and showed me the laminated plastic cards that explained the arrangement of the day. After about five minutes he asked the children to line up and let them out to play in the adjacent playground while we continued our discussion. I noticed the rich classroom environment with play corners, blocks, puzzles, toys and so forth. The playground was another space with a lot of resources available. We moved next door to a class of Year Two children who were engaging with a very tall young teacher who was in his second year in the job. Here the children had been discussing a story that they had read. I was impressed with the level of engagement and the quiet industry in the class.

I was very impressed with the children's ability to work independently. I didn't see much whole class teaching in any of the schools I visited. Teachers were good at organizing their classes into smaller independent groups and assigning work to the groups.

I noticed a colourful poster on the wall with a Kanjer Training logo. The poster had four panels with pictures of different animals. Robbert then showed me the four caps - white, black, red and yellow - hanging on the wall. The teachers had all been trained in this method which promoted prosocial behaviour. According to the teachers I spoke to the approach was very effective.

Topper Training is one of the most widely disseminated programmes on social emotional development and bullying in the Netherlands. The Dutch word 'Kanjert' (in Kanjertraining) does not have a direct translation into English, but means something like a champion / hero /tiger /topper. Kanjertraining was originally translated into TIGER (Training I Go for Emotional well-being and Respect). Later on, Toppertraining Foundation translated all materials of the method, and the word 'Topper' was chosen for 'Kanjert': hence, the method was called Topper Training in English. In the intervention, a 'Topper' is someone who is authentic, trustworthy, socially competent and respectful to others and him/herself. A 'Topper' has a constructive coping strategy: he/she searches for respectful solutions on the basis of equality.

The intervention was first developed in 1996 by a psychologist and former primary school teacher (Topper Training Foundation, 2007a). He based the training on his experiences with children in primary and secondary school. Topper Training is a multimodal method that includes prescribed lessons and directions for pedagogic action, school policy and parental involvement. The programme focuses on the attitudes and behaviour of children, educators, the head of the school and parents.

Source: From the introduction to Vlieg, L. (2015) Effects of Kanjertraining on the Emotional Problems, Behaviour Problems and Classroom Outcomes. PhD Dissertation: University of Utrecht.

De Telders School, Leiden

De Telders is located on the outskirts of the city centre of Leiden. The building is solid but a bit run down as the school is waiting to be relocated to a more modern building a couple of blocks away. De Telders School is proud of its international links. Mr Geirnaert leads the programme to ensure that the school develops its international profile and contacts. The school accommodates children from around the world who engage in an intensive Dutch language programme.

The school encourages parent involvement and provides many opportunities for



engagement. This was true of all the schools I visited. Mr Van Hasselt, for example, emphasised that all parents come to parents' evenings as this is expected of them.

Each of the schools visited emphasised the importance of children feeling safe. The three schools used Kanjer Training to teach children to interact with each other in a positive way. The programme teaches them to stand up for themselves and to say what they like or dislike, in order to enjoy school. Problems like fighting or bullying are resolved in the Kanjer way.

De Telders' aim was for education that suited every child. This meant that in addition to the classroom interaction, each child received one-on-one supervision. The school was able to offer this extra support through implementing the principles of 'independent working'. The learning environment was structured in such a way that the teachers were given space to guide pupils in groups or as individuals. The school set out to teach the children how to deal with deferred attention, make choices and solve problems themselves.

The school used different working methods in groups, and used co-

operative learning and other 21st century learning skills. Children practiced skills such as listening, asking questions, helping and thanking. Children were set challenges and worked in small groups with each other to solve problems. To recap, they practised skills like:

- working together;
- critical thinking (through questions and thinking from different perspectives);
- problem solving skills (problem identification, analysis, devising solutions and making choices);
- ICT skills;
- Communication;
- Self-regulating ability (setting goals and planning).

Language was one of the focuses of the school and the school had two transition classes: 'International Schakelklassen' and the 'TOP-class'. On Wednesday afternoons, twelve pupils from the upper school were offered extended school hours. They called this transition class the TOP-class and it was meant to give children an extra language stimulus in the field of vocabulary, reading comprehension and oral language skills.

An 'International Schakelklas' (ISK) is connected to the Telders School. This class is for children aged 6 to 12 years who have lived in the Netherlands for less than a year and who had little, or no command, of the Dutch language. The aim was to teach pupils Dutch and to get them acquainted with Dutch culture and customs. They also took classes in the regular groups to promote integration. Pupils stayed in this transition class for a maximum of one year, and then moved through the school, or to a primary school in their own neighbourhood. There were a number of refugee children from Syria participating in this class.

Anne Frank Montessori School, Amsterdam Zuid

I soon realized that this was not the best time of year to visit a school. The principal, Mr Bas, was welcoming, but visibly distracted. It was his last week at school before he retired. The teachers at the school had challenged him to teach again. So he was running a massive art project across the school with all of the classes in the school - he was clearly enjoying the challenge.

Mr Bas assigned an eleven-year old boy to me after spending 10 minutes briefing me. He said that this 'kid'



While the other children worked in groups the teacher was working with one girl on her own, taking her through some of the work she had missed when she was absent. The children then went out into the playground where some climbed up the jungle gym and others rode bikes and so forth.

spoke good English and knew the school well and would provide me with good insights.

I was introduced to a teacher who was responsible for four-year-olds. I sat and observed her class. The class had been divided into small groups of three to four who were all engaged in different small group activities. One group was building a Lego town, another group were building a tower with wooden blocks, another was playing with sand.

While the other children worked in groups the teacher was working with one girl on her own, taking her through some of the work she had missed when she was absent. The children then went out into the playground where some climbed up the jungle gym and others rode bikes and so forth.

After my 40 minutes in a preschool class observing small group work, I had a tour of the school through the eyes of a child. My guide was very

eager to share, and was able to explain all sorts of curriculum initiatives at the school. He was also proud to take me to classroom where a teacher was teaching Dutch to some Moroccan women who helped out at lunch times. He also insisted on taking me to meet the general handyman; who he insisted should show me how the photocopier machine worked.

Key observations

- Some key observations in the schools:
- Class sizes ranged from 26 to 35. The primary schools were relatively small and ranged from around 250 to 300 pupils. There was a lot of differentiation in the primary school classroom, with one teacher reporting four levels of differentiation in his class.
- The facilities were modern, clean and up-to-date. There were interactive TV screens in all classrooms, but very little emphasis

was placed on technology as such. Technology was seen as enhancing the educational experience of the child.

- There was very little whole class teaching done by teachers. A lot of the focus was placed on group work and offering individual support. Teachers tended to work with smaller groups of children at a time.
- The children had developed excellent skills which allowed them to work in small groups without any direct supervision from the teacher. This was very positive as it allowed teachers to spend more time with pupils who required more support.
- The relationships between pupils and their teachers were very friendly and easy. I never saw, or heard, any teacher raise their voice while visiting classes.

Book Review

Albertina Sisulu abridged by Sindiwe Magona and Elinor Sisulu

Sindiwe Magona has distilled the story of Albertina Sisulu from the magnificent account of the whole Sisulu family's life-long involvement in the struggle for freedom, equality and justice in South Africa that was written by Elinor Sisulu and published in 2002.

Albertina Sisulu abridged by Sindiwe Magona and Elinor Sisulu

Language: English

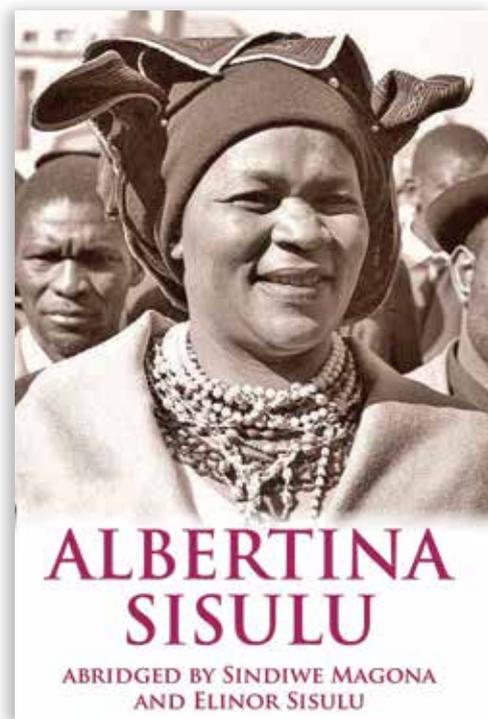
Genre: Biography

Age range: 15 – 20

Publisher: David Philip Publishers (Pty) Ltd., 2018

ISBN 978 1 4856 2285 7 (paperback)

Price: R100-00.



Review by: M J Daymond

Albertina Sisulu's story of courage and determination is told for young adult readers and, released in the centenary year of her birth and during August, Women's Month, it makes a stirring contribution to the world-wide celebration of women. It is illustrated by photographs and drawings by Tasha St John-Reid, and there is a useful time-line at the end.

The opening chapters give what are perhaps little-known details of Albertina's young life in the Eastern Cape. Known in her infancy as Ntsiki (short for Nontsikelelo, from the isiXhosa word for a blessing) and then as Albertina which she chose for her school name, she was raised largely by her grandparents because her mother's health was poor. Her responsibilities increased dramatically when her dying father asked her to take care of her four younger siblings. Not yet out of childhood herself as she shouldered her new role, Albertina already showed the qualities of calm resolution that she would need as wife and mother to the Sisulu family, and indeed, as Mother to the Nation, as she was known during the struggle.

Once she had moved to Johannesburg to study nursing, and had met and married Walter Sisulu, Albertina's story

follows what may be more familiar lines for those who know the country's recent political past. But as this has tended to be dominated by the part played by men, it is important for young people today to appreciate what was required of women during the freedom struggle. They too were persecuted, harassed and tried under a totally unjust set of laws. For example, Albertina was the first woman to be arrested under the General Laws Amendment Act of 1963 which enabled the police to hold prisoners for 90 days without charge, and then to renew their imprisonment at will. As Walter had gone underground, her arrest left no one at home to look after the young children who had just come home for the holidays. Although desperately worried for her family, Albertina did not give the police the information they were determined to get from her.

Magona's lucid account of this heroic woman continues until 1994, when the first democratically elected parliament sat – with Albertina as one of the elected MPs – and when the Sisulus celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. Besides having been the main bread-winner in the family throughout the struggle years, Albertina was, as the story concludes, “a unifying force in our nation, a giant of the liberation struggle, and an inspiration to all humanity.”

Margaret Daymond, is professor emeritus in the English Department at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and a fellow of the university. Most of her research has been on women's writing. She has edited fiction by writers such as Bessie Head, Lauretta Ngcobo, Frances Colenso and Goretti Kyomuhendo as well as major anthologies of women's writing (Women Writing Africa: The Southern Region, New York 2003) and feminist criticism (South African Feminisms, New York 1996).



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