



BELLAVISTA

# NEWSLETTER

DEVELOPING MINDS

5 of 2021

What are you cultivating? An appeal from a Principal's heart...



*Grace.* Some choose to cultivate grace. It's an action and an event. Grace is an atmosphere to live in. It is a place of tolerance and pardon. Exercising grace doesn't mean being insincere. It is, perhaps, closer to transparency and vulnerability than kindness is. It is about extending mercy and stepping back from our own immediate need or ire to consider that the other person is just that, a person. All human beings make mistakes. Grace allows a measure of fallibility in another and within ourselves, all the while holding out for good. Grace is also about etiquette. It involves respect and dignity in our dealings with others. We need grace now more than ever.

*Criticism and judgment.* Some choose (an action and a decision) to indulge and dish up bucket loads of criticism and judgment. It is not that criticism cannot be constructive. Of course it can. But, when it is a default position or when it casts harsh and uninformed aspersions over someone else's character, and it lingers in the realm of gossip, it's hardly constructive, is it? Criticism and judgment elicit only one response from the victim: dread. Criticism is permissible. However, not all fault finding is helpful in reaching the right outcome in the context of a relationship.

*Kindness.* "Be the I in kind". Kindness is a decision (an action and a choice) that is divorced from the decisions and actions of others. No one can earn the kindness of another. It is offered freely by the person extending it. Very often, the recipient of kindness may not deserve it. The ultimate test of kindness is to extend it when you have been wronged. It is a disposition that takes a person towards grace.

*Discord.* Some people cultivate discord and choose to divide the community by sowing discontent. They're the walnuts in the field of marigolds. Nothing grows in the shade of a walnut tree or anywhere near its roots. It kills other life. Gossip, criticism and judgment all cause discord. These behaviours break individuals and destroy communities.

Why write about these things this March? Essentially, if I don't call even one or two instances of discord and aspersion out loudly, our school's commitment to kindness and grace will be a voiceless whisper in the waterfall. It is not difficult to point divisive, hurtful behaviour out to children. Our balance of power as adults gives us permission to lead them away from it. We are obligated to instil empathy and compassion in our offspring. However, it is not so easy to point out to adults that their responses or actions are causing harm. Yet, I must.

In this last week, I was alarmed at a handful emails trafficking towards teachers as recipients. The tones of judgment and criticism, the hurtful language and the assertion of dominance fired off, even when informed of the context and specifics, astounded me. Do teachers make mistakes? Often. Do professionals fatigue? Very much. Right now, the care profession globally is close to burnout. Might a teacher be irritable? Sometimes. Will a teacher ever be cross? Not nearly as grumpy as you might be with your children as a very human parent. Do children need to relay the story at home from their perspective? Always. Might they be very upset? If they feel wronged or disappointed, yes. Does this make their version the full picture? Never. We know that there are always two sides to a story. Will the unkind actions of one or two parents drive a passionate, dedicated and committed educator out of the profession? Every single time. Would I tolerate language, accusation and maligning commentary towards a parent or child from a member of staff? Absolutely not. I count it pure joy that, at this school, I have never had to deal with something of this nature. The staff respect and honour the parents and the children.

As a school leader, I traverse an interesting matrix of relationships between stakeholders – precious children, parents, caregivers and guardians, relating school colleagues, suppliers, donors, alumni, governors, officials and neighbours. Relationships can be tested. Last year, these were stretched in ways that we might never have conceived possible. Yet, the partnerships held firm. I am compelled to honour every dimension of this Bellavista School family. Everyone engaging the entity has one purpose only – safely raising and carefully readying our children to return to mainstream schooling, life and living.

As time marches on from 2020 through 2021, experts worldwide are joining a chorus. Trauma abounds. The restrictions and uncertainty have unleashed unprecedented amounts of uncertainty and anxiety on us all, including children. If you have a child prone to anxiety, it is likely worse now. He or she may be in fight, fright, freeze mode and not even be sure why. There certainly won't be a point of blame anywhere – not your home environment and not the school's. Together, we need to help our children on a recovery, and it will take communication and care from your side and ours to bring the repair.

I appeal to every parent to choose grace and kindness in dealing with the teachers, support staff and therapists who are pushing through compassion fatigue and physical exhaustion to ensure the safe passage of your children in a pandemic event. No person here will choose to do harm. Every person employed is committed to doing what it takes to support and meet the needs of every child in our collective care. Before casting judgment at any fallibility, or leaping into harsh and demeaning commentary in an email or text message, please stop and consider the relationship that this professional has committed to voluntarily. He or she will bring an approach that may not match your parenting style. It will likely complement it if you allow it to. It is the diversity in the village that rears children who are best prepared for life outside of the protected waters of Bellavista School. We are fifty four years into the history of the school,

and we know that our approach works. Children need boundaries, routine, love and unconditional acceptance. They need to know that they can make mistakes, and it doesn't come with relational consequence. They also need us to believe in their potential, their future and their hope. The market is not saturated with professionals who are willing to spend themselves like the Bellavista School team.

My appeal is that you hold them respectfully, kindly and supportively. Approach them in person with a view to resolve an issue or to bring your child's perspective if you are concerned. Allow yourself to get to know them and their style. You sit with a treasure trove before you. Help your child deal with difference and with making mistakes themselves. No matter how heated you get, remember, we are all in this, together.

### **Staff News**

Welcome to Hastings Nyirenda who has started marimba classes in rotation groups in grades 3, 4 and 5. Hearing the music strike up again is a delight!

Also, welcome to Shimi Makhanya who takes over from Kian Ainley at the front desk. We bid farewell to Kian who has completed a two-year internship with us and now wends his way to start life in the UK.

Congratulations to Romy Genende (Saunders) and her husband on the birth of their precious baby girl. We wish Nisi Cohen and her husband joy as they await the arrival of their first born. Mrs Mandy Hanouch, with whom the school has a long history, will begin to take hand over of Nisi's caseload in the next few weeks.

In anticipation of a beautiful celebration, we wish Drew Holman a happy and memorable wedding this April!

Mrs Sharona Smith leaves Bellavista School at the end of April to join her husband, Anthony, in England. I thank her for her years of faithful and diligent service. Mrs Nicole Lotter, who is also well known to us, takes hand over of the class in the next few weeks.

Thank you to Mrs Romy Ancer for so capably filling the locum role in the Remedial Department this past term. Romy will hand over to Christine Botha who commences in the second term.

### **Dates ahead**

- This week and next, staff are involved in parent feedback meetings. Please do be alert to timetabling arrangements that are made in this regard.
- Extra murals for Gr 4 – 7 will end this week, Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March
- Extra murals for Term 2 will start on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> May. The children will make their choices during the course of this week at school.
- The school closes at 10h00 on 31 March 2021, for the April holidays.
- Term Two reopens on 28 April 2021 at 08h00 for all.

## Holiday Clubs

A number of parents have expressed interest in holiday clubs. We are pursuing and will advertise if there is enough commitment in Grades 3-7:

- Soccer Clinic
- Lego Robotics
- Touch Typing

Please indicate your interest here: <https://forms.gle/vsDNnKXkEissFW1w9>

## Term Two intentions

Subject to being prohibited by any COVID-19 related regulations that could be applied over the month of April, we hope to bring some changes to our programme that further the reintegration of what would be our 'usual' practice:

- 08h00 will remain the start time for all grades except Grade R who commence at 07h45 via the same access points.
- Grade R close at 12h45 every day; Grades 1 and 2 close at 13h30 every day; Grades 3 – 7 Monday at 14h00, Tuesday and Thursday at 14h00 unless taking part in sport, then 15h00; Wed and Fri – 13h30.
- Grades 3-7 resume a full sport and cultural programme from Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> May, ending their day at 15h00 after sport each Tuesday and Thursday. *For the second term, participation will remain optional.* If a child in these grades elects not to participate in the sport programme, the school day will end at 2pm.
- 'Circle group', our weekly peer mentoring programme, will resume each Wednesday morning. The groups will be organised internally.
- We will resume assemblies in the hall each week, but with alternating grades in attendance.
- *Coffee and Cognition* as well as *Book Club* mornings to support parents on the journey of raising their child will resume. Notices with details will follow in the new term.
- Netball and soccer fixtures can only resume if regulations permit. That said, we remain cautious of potential risk in mingling with other schools and will assess risk closer to the time.

As we close out the term, just one year on from the first month of lockdown, I wish everyone celebrating a blessed Pesach and Easter. Do stay safe.

**Alison M Scott (Mrs)**  
**Executive Principal**