



6th June 2022

Dear parents

Enhanced Opportunities: Homework Classes

We are pleased to add to that offering in the form of a homework class with Mrs Briley Smith. Briley has extensive experience running homework classes at schools including Bellavista School pre-2009 and also a remedial school in Cape Town after that. Please see the flyer attached from Briley for your information and convenience.

Sports

Our last soccer fixture for the season is against Knights College. If your child was selected to play this week, the details will have been sent to you per separate letter. If you have any queries, please email:

Ashley.Button@bellavista.org.za (coach) or Anien.Evans@bellavista.org.za (HOD)

The netball girls played against Crawford International last week, with the junior girls drawing their game and the senior girls winning their game, scoring 9-2.

EAGALA

The last EAGALA session for this cycle is 7th June.

Dates to diarise:

Grade Seven Wellness Day

To assist the Grade Seven children in preparing for the midyear exams which start on the 11th July, we have a wellness day planned for them on 15 June.

The day will start with the EMS Cycle test from 8 to 9am.

A gym session will follow.

After 1st break we will cover study skills.

There will be a talk on nutritious eating during exam time.

Mums and Dads vs Lads and Lasses We are delighted to invite all moms and all dads to our annual Moms vs Girls Netball and Dads vs Lads Soccer afternoon **at Bellavista**.

This match will be held on **Tuesday, 14 June 2022**.

Matches will commence at approximately 1 p.m. and we expect to finish at about 3 p.m.

Please complete the reply slip attached to this Heads Up if you wish to be included in the team and return to it to Ashley asap for team planning. Any queries may be directed to ashley.button@bellavistaschool.co.za.

Provisionally, there may be a derby day on 23rd June – netball and soccer. We await confirmation of this and will keep you informed.

The **Foundation Phase performances of “Sing!”** are to be held on 10 and 12 June. Please note:

- Two tickets are available per family, this to ensure that everyone can attend and we can still maintain reasonable distancing and ventilation in the hall.
- If you are experiencing ANY respiratory symptoms or COVID19 symptoms, we ask that you do the right thing and avoid attendance. There will be a video recording for you to enjoy – it’s not the same we know, but the sensible and kind thing to do.
- The class teachers have any information you need around logistics (costumes, arrival times, departure times etc.)
- The timetabled week will be disrupted for rehearsals ahead of the performances – if you notice a slowing of homework etc. this is not untoward.

‘Music Through the Aged’ had us clapping and chuckling along last week. Thank you to the stars of the show, the children, for their wit, courage and fun. The atmosphere was ‘joy’ as they took to the stage to perform. This week, ‘Sing’ will deliver the same – bring some tissues! Appreciation must be extended to the teachers, choreographers, directors and parents involved in making these memories. Special thanks to Nikki Bencsik who pulled out all the stops to install our stage curtains manufactured and mounted in time. They are a fabulous addition to our space.

Sweetie Tuck

This Friday there is no tuck.

A Note on Tests

The term “cycle test” brings anxiety to parents. It might be helpful to contextualise the purpose of these assessments in our programme at Bellavista School.

The very concept of taking an exam raises adrenaline in adults because of our own experiences and also because results thereof introduced ideas of ‘pass’ and ‘fail’. Research tells us that the introduction of high stakes formal assessment is emotionally damaging to learners under the age of fourteen. Despite the findings and knowledge, educational systems around the world are deeply entrenched in the practice and examination results represent access to the next level of institution that a child transitions through. High schools must prepare their learners for the matriculation exams and primary schools must prepare their children for high school. Fortunately, primary schools have leeway as to how and when they bring children on stream with the high stakes nature of these tests.

At Bellavista School, we know that children with barriers to learning are at great risk of high anxiety and undue stress in assessment, and we do everything sensible and allowable to mitigate the pressure on our side. It is our premise that test taking is a skill and preparing for a test to demonstrate your understanding is a learning experience in and of itself. It is on us to make the exercise of acquiring test taking skills as unthreatening as possible while bringing the importance of preparation and practice in the task of test taking to the children responsibly.

Working backwards, you will know that at the end of our INTERSEN Phase (Grade Seven), we must have the children versed in the practice of sitting formal examinations ahead of mainstream placement. By Grade Seven, the children sit two sets of examinations, in July and then again in November. They also participate in Shared Assessment Tasks as set out between IEB ISASA schools and many sit entrance tests ahead of their high school placements. In Grade Six, we build stamina for a continuous examination week across all subjects at the end of the year, and heightened diligence in revising independently and planning ahead of cycle tests through the term. In Grade Five, the children take year end examinations in three subjects only, and cycle tests are taken weekly. Preparation for tests is largely in class with some revision at home. These papers very much mirror the course work tasks that the children are familiar with. In Grade Four, the children have formal assessment tasks woven into their course work and very gentle “cycle tests” from the second term. The tests are not high stakes, are weighted low in the balance of results and are carefully mediated by the teacher. We want successful outcomes to build a feeling of competence. Test tasks are completely mirrored with class work and the activities and demands are familiar to the child.

Concurrent to the scaffolded assessment programme, the children are exposed to various skills to organise thinking and retain information. Some may call these “study skills”. Note taking and outlining are developmentally appropriate in the older grades. Rote recall or memorisation strategies are appropriate for Grade Fours. Only when the children are able to take on abstraction in revision and the ‘weight’ of regular study time do we name the strategies ‘study skills’. In Grades Six and Seven, we introduce accommodations and concessions that we are confident that the child needs through high school. Whilst we have a low stakes opportunity to build independence and a feeling of competence, we support access intuitively and in an empowering way. In the senior grades, we introduce the practice of past papers as a form of preparation.

Our teachers have many, many years of preparing children with learning difficulties to take on the rigor of formal assessments practices between them. We want the children to succeed and we seek to mitigate the anxiety attached to the process. Year on year, our children mainstream successfully and matriculate in ways that make us proud. We are not interested to apply mainstream policies built of large schools and an even larger industrialised system to our practice. We are deeply invested in achieving the end goal by carefully laying the foundations.

You can trust the team. They will guide the children. Support your child, hold space for them emotionally as they approach these activities and assist them with their organisational needs as they prepare. Be sure to hold in mind that you are your child’s co-regulator. If you are anxious, they will be. If you have confidence in them and the process we put forward, they will be too. If your child’s teacher has observations to share, she will. At this stage, your child can’t “pass” or “fail” the tests, s/he can only learn.

Enjoy the week.

Alison M Scott (Mrs)
Executive Principal