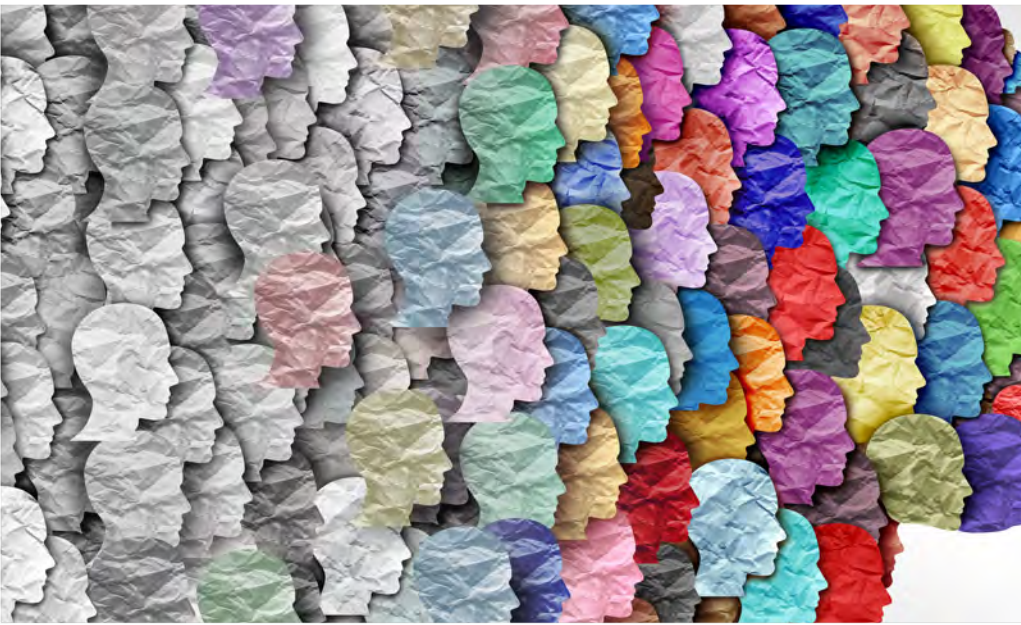




BELLAVISTA

# NEWSLETTER

A SAFE HARBOUR SCHOOL



11 March 2024

## Redefining Normal

*Normal* is defined as conforming to a standard; who sets this standard is entirely variable and subject for another debate. Normal refers to a ‘usual’, ‘typical’, or ‘expected’ state or condition. Often, parents raising children who develop uniquely contend with and internalise a deep untruth that their child is not normal. They hold on to that word, likely recalling the very moment they heard it.

1

SHIFT THE  
PARADIGM

2

DIVERSITY IS  
DESIRABLE

3

DESTIGMATISE  
DIFFERENCE



It was great to catch up with the Grade Seven class of 2023 and hear their accounts of starting high school this year.



Thank you to the PA for a phenomenal UV Family Run on the 29th February



Grades Six and Seven enjoyed fun filled camps just ahead of midterm.

When ‘normal’ is intended for use as a rigid definition, unnecessary pressure and stigma for both the child and parents follows.

### **Shift the paradigm**

What if we talked about a child having individual unique needs instead of not being normal? Instead of striving for conformity to a perceived norm, parents should shift their focus towards understanding and addressing the individual needs of their child to foster optimal development and wellbeing. These needs are going to be very unique and they demand skilled hands, a willing heart and a fundamental belief in the potential of every human being to learn, and grow and change. Parents need to develop safe and trusting partnerships with others who choose to see their child as an individual not as a comparative peer. Dr Daniel Amen, a psychiatrist and founder of the Amen Clinics, which specialise in brain health and neuropsychiatry, advocates for a personalised approach to mental health assessment and treatment, emphasising the importance of understanding individual brain differences and promoting brain-healthy lifestyles. Work like his has fuelled the trend of a new term of reference for our uniqueness as human beings: ‘neurodivergence’. It is a pity that this descriptor is widely used to generalise an umbrella for ‘disorders’ rather than a liberation of individuality.

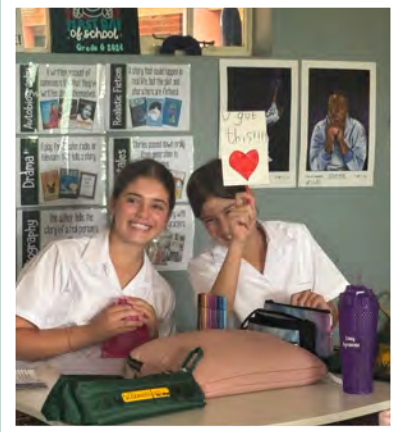


### **Diversity is Desirable**

Human beings are inherently diverse. Each one of us has a spectrum of physical, cognitive, and emotional traits. Diversity is not only natural but also enriching, contributing to the richness of human experience. It is hotly pursued in successful organisations who understand that many minds are better than one if they are to remain cutting edge in their business sector. The world of work is developing a nuanced understanding of collective human potential that embraces diversity, promotes

### **Personalised Learning Promotes Thriving**

Every child has unique strengths, challenges, and interests that shape their learning and development. Recognising and accommodating these individual differences is crucial for supporting their holistic growth. One-size-fits-all expectations are redundant in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Parents and educators must adopt a personalised approach that tailors support and resources to meet their child's specific needs. This may involve adjusting educational strategies and curricula, extending the depth of content as the child initiates learning, seeking specialised services, or offering learning environments that nurture each child's passions and talents.



inclusivity, and recognises the importance of individual variation in shaping human experiences, identities, products and services. Regrettably, the education sector, *inclusive of parents* with children in the system, is not translating the corporate requirement to classrooms, or even staff complements. By acknowledging and celebrating diversity, school communities can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for their children, ready for the world waiting for them.

### **Destigmatising Differences**

The notion of "not normal" perpetuates stigma and undermines self-esteem, leading to feelings of inadequacy and exclusion in the child, but also in the parent of that child. By reframing differences as individual needs, parents can foster a more positive and accepting mindset within their families and communities. This shift in perspective promotes empathy, reduces stigma, and cultivates a culture of inclusivity where everyone feels valued and respected.

Let's not seek to 'fix' children against any version of normal. Rather, let's find children for the wonderful individuals they are, teach them, train them and equip them for their world and life ahead.

### **Empowering Resilience and Self-Acceptance**

When children feel understood and supported for who they are, they are more likely to develop confidence, autonomy, and a sense of belonging.

This foundation of self-worth and constructive self-awareness enables them to navigate life's challenges with very desirable grit.

### **Serving people outside of our school community**

iThemba will offer one to one and group services, continuous professional development and quality training to individuals and organisations to do better in reaching their personal potential or facilitate the same for others.

### **Launch of Bellavista iThemba**

*iThemba* means hope in isiZulu and hope is the fundamental belief we hold at Bellavista – that every person has the ability to expand their personal propensity for learning.

At Bellavista School, a culture of care and integrity has ensured that we do all that we know to support a child and their families through our leg of their educational journey. We have, over decades, taken an active approach and not a passive one, deeply embedding best practice in a number of ways, including the principles of cognitive modifiability and the mediated learning experience. The role of a human being in the process of learning development cannot be more imperative than it is in our world today, and in the future ahead. As human beings, we need to co-regulate, to envision and to support each other even if AI steps in to handle much of our content generation. If we are to raise ethical citizens, in our country or any, we need deep learning of empathy, collaboration, communication and resilience. It is not enough that

we practice in this way in one localised space. Beyond our palisade fence is, to be bold, a world to influence. We are compelled to hone excellence in the school and to share our knowledge and skills beyond this. It has taken years of careful planning, training and practice to reach the occasion we have arrived at today – the launch of a cognitive education centre where we can serve people outside of our school community.

## Nuts and Bolts

**E**arly road closure the Thursday, 14th March, ahead of the JPMorgan Challenge. Grades R-3 will leave at 11h30 and Grades 4-7 at 12h00 on the day. Please remember to approach the school from Greenacres and Wingfield - St Andrews and Venus Streets will be closed.

**P**rof Venter is consulting at the school from 11 March. Do catch his talk in person this Wednesday 13th March in the evening. You can book via the Bellavista SHARE website. Link on advert alongside this notice.

**E**nhanced opportunities; The Upstage Drama Team is growing. With more demand, Coach Donnaley is bringing a new Teacher on board to join her. This will make for more spaces, so do enquire for your child if you believe this is something he/she will enjoy! Donnaley : 0647898460

## **G**rade R-3 **CRITICAL Administration Required**

As of **18th March**, your child's teachers and therapists will **no longer be chatting over Whatsapp, only using DALZA and school designated email addresses**. DALZA offers quick feedback, email is checked within 24 hours.

If you are a parent in Grades R-3, you need to download and activate the DALZA app per our previous correspondence:

### **Our reasons for the implementation of the platform:**

- we are ensuring that we work with the best secure data controls we can find for all your child's private information
- we are actively addressing the parent body's call to establish cohesive communication lines when it comes to your child
- with DALZA - you are in control of your child's data and YOU decide who to add to the communication between internal staff working with your child, and/or external support like physiotherapists, consulting doctors etc.
- with DALZA, everyone has the same information about your child's history and interventions
- with DALZA, the bank of information built over the years, through various assessment reports etc. remains in one place, easily accessible to you through the school years.
- With DALZA, personalised learning is enabled by keeping everybody aware and updated about your child's unique strengths, challenges and interests.



**ONSITE**



**ADHD: Truths and Myths**  
with Professor André Venter

13 March 2024 | 18h30-19h30 | Price: R280

Join us as Professor Venter explores the truths and myths of ADHD.

share@bellavista.org.za  
bellavista.org.za/bellavista-share



**BELLAVISTA**  
•S•H•A•R•E•  
EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER

**Steps to implement:**

1. Log on to <https://www.dalza.com/>
2. Register as a user and use the code BELLAVISTA
3. Download the DALZA app on your smartphone and sign in for easy mobile access. The Apple App is already available and Android soon. You can also access the website on your mobile.
4. Invite your child's team to join your profile and set permissions.
5. We can help you upload key documents to date over the April holidays if you request the support - invite [reception@bellavista.org.za](mailto:reception@bellavista.org.za)

**Support:**

Change is always effortful, so we have the following to assist you in making it as easy as possible:

- Reach Zayd at [IT@bellavista.org.za](mailto:IT@bellavista.org.za)
- See the DALZA team onsite in the next week.
- Reach out to your child's teacher.

Enjoy the week

**Alison Scott**  
**Executive Principal**