



Founded 1922

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HERSCHEL SENIOR SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Dear Parents

When time and space and change converge, we find place. We arrive in Place when we resolve things. Place is peace of mind and understanding. Place is knowledge of self. Place is resolution.

(Author: Abdullah Ibrahim)

We spent the first week online and it was way too quiet at Herschel! And then Monday dawned and it was so good to see parents and students arriving to fill this space because that is what it is without people – a space, granted, a beautiful one. The point is that at the end of the day, Herschel is about the people.

This past week both students and staff have participated in workshops online with Lovelyn Nwadeyi and Julie Nxadi, with the over-arching theme being building community and culture at our school. This is a continuation of the work that was started in 2020 and it has been an enriching week; one filled with challenges, relationship-building opportunities, managing reunions after the three week holiday break within the expected Covid-19 protocol policy and a Covid-19 protocols site management audit, inspiring conversations, productive sessions with Lovelyn and Julie and the usual day-to-day academic programme with sport sessions taking place into the early evening to accommodate all age-groups across the codes. To say nothing of The Olympics and the feast of sport!

On Wednesday evening we hosted a parent webinar focusing on community building and the culture of Herschel. This was well attended and we felt heartened by the responses and the conversations that unfolded. The Zoom platform worked particularly well, allowing for smaller group conversations in the breakaway rooms. Lovelyn structured this session around a series of questions with normative culture/marginalised culture theory serving as a segue between the questions and providing important content relevant to the key concepts of community and culture. Key phrases used in describing community included “a sense of belonging”, “being safe”, “being involved” and “building a form of history together”. It took a while longer to determine personal interpretations of culture, but it was agreed that culture is an “expression of identity”, “culture shifts with every new inclusion”, “culture is rich”, “culture is personal and communal” and “culture includes ideas, traditions and social behaviours”. From this general starting point, Lovelyn moved the conversation into the Herschel space asking about the Herschel community and culture and then taking the next step and asking what individual parent’s experiences of Herschel had been like. This elicited a range of responses and the breakaway rooms buzzed. As Heads, Lin Heidmann and I learnt a lot and we will reflect on what parents shared and ensure that we use this feedback and make it count towards growing a more inclusive, happy and safe school environment.

We are encouraged by the positive energy and support for change, by the humility and vulnerability shown by parents who shared experiences openly, by the open-heartedness expressed and the support shown for changes that are being implemented. Important factors such as the impact of race and socio-economic factors on individual's experiences of Herschel, (referred to as double exclusion), the "bubble culture" of a protected environment and the need to focus on preparing students for life beyond Herschel were raised. It was acknowledged that lots of work needs to be done to support the journey of people of colour coming into a previously white community. Parents discussed the need to expose their daughters to difference and to support the concept of diversity more intentionally.

What was clear is that there is a sense of hope and possibility and we need to action this and ensure that we continue to build a Herschel community that honours the concept of place as expressed in the opening quote by Ibrahim. We want Herschel to be a place where "we resolve things", where there is "peace of mind and understanding", where there is "knowledge of self" and "resolution".

In a discussion with Lindsay Wills (Subject Head of History), I was reminded of the Durban International Film Festival, something that I was always privileged to attend when in Durban. For those of you who love arts and culture, it is worth noting that the Durban International Film Festival is screening all films free online this year.

Visit <https://www.durbanfilmfest.com/>. It ends on Sunday 1 August which means you will need to log on quickly! Most of the screenings are either African or South African premieres. The festival also offers a range of workshops, industry seminars, discussion forums, and outreach activities that include screenings in township areas where cinemas are non-existent. This is a rich and diverse film festival with a genuine focus on community and storytelling.

Robert Paddock's latest blog post, *The paradox of being South African: https://www.robertpaddock.co.za/post/the-paradox-of-being-south-african* is thought-provoking and inspiring. [19 July, *Work as a pilgrimage of self-discovery*]. It was shared with me this week and following on recent events in our country, it provided a ray of hope and possibility. I loved the last few lines which summed up how I felt at the end of the parent webinar on Wednesday evening. I hope that many of you felt like this too!

"Personally, in engaging with this paradox, I choose to lean more towards the group than the individual. Because dancing with others is a richer experience than dancing alone."

Kind regards,
Heather

Important reminders: Reporting mechanisms on the intranet

A reminder to all to please use the Covid-19 reporting mechanism on the dashboard of the intranet – it presents as a red virus icon on the landing page.

A reminder to all members of the Herschel community to use the Stopracism@Herschel.org.za button (a large red square) on the landing page of the intranet) to report incidents of racism and discrimination.



PROUDLY SOUTH AFRICAN!

Herschel got behind our national athletes today, hosting our very own torch lighting ceremony, let by our Sport Heads.

Swimming Head, Hannah Pearse, also recorded the following congratulatory message on behalf of Herschel to Tatjana Schoenmaker, who this morning became South Africa's first gold medalist in a new World Record time!

https://youtu.be/p0J2mVB_oAA



Long Service Awards

At the end of Term 2, our Long Service Awards Ceremony took place at a small, socially distanced gathering of staff in the Theatre.

Chair of Herschel Council, Adv. Tracey Dicker, handed out the awards and congratulated and thanked the recipients for their long service.

10 years:

- Claire Brittan, Sharondine Gobey, Verushca Johannes, Amanda Mozley, Jenny Wesson

15 years:

- Sam Centurier-Harris, Belinda Heidmann, Stuart Levey

20 years:

- Mary Martin, Margot Roebert, Sandy Rule, Pumla Vundla

25 years:

- Tillie Venter

30 years:

- Andrew Scott



CHARITY DRIVE

Over the past few weeks, we have seen massive acts of violence and looting spread across KZN and Gauteng. The effects of which have left many people jobless and without the most basic of foods such as bread and milk. Even more so for babies, who, unlike us, have very specific sanitary needs. All of which are very expensive and now rendered impossible for the people of KZN to obtain!

Babies are the future of our country and most of all completely innocent. Since I have baby cousins living in all this chaos, the issue is especially close to my heart. There are babies out there that are without nappies and wipes as we speak, and they cannot help themselves. But together we can make a difference in their little lives, through donating basic baby supplies and showing our support! For it is in times like these when our community needs to come together and do what we can to better the situation.

If you would like to help this cause, please donate either baby wipes, nappies or funds and drop it off at the Senior School reception. Together we can help feed the babies of KZN and rebuild communities!
(Taskya Pillay, Grade 9)



English Olympiad

In March this year, 21 of our Grade 10 to 12 students sat down to write the English Olympiad. This is the only Olympiad where the students are required to study an anthology on their own. Considering the workload of the average Herschel student, this is quite a lot to ask. The theme for this year was *This is My Story.... People and Personas*: a collection of first-person narratives. We are extremely proud of all our students who took on this challenge and especially Grace North who was placed 88th in the Home language section.

The extract below, written by Saul Musker who achieved 2nd place in the 2012 English Olympiad, sums up the real reason, perhaps, as to why we encourage our students to take on this challenge:

Isaac Asimov, the celebrated American science fiction writer, once declared: 'If the doctor told me I had six minutes to live, I'd type a little faster.' Reading this quote, my mind wandered to the top-corridor English classroom where I recently wrote my last English Olympiad, with Mrs Leaver's voice in the distance: 'Six minutes left, everyone! Hurry along!' Six minutes left! Lord have mercy! It wasn't that I was worried about time; I had just finished my last piece, and was about to give it a final read-over. No; I owed my despair instead to the realisation that I would never write another Olympiad. For me, the Olympiad is more than just another exam or competition. It is protected time for creativity; a dedicated three hours devoted to writing. I only wish I could write one every day, to escape the usual chaos of our existence, to let the ink pour out of my grateful mind. F Scott Fitzgerald observed that 'all good writing is swimming under water and holding your breath.' So dive, ye stranger! Submerge yourself in the cool green waters of your imagination, of the English language, of this moment in time! (English Olympiad Website)

Results:

Gold: Grace North (88th overall) and Esther Couves (pictured below)

Silver: Emily Warwick, Kelyn van der Westhuizen, Julia Wellington, Yumnaa Rawoot, Anni Dall, Hannah Mackay, Romy Myers

Bronze: Camilla Campbell, Zaakirah Adams, Emma van der Velden, Josephine Orpen, Sarah Gutuza, Salma Moosa, Kayleigh Campbell

Merit: Claire Murphy, Gabby Botton

Participation: Leya Patel, Phelo Tima, Jordi Paine



Geography Olympiad

The Geography Department participated in the SANGO (South African National Geography Olympiad) which took place on the 18th May 2021. It was Herschel's first time registering for the Olympiad, and we entered a group of 14 girls across Grades 10 to 12. Our numbers were limited as the Mathematics Olympiad round two also took place on the same day and time.

The girls did exceptionally well and enjoyed being challenged. (*Naseema Parker*)

Outstanding Achievements:

Chelsea Thompson

- 8th position for the Royal Geographical Society
- Top Grade 10 learner for Royal Geographical Society
- Top Grade 10 Female learner for Royal Geographical Society
- Platinum Certificate



Gold certificates:

Kayleigh Campbell (Grade 10)
Lathitha Sicweby (Grade 10)

Silver certificate:

Emma van der Velden (Grade 12)

Bronze certificates:

Stella Parry (Grade 11)
Chloe Boyd (Grade 11)

