



HERSCHEL SENIOR SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

No. 9 – 3 June 2022



Greetings!

It has been a crisp Autumn week and I have carried a healthy dose of empathy for our students as they sit each day in the Sports Centre writing their examinations; some of them for the first time in a while! The examination season sees a shift in campus life because of the multi-tasking that is required to meet the academic needs of each specific grade.



Yesterday, I received an IEB update from Anne Oberholzer, outgoing CEO of the Independent Examination Board, and felt that her advice regarding examinations and pressures was definitely worth sharing with you

It is our duty as teachers to understand why examination fraud happens and assist students to understand the phenomenon and its consequences. One of the highest causes of examination fraud (cheating) is pressure – pressure caused by parents, teachers or simply a student's own anxiety to do well. Teachers and parents should be mindful of the very detrimental impact of unnecessary pressure. Students need to be confident that they have been well taught and have had ample opportunity to prepare for the examination. They need to have support from their parents, family and others that are close to them that whatever happens, they are still loved and

valued for the people they are. Students who realise that they have the resources and the support they require, have no need to cheat. And even then, if something doesn't work out as one might want, there is always a second or third chance.

A "pressure cooker" environment surrounding examination results is extremely toxic for students. Schools that sell themselves purely on the basis of examination results may well be undermining their real strength as an educational institution – confident, purposeful, rounded and well-adjusted students who are properly taught but see themselves as more than their academics. This surely is the ultimate goal of a successful educational institution? Our citizenry needs people who are the best they can be in whatever it is that they do after they leave schooling.

Parents knowingly, or unknowingly create a stressful environment by laying unrealistic expectations or providing 'motivations' – some call it bribes – as a mechanism to 'encourage' the student. This pressure is the worst kind for many students. Parents must be mindful that they are often the primary reason for unmanageable pressure on their children. Parental encouragement is essential but more important is their emotional support for their child- appreciation and love for the child who they are rather than what they achieve.

Upfront I must say that within the IEB there are a very limited number of incidents of examination fraud. The educational institutions and the students we work with are very conscious of the dangers of examination fraud and the consequences should anyone be found to have participated in fraudulent activity.

At a later stage, I will share with you the strategies that the IEB has in place to protect the integrity of the examination process. Sophisticated artificial intelligence is employed in this regard. I fully endorse this view of pressure and believe that there is, in addition to what Anne Oberholzer details, an additional layer of 'legacy pressure' at Herschel, where successive matric grades feel that they need to uphold the Herschel record. Last year some of the Grade 11s expressed this as a 'fear' or 'pressure'. This issue is one that requires of us a vigilance and an intentional stance whereby we support our students holistically.

Gender conversations

This past week we hosted Kerry Frizelle (UKZN) who engaged with parents on the topic of gender (on Monday evening) and with the senior school staff in a full day's workshop on Tuesday. We have seen the need for greater awareness around gender issues and for information to be shared so that staff and parents are equipped to have conversations about gender and to support the safe spaces in which conversations unfold on campus and at home. The approach taken is a pedagogical approach and I am aware that in this regard differing world views can make such conversations complex. Being part of a diverse community and supporting, at heart, the desire for a community in which each person can belong fully, means that diverse world views, different perspectives and understandings will co-exist. This is okay. This is part of what a diverse community is. It is also important to prepare our students to be able to hold their own when they leave Herschel and to feel equipped to contribute to the robust conversations which take place at university and in tertiary spaces.

The month of June is Pride month and we acknowledge our need to support gender justice in South Africa and as a place of learning, to create awareness.

We are in the process of completing our awards (previously known as bursaries and scholarships) for 2023, having applied the updated Herschel Awards Policy which is now available on the school website. Those who have been through the application process will already be familiar with this policy. In the interests of transparency, all policies will be displayed for ease of access via a tab on our new website which we are hoping will go live in July. In the meantime, you will find the Awards Policy on the current website.

I wish you all a wonderful weekend!

Heather Goedeke

(Cover photo of our campus in the early morning light taken by Kerri-Lyn East)

STAFF GENDER & SEXUALITY WORKSHOP

It is important for Herschel to ensure that we are creating a safe space for all pupils at our school. In order to do this, we recognised that teachers require education on central concepts related to gender and sexuality and the importance of gender and sexuality inclusivity in the classroom and the school.

Dr Kerry Frizelle (Counselling Psychologist and lecturer in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal), together with Alexa Russell Mathews (from NPO Arise), engaged our academic staff in a day long workshop where teachers were provided with a safe space in which to explore their own perspectives on gender and sexuality and how this might be impacting on their practices within the wider school environment and within the classroom.

Teachers were able to develop a conceptual framework and vocabulary that will enable them to engage meaningfully around the topic of gender and sexuality within the context of education and develop an understanding of what is required to create gender and sexuality inclusive schools and classrooms. *(By Tracy Rousseau)*

Herschel Pride Club

The Herschel Pride Club was started in 2018. Since then, it has functioned as safe space for queer students, a place for education regarding all things queer, and has a focus on community service within the queer communities of Cape Town. This year, it is run by Matrics Jorja van Schalkwyk and Kate Forrest, who have introduced pronoun badges to Herschel, which are available to all students. Going forward, the Pride Club aims to continue to create a safe school environment for all members of the LGBTQIA+ community, as well as raising awareness about queer issues within the school.

June is Pride Month, and we are proudly flying our Pride flag next to our school flag. *(By Kate Forrest and Jorja van Schalkwyk)*



SINGLE FOCUS DAY



The **Grade 9 Around the World** class visited Khoa Hom Thai Restaurant to experience Thai cuisine and culture on their Single Focus Day.

Khob khun Ka – Thank you! (in Thai)

GEOGRAPHY OLYMPIAD

A busy and exciting time for the Geography department, as 35 Grade 10 – 12 Geography learners participated in Round One of the SAGTA (South African Geography Teachers Association) annual Geography Olympiad held on 17th May 2022.



Congratulations to **Chelsea Thompson** (Grade 11) for making it through to Round Two!



SPORTS WRAP

Our netball teams played Rustenburg this week and produced some strong results. For all sport results, visit:

https://sport.herschel.org.za/Fixtures_Teams.asp?id=28362





OHA WINTER DINNER

Save The Date

WEDNESDAY 17 AUGUST AT 18:30 FOR 19:00



After the 1996 elections and the release of Nelson Mandela, my husband and I were excited to return to South Africa from London. And yet, it was with a certain amount of heartache, as I had so enjoyed our 20 years there; being a member of one of London's top choirs, travelling with world class conductors and soloists, training as an art therapist and working with children in Middlesex Hospital.

I found myself in the role of a farmer's wife running the family farm, Diemersfontein, as 3rd generation Sonnenbergs.

I felt cut off from all I had enjoyed in London and without purpose until, out of the blue, an opportunity arose to start a school on our farm and thus be able to offer a good education to the local children.

It is said that it takes a village to raise a child, and it certainly took the community of like-minded people to start a school. With the help of dedicated teachers, an excellent headmaster and a core of committed parents, Wellington Prep and Wellington College came into being.



Old Herschelians and friends are invited to attend the

OHA WINTER DINNER

to be held in the Mary Jagger Hall

on Wednesday 17 August 2022

18h30 for 19h00

Our guest speaker this year is

SUSAN SONNENBERG

and her talk is entitled:

FINDING PURPOSE

Cost: R260 for a 3-course meal. Wine and soft drinks included.

NB: Please indicate if you would like a vegetarian meal

RSVP: oha@herschel.org.za before 1 August 2022

Banking details: Standard Bank, Claremont

Name: Old Herschelian Association

Account number: 07 187 902 1

Please email proof of payment to oha@herschel.org.za