



From the Head of School's Desk

Are you connected?

How are you connected?

What is your connection?

My connection is slow!

Be connected!

Why are you not connected?

My connection is good!

I expect that in most instances it has something to do with connectivity and therefore involves the internet, a cell phone, or an electronic device. As the year progresses, with no end in sight regarding the pandemic, Alert Level 3 or COVID-19 protocols, we have become more and more dependent on our devices. This has resulted in increased screen and alone time.

An interesting article (courtesy of Mrs Tracey Munro):

<https://thriveglobal.com/stories/arianna-huffington-parenting-distracted-technology-screen-time-impacting-children-relationships/>

We do need to encourage our pupils and children to keep up with their online studies and schoolwork, of course, most of which is being done on a device. But what about “down time”, when we need to connect with real people, authentically? When the word connect also means to associate and identify with each other by actively participating in conversation and discussion that cannot be disguised by a meme or a peculiar expression or symbol. Yes, we may be hidden by our face masks but our words, real words, can be heard, expressed and enunciated to give meaning to our discussions and emotions. To connect with each other in this coherent manner, to show our compassion for one another, reaffirms our association with our grade, boarding house, friendship group and our school.

This year has taken its toll on our sense of belonging. In the words of Dr Brené Brown, “I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgement; and when they derive substance and strength from the relationship.” We need to feel the Epworth bonds of unity and affiliation that we would feel and experience in the many and various activities that we have not been allowed to pursue so far this year.

We celebrated our 122nd birthday on 03 August and we have also made up for other missed opportunities by having some fun during teas and lunches.

2020 has afforded Epworth opportunities to grow and to do things differently; to adopt new approaches. These are evident especially in the academic programme and in the utilisation of teaching spaces to meet the Covid-19 protocols. Epworth has also had the opportunity to re-energise our transformation journey. Further to the communication you have received from the school, we have continued to give our pupils the space for courageous conversations, and we continue to communicate with members of our alumni. Whole school management is in the process of setting up a structure for a transformation officer to take the work done thus far by the Transformation, Diversity and Inclusivity task team further, to drive the goals of the mission and the values of Epworth in this regard. We look forward to further interactions with all stakeholders of the school. Please note the communication from our Deputy Head: Pastoral, which is included on the next page.



As we take a well-deserved breather halfway through the term, may God reset your perspective. *You are not called to do everything, be everything, or even see everything. You are called to keep your gaze fixed on God alone. God's Word is living and breathing, active and powerful. God's Word holds life, wisdom and revelation for you. Search until you find them. He has peace for you here.*

Faith Compassion Courage
Ms **Laura Bekker**



From the Deputy Head: Pastoral

I would like to update you on how we, as a school, have engaged with the #BlackLivesMatter movement this year and the issues that have arisen.

Since the rise of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, we have given each grade a space and time in the chapel to tell their stories about racism and discrimination as we realised there was a lot of hurt and underlying resentment amongst the girls. The discussions with the different grades have been necessary, heartbreaking and humbling. As a school, we want to engage with the stories we have heard in order to make amends where we have done wrong, whether through action, systems or attitudes, and to further educate staff and girls if necessary. Years of hurt, misunderstanding and racist attitudes from some cannot be undone overnight and so we have had to grapple with uncomfortable conversations, past wrongdoings and our own unconscious biases at times.

Asking the girls to share their stories while the rest of the grade listens and receives is part of the healing process. We encourage open hearts and minds and ask the girls to sit with uncomfortable emotions and not to judge. This type of honesty is not without its casualties and some staff and pupils have been named. It has been done, we believe, respectfully and without malice as we have wanted the chapel to be a safe place in these discussions. Our hope is that the staff/girls named will receive the comments with humility, openness and a determination to do better. We encourage girls to seek guidance from the Chaplain, School Counsellor or Deputy Head: Pastoral should they need help in processing any issues. We have already seen healing and deep reflection from some of the staff members named and we are committed to continuing the process of educating staff regarding unconscious bias, micro-aggressions and privilege. Our belief is that everyone is on an individual journey to understanding our own biases and prejudices and we need to accept that people might not be as far along the path as we are. We want to emphasize the need for grace and kindness at this time, but without diminishing the need to stand up to discrimination.

We, as an educational institution, also want to use this opportunity to teach the girls the importance of using their voice in a constructive manner. Posting volatile messages and "calling out" peers on social media has become an easy option for not engaging with the human pain behind the issues. Please could we urge you, as parents, to have a conversation with your daughters regarding the permanency of social media, the dangers of character shaming in public and the need for kindness. We would appreciate your assistance in helping us channel their voices so that we can build and heal as a school.

Ms **Moira Filmer**



All grades back at school



Monday, 20 July, was cause for celebration as we welcomed the Grade 8's back to campus, completing the return of all grades to school on the Epworth campus, which has not been the case since the end of March. Pupils and staff have adjusted well to the necessary protocols and procedures, always ensuring that safety and health remain the top priority.

Celebrating Mandela Day



#itstartswithme

The school centred its Mandela Day activities around the theme “#itstartswithme”, a challenge from the Bhambayi Project which is a non-profit organisation that supports orphans and vulnerable children. In line with the project’s focus on honour, relationships and empowerment, pupils were asked to reflect on how they can honour those around them. One of the tasks involved populating a rainbow graphic with people’s names, indicating the ways in which they can honour them. All the pupils from Grades 8 to 12 embraced the exercise as it enabled them to think about improving themselves and contributed to their understanding of those around them.



Staff engage in racial literacy workshop



At the beginning of the term, all the staff participated in an online staff development focused on anti-racist training and education. It was run by Lovelyn Nwadeyi, a founder and director of L&N Associates, a consultancy dedicated to seeing social justice normalised and embedded in



business, academic and religious spaces. It was an extremely valuable exercise and provided staff with a way of interrogating their racialised identities in order to understand what race is, why it is and how it is used to reproduce inequality and oppression.

Grade 10 printmaking...with a difference



Necessity is the mother of invention in these Covid times! Part of the art department moved to a different space on campus to ensure social distancing and to accommodate the practical aspect of the subject. The Grade 10's enjoyed a printmaking exercise in their new outdoor "classroom" and created some eye-catching pieces.

Grade 10's taking advantage of the spacious school grounds to gather leaves for their lesson on leaf structure.





Subject choice time for Grade 9's



Although the pandemic put a stop to parents attending the Grade 9 subject choice discussions, it did not restrict the pupils from participating in an afternoon of enlightening and informative presentations by the subject teachers. Parents were sent the teachers' PowerPoint presentations, created with voice-overs, so that they could gain some insight into the subjects on offer. Note to parents: *"Never force your children to adopt a system or a profession that does not value their creative expression, nor encourage their unique abilities"* (Association for Academic Quality).

Dance on display



Well-known Pietermaritzburg artistic director and instructor of Epworth's LiveArt Dance Company, Bonwa Mbontsi, together with his partner, wowed the pupils at teatime with a dance routine to the music of Bach, played by Epworth music teacher, Ms Ilse Myburgh.

Epworth says "enough is enough" to landfill site fires



During the recent fires at the city's landfill site, which forced the school to close for four days, Epworth stood behind Love Pietermaritzburg in saying "#enoughis-enough". We joined other city ratepayers at a protest on Hesketh Drive, condemning the municipality's lack of action and scant regard for



the health and wellbeing of its residents. Epworth also participated in a meeting with the Pietermaritzburg and Midlands Chamber of Business to devise a solution to compel the municipality to address the landfill site. If you would like to add your voice to a petition advocating the closure of the site, please [click here](#)



Epworth celebrates 122 years



Monday, 3 August was an auspicious day on campus as Epworth celebrated its 122nd birthday. The gate staff set the tone with their festive outfits while an energetic group of teachers and support staff performed the “Jerusalem” dance at teatimes. Groups of pupils followed suit and joined in on the dance. The Chaplain, Mrs Rebecca Schultz, presented a heart-warming prayer that reminded us of our heritage and everyone enjoyed a special tea replete with Epworth-inspired doughnuts.

Special gift for class of 2020



Last year, a tradition was started whereby the Grade 12's are welcomed into the Epworthian fold at an induction ceremony where they are presented with a sterling silver shell necklace. Due to the restrictions imposed by Covid-19, the school agreed to include the official induction as part of other end-of-year activities. However, the Epworthians and the school wanted the pupils to receive their necklaces earlier so they can benefit from the privilege of wearing them for the rest of the school year. The Grade 12's received these unique necklaces at a special, social-distanced tea in the chapel gardens.



Sports achievements

KwaZulu-Natal Canoe Union awards

Epworth canoeists featured prominently at the virtual KwaZulu-Natal Canoe Union (KNCU) awards ceremony that was held recently. KZN colours went to Georgina Howard, Lizanne Conradie, Shannon-Ann Parker-Dennison and Amy Hulett. Protea colours were awarded to Georgina Howard, who, along with Lizanne Conradie, received KNCU Championship trophies for K2 River and Sprints respectively. Epworth won the Girls' Inter-Schools' Trophy and Georgia Gace and Georgina Howard won the U14 and U16 categories in the schools' league. Lizanne Conradie received the Bridgitte Hartley Trophy for the Best Performance by a KZN Sprinter in 2019 in the Girls' category. Several Epworthians also received prestigious awards at this ceremony.

**Shannon-Ann
Parker-Dennison**



Georgina Howard



Lizanne Conradie



Amy Hulett



Georgia Gace



Hockey, tennis and squash selections

- ◆ Isobel Cobbold, Tannah Duncan, Daniela Vonkeman, Bailey Duncan, Rebecca Smith, Kelly Naude, Yasmin De Meyer, Emily Cobbold and Tayla-Jade Weiss were selected to various Inland hockey teams
- ◆ Chloé Morton was selected to represent the KZN B U19 tennis team at the Inter-Provincial Tournament, which has been postponed. Nicola Bentley represented Midlands at the KZN tennis trials prior to lockdown.
- ◆ Yasmin De Meyer, Fia de Bruyn, Nirmeen Khan, Kayleigh Els, Nicola Bentley and Paige Stella were invited to participate in the SA Closed Squash Tournament, which has been postponed.

Message from the Chaplain

"IT TAKES COURAGE
TO SAY YES TO
REST & PLAY
IN A CULTURE
WHERE
EXHAUSTION IS
SEEN AS A STATUS
SYMBOL"

BRENE BROWN

As part of our mindfulness session this week, our pupils were encouraged to make time this half-term to rest. This is not just about sleep but also about self-care, about intentionally stepping away from all the noise and demands. In a world where we are constantly "switched on", it's really important to make time to "switch off" (and recharge). With all the challenges we are facing as a result of Covid-19, can I encourage you, this half-term, to set time together as a family to disconnect (from your devices, your responsibilities, your busyness) and connect with each other. Please know I continue to uphold the Epworth families in my prayers. *Mrs Rebecca Schultz*