

GRACE CHRONICLES

Issue No. 4 | June 2022



From the Principal's Desk

This term has once again been jam-packed, with a number of celebrations, extracurricular activities, classwork, assessments and exams, our first mini fundraiser as well as the start of our long-awaited building project. In this edition of Grace Chronicles we will highlight some events of the term, focussing particularly on moments of celebration and enrichment. Our habit of focus for the start of this term was thankfulness and this was practically expressed through our Grade 6&7 camp (thankfulness for fun, teamwork and the outdoors); our World Book Day celebrations (thankfulness for books); our Mothers Day assembly (thankfulness for

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family) and much more. During the latter half of the term, we focussed on the habit of mental effort, which was again fitting since this was our time of assessments and exams. We have included an article on this theme, entitled “Fit Brain” which we have also submitted to our local Muse Magazine in Pinelands for the July edition.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our parents for your support of the school this term. We recognize your contributions in so many ways, from baking for our tuckshop; to knitting squares for charity; to praying with us at our monthly prayer meetings; to joining us at special assemblies – and most of all for entrusting your child to us each day and supporting them at home in their daily homework activities. We wish your family a very blessed mid-year holiday break!

Philosophy Corner: Fit Brain

Fitness Training for the Brain

Most of us are familiar with the necessity of keeping physically fit. Professionals will tell us that a well-rounded fitness training program is essential, including aspects such as aerobic fitness, strength training, balance training, flexibility and stretching. This broad approach ensures that we’re developing muscles that help us function better in our day-to-day lives; that we’re stronger, leaner, have more energy or endurance. But what about our mental or intellectual fitness? How often do we think about all that is needed to keep our minds performing optimally, so that we are growing in wide and varied interests and cultivating a rich and deep inner life? True education is a way of life and hopefully as we discuss some of the core ingredients to “mental fitness” we can all be encouraged to become life-long learners.

1. Strength Training of the Mind: Building the Power of Memory

We live in a world where we have information at our fingertips. We have “Google” and phones to remember for us, so at times we might think there is no need for the strenuous process of memorization.

Amongst some there is also a tendency to ridicule memory-work, viewing it as outdated and less important than higher order critical thinking and problem solving skills. However, while technology has increased the breadth of information

available to us, the process of memorization builds not only intellectual accuracy, but sets in place a storehouse of foundational knowledge in our long-term memories. It is from this storehouse that more complex critical thinking and problem solving can grow as we mature. Early childhood is a wonderful time to make memory work a delight, because it is such a natural way in which children learn. Memorization of poetry for example not only extends a child’s vocabulary, but encourages an appreciation for the rhythm and beauty of language and stimulates the imagination. It is striking that for the ancient Greeks, Mnemosyne (Memory) is the mother of the muses (who were thought to inspire all fields of learning). Thus, memorization was viewed as the starting point from which creativity and imagination could flow out into all areas of life.

2. Mental Stretching: The Power of Attention

The habit of attention is of vital importance to long-term mental stamina. The call to “pay attention” is one familiar to most classrooms. The word “attention” comes from the Latin “attentio” which literally means “to stretch toward.” So the assumption here is that there are important aspects of knowledge that require these “mental stretches” if we are to

Philosophy Corner: Fit Brain cont...

live productively and meaningfully in our present era. However, attention is not something that will grow on its own, it has to be slowly and carefully cultivated – in the same way that physical stretches are practiced carefully and regularly. The method of narration is a powerful tool for cultivating attention. It is essentially the practice of retelling a story/concept in your own words after only one reading. Such a method may sound easy enough, but it requires a good grasp of the subject matter and therefore forces the child to pay close attention to what is being read. Think about the difference between watching a science video on photosynthesis, for example, versus trying to explain it to your child yourself. A practical retelling means you need to know some of the scientific vocabulary involved in the process as well as have an understanding of the sequence involved.

Mental effort is involved in articulating the new information sequentially and with accuracy, but as this is accomplished, the new information or ideas are assimilated and internalized translating into personal knowledge that is both engaging and delightful. Obviously, this is most successful when the curriculum itself is rich and stimulating, using as much narrative material in all aspects of learning as possible.

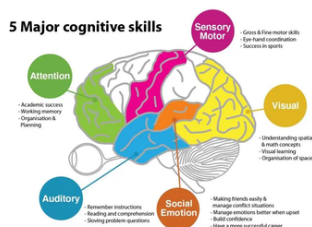
3. Aerobic Training of the Mind: Using the Imagination

Aerobic training in a physical sense is all about improving our breathing whilst doing physical exercise. Possibly this analogy most closely correlates with the role of the imagination in our mental fitness regime. As we “breathe in” inspiration from the world of artists in all their fields, so our own “breathing” or imagination is inspired to produce creativity in some form. Imagination is the process of producing mental pictures or ideas in response to new information. It involves recognizing relations between things; or seeing connections between the material and the immaterial. For example an artist uses the material aspects of colour and art media to communicate immaterial concepts such as love, beauty and anger through paintings. We can foster imaginative growth by surrounding our children with beautiful art, music, literature and poetry, first for the purpose of delight and later on to help foster their own creative connections. As the great educator, Charlotte Mason once said: “Every child should leave school with at least a couple hundred pictures by great masters hanging permanently in the halls of his imagination.”

Conclusion

There is obviously so much more that be added to this discussion on mental fitness. We have not even mentioned the power of meditation, reflection, reasoning, analytical thought and so on. However, all of these qualities are not an end in themselves. Just as physical fitness enables us to explore the outdoors, participate in sports and enjoy a healthy lifestyle, so mental fitness enables us to foster healthy relationships with different spheres of learning, explore the treasures of our natural and cultural heritage and stimulate us towards our own creative engagement and contributions which are so needed in the world today.

Judy McComb, Philosophy Director



Grade 6&7 Camp

The Grade 6&7 Camp this year was at the Simonsberg Christian Resort in Stellenbosch. The children had beautiful weather and we thank God for a safe time full of bonding, confidence-building, memorable experiences. Here is some feedback from a few Grade 7 children:

Zach: "This year's camp was an amazing experience that included team bonding activities, night hikes, free time and optional morning devotions where we learned more about Jesus and the gospel which got me in a good mood for the day! I really enjoyed the break from work and more time for building special friendships. Three of my favourite times were 'gambling egos' when playing UNO in the late evenings, going out on the night hike just in time to watch the beautiful sunset, and, last but not least, squashing 13 boys in a room meant for 4 for a time of bible reading and prayer together. But probably the most memorable time for me was the talent show around the bonfire where my friends and I got to 'embarrass' ourselves!"



Voninga: Some of the activities I enjoyed most were the rope swing where we had to swing over mud without touching it, rafting where we built rafts and raced each other and the night hike when we went around the camp in the dark. In one of our breaks, we had a massive water fight. On our last night of camp we had a bonfire where we sang songs, roasted marshmallows and had a talent show.

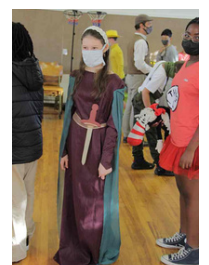
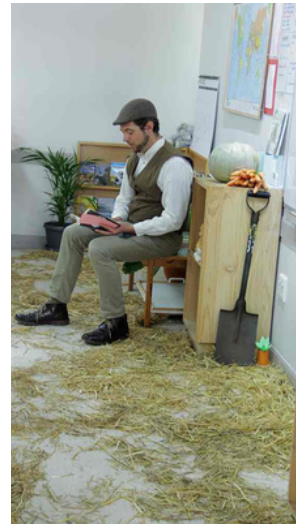
Jenna: Camp this year was amazing. The Grade 6's and 7's had a great time on the activities - we went rafting, we had 'mud rope', a night hike, bonfire and obstacle course. Camp was honestly so much fun, the fact that we were able to get closer to our friends, teachers and other classmates. I think we all learnt more about ourselves on camp, which was noticeable afterwards.

World Book Day

It has become one of our annual habits to celebrate World Book Day in the life of our school. Our teachers each choose one book or author to celebrate with their class and decorate their classrooms accordingly. The children also love to dress up as their favourite book characters and we have great fun at our Book Day assembly as we try and guess “who is who”! This year we were privileged to hear from an author from our parent body, Kate le Roux, who has written a number of wonderful books for young adults. She inspired the children with the story of her own writing journey and also shared one of her favourite illustrated Read-Alouds, a book by Alex Latimer called “Stay!”, which had both the children and the parents giggling with its delightful humour.

It would be important to add that this celebration of World Book Day is about more than just dress-up and fun. It is a unique opportunity for us to emphasize the significant place that books and literature play in our school curriculum. At Grace Primary we don’t confine our use of books and stories to English lessons, but also integrate them within our Science, History, Geography, Picture and Composer Study lessons. The reason for this is that we believe books play a critically important role in helping children assimilate knowledge. They engage the child’s attention, interest and imagination and thus enable the mind to deal personally with new ideas in a way that stimulates ongoing self-education. And of course, books provide a world of wholesome enjoyment for children, which cannot be encouraged enough in our present day.

As Charlotte Mason said: “Children must have books, living books; the best are not too good for them; anything less than the best is not good enough; and if it is needful to exercise economy, let go everything that belongs to soft and luxurious living before letting go the duty of supplying the books, and the frequent changes of books, which are necessary for the constant stimulation of the child’s intellectual life.”



World Book Day cont...



A visit by South African children's author Refiloe Moahloli

As a continuing celebration of World Book Day, we felt very privileged to host a visit by a local children's author, Refiloe Moahloli on Friday, 13 May during our morning assembly. Refiloe is the best-selling author of many popular children's books including: 'How Many Ways Can You Say Hello?', 'Tullula', 'Yes Yanga! Yheke Yanga!' and 'We Are One'. Refiloe shared some of her own stories with the children and encouraged them to aspire to writing their own books one day. We enjoyed her positive and lively presence amongst us and were inspired by her passion for children and books.

I Opened A Book

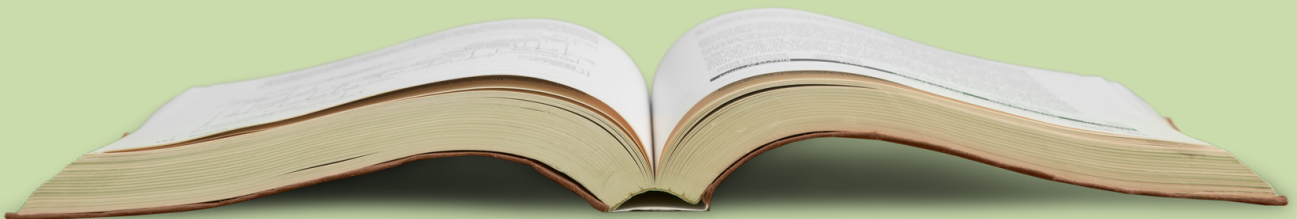
by Julia Donaldson

I opened a book and in I strode
Now nobody can find me.
I've left my chair, my house, my road,
My town and my world behind me.

I'm wearing the cloak, I've slipped on the ring,
I've swallowed the magic potion.
I've fought with a dragon, dined with a king
And dived in a bottomless ocean.

I opened a book and made some friends.
I shared their tears and laughter
And followed their road with its bumps and bends
To the happily ever after.

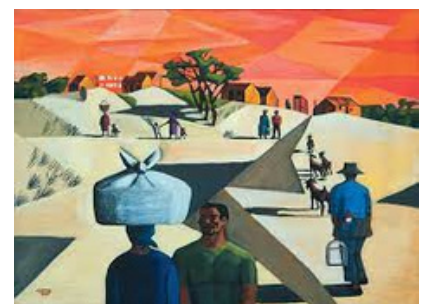
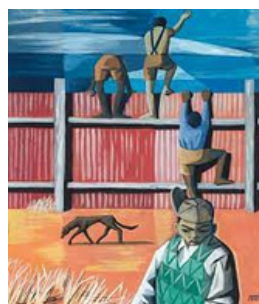
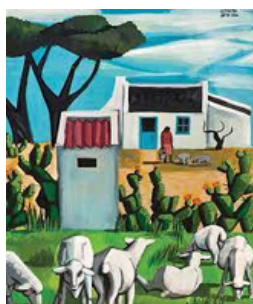
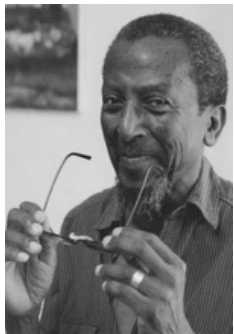
I finished my book and out I came.
The cloak can no longer hide me.
My chair and my house are just the same,
But I have a book inside me.



Grade 2 Excursion to the Peter Clarke Art Centre

Each term our classes go on excursions to places of natural, historical or cultural interest in our city with the aim of extending their learning in more first-hand and practical ways. This term our Grade 2's visited the Peter Clarke Art Centre since they had been learning about the late Peter Clarke in their Picture Study lessons during the term. They were very privileged to hear first hand from Peter Clarke's younger brother, David Clarke, as well as one of his nephews during the morning. David Clarke described his brother as a humble and compassionate man who had used his art to both portray human suffering and inspire hope. He also shared some stories from their childhood, describing Peter's resourcefulness in using waste material and natural objects to include in his art creations. On one occasion David had noticed Peter carefully picking wild flowers on a hike near their home in the Simonstown area and later saw how he had carefully pressed these flowers and used them to make beautiful cards and bookmarks.

The children were then shown some of Peter Clarke's original artworks in the Gallery and ended the morning with a practical art lesson demonstrating the linocut method for which Clarke was well known. All in all, the excursion was both an inspirational and special time for both the children and teachers involved.



Mothers' Day Assembly

We so enjoyed taking the opportunity in the week leading up to Mothers' Day to appreciate our moms. Those moms who were able to take time off work joined for a special assembly on Friday, 6 May and were our honoured guests for the morning. Mrs Meissner (our caretaker-principal while Mrs Wood was away) shared an inspiring message on motherhood, using the analogies of words such as "motherboard"; "mother earth" and "mother city" to emphasize the central and defining role that mothers play in our families. This year, our Fundraising Committee also took the opportunity to organize a couple of Mothers Day Hampers which were awarded to 3 lucky moms at the end of our assembly. These were not only a spoil for the recipients but raised about R7000 for the school through the raffle ticket sales.



Grace Knitting Challenge

All the knitters in our Grace community have been busy this term knitting squares to make blankets for children from the Sinothando orphanage in Khayelitsha. This project was inspired by a mom in our parent body, Megan Chitsike, who has rallied a team of helpers to sew up the squares that have been handed in to the school. Some of our children joined a knitting training class at the beginning of the term to help them get going and many moms and grannies have been knitting at home to make their own contributions. The plan is to invite the leaders of the orphanage to come and share about their work at the beginning of next term to give the children some idea of where the blankets are going and to make them aware of some of the challenges faced by less privileged children in our city.



Parents' Inspirational Evening with Brendan and Sandy Carroll



Carroll family 2017

We have so enjoyed being able to host parent meetings in person again this year! It is our tradition during the second and third terms to invite parents to inspirational evenings where we host speakers to share on topics relevant to education, parenting and nurturing children in our present day context. This term we were privileged to welcome Brendan and Sandy Carroll to speak to us on "Transitions in Parenting". Brendan Carroll is the Principal of Pinehurst Primary School in Pinelands (and also serves on our Board) and his wife Sandy is a music teacher who taught our Senior Choir at one time and still teaches some of our children instrument lessons from her home.

The Carrolls spoke from their own experience of raising two boys who are now young working men and shared personally about some of the challenges and joys of transitioning through different seasons of toddlerhood, primary and high school and beyond. They challenged us as parents to take time to get to know our children as people, discovering and encouraging their interests and checking in with them regularly so as to build deep and lasting relationships. The evening together was truly an enriching time, with many stories to remember and truths to ponder.

Staff Reading Recommendations

The winter holidays are a wonderful time to catch up on reading in the cosy indoors! Our teachers have put down some of their own favourite children's books to give you some ideas:

Grade 1 Mrs Jack:

Anything by Patricia St John especially Treasures in the Snow. Other family favourites included Journey to the River Sea by Eva Ibbotson; Pippi Longstocking by Astrid Lindgren, The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien and Swallows and Amazons by Arthur Ransome.

Grade 2 Miss Pretorius:

Here are some picture book favourites: Cordoroy by Don Freeman; Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter; If You Give a Mouse a Cookie by Laura Numeroff; The Berenstain Bears Go to School by Stan & Jan Berenstain and Lettie Losper het Verkoue by Gill Davies.

Grade 3 Mrs Rodo:

All the Narnia books by C.S. Lewis; The Ramona series by Beverley Cleary; Heidi by Joanna Spyri; the Laura Ingalls Wilder series; Jock of the Bushveld by Sir Percy FitzPatrick and Pollyanna by Eleanor H. Porter.

Grade 4 Mrs Gregoriades:

Winnie-the-Pooh by A.A. Milne, the Beatrix Potter stories and the Enid Blyton books.

Staff Reading Recommendations cont...

Grade 5 Mrs Johns:

All the Nancy Drew books by Carolyn Keene as well as the Enid Blyton school stories about St. Claires and Mallory Towers and the Scarlet and Ivy series by Sophie Cleverly. For boys she would also recommend the Bear Grylls adventure series and for younger children, the What-A-Mess books by Frank Muir.

Grade 6 Miss Andersen:

The Anne of Green Gables series by L.M. Montgomery as well as the Georgette Heyer books for slightly older children. Afrikaans favourites were the Maasdorp series by Stella Blakemore.

Grade 7 Mr Louw:

The Story of Man – a Pictorial Pageant by Michel Lacre, and from his wife, When the People are Away by Ann Jungman (not surprisingly a book about cats!)

Judy McComb:

All of L.M. Montgomery's books, especially the Emily of New Moon series. Also Daddy-Long-legs by Jean Webster; Freckles by Gene Stratton-Porter and The Silver Sword by Ian Serraillier. Favourite picture books would definitely be all those by Shirley Hughes, especially the Alfie and Annie-Rose books.

Mrs Wood:

Family favourites included the Narnia series by CS Lewis, Roald Dahl books as well as adventure stories by Enid Blyton and African animal stories such as The Long Grass Whispers by Geraldine Elliot.

Guest Book Day Author, Kate le Roux:

Some of the Le Roux family favourites include Babe, the Sheep Pig by Dick King-Smith; By the Great Horn Spoon! by Sid Fleischman; The Seventeenth Swap by Eloise Jarvis McGraw; Owls in the Family by Farley Mowat; Caddie Woodlawn by Carol Ryrie Brink and The Toothpaste Millionaire by Jean Merrill.

