

GRACE CHRONICLES

Issue No. 3 | March 2022



From the Principal's Desk

This has been a year in which most schools have endeavored to “be back to normal” as much as possible. While this is a good thing, at Grace Primary we haven’t just wanted to be busy again – instead, we have wanted to ensure that our school’s distinctive offerings are indeed producing the nourishing education that leads to life and growth. What has this meant in practice? In this newsletter, we hope to answer this question by sharing some of our reflections and convictions with you as well as giving you a glimpse of each classroom.

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Philosophy Corner: A Nourishing Education

First of all, it's helpful to think about what nourishment means in the context of education. Perhaps the easiest way to think about this is to consider the daily lunch boxes that we pack for our children. What are some of the things we keep in mind as we pack these lunch boxes? We want the food to sustain them throughout the day, so mostly we look for options that will be both tasty and nourishing, preferably giving some variety as well. Healthy lunchboxes could possibly include a fruit/vegetable, a healthy sandwich with cheese or cold meat and some nuts, raisins and dates. We know that these foods will sustain them as they exercise both physically and mentally.

These same ideas influence the way we think about the education at Grace Primary. We recognize that there are many aspects of the curriculum that involve intense exercise of the mind – we could think of solving a mathematical equation, doing times-table drills or learning spelling words and so on. All these aspects are necessary activities of the mind, but on their own can create brain fatigue if we do not simultaneously ensure that intellectual growth is sustained with nourishing mind food.

Nourishing educational ingredients include:

- reading books full of living ideas, not just dry facts;
- listening and reciting beautiful words in poetry;
- spending time in nature, carefully looking and listening;
- listening to good music with focused attention;
- appreciating great works of art;
- learning from great role models in science, history, literature and other spheres of life;
- planning excursions to different parts of our city that broaden their learning across many dimensions.

Charlotte Mason recognized this reality and therefore wrote the following: “The mind is capable of dealing with only one kind of food; it lives, grows and is nourished upon ideas only; mere information is to it as a meal of sawdust to the body” (A Philosophy of Education, p. 105). Thus, in your child's daily “lunch-box” at Grace Primary, we have made sure to include core ingredients that are conducive to this educational nourishment.

We don't consider these things to be extra frills that can be included once in a while if we happen to get around to it. In contrast, we see these as integral to an approach to education that truly respects the child as a person.

We hope that some of this nourishment has overflowed into your home context during the term as your child has shared a favourite story or a new treasure from nature or possibly as they have recited their poem of the term or living story from history. As we come to the close of the term, we would like to share some nourishing stories from our classes with you. Enjoy partaking in their fest of learning.

Judy McComb

Glimpses of Grace

Grade 1:

Our Grade 1's have enjoyed getting to know more about Vincent van Gogh and his artwork. His painting 'Starry Night' inspired them to make their own replicas using broad sweeping brush strokes and vivid colours. Here are some of their masterpieces:



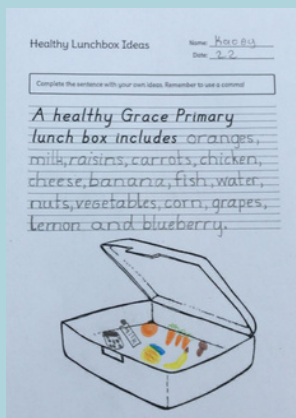
In their History lessons, the Grade 1's have also been thinking about how different areas of life have changed so much over time – from transport, to technology, to entertainment and food. They had fun earlier this week learning about how people used to pickle, preserve and jam fruits and vegetables in the days before supermarkets and fridges made food so much more easily accessible.



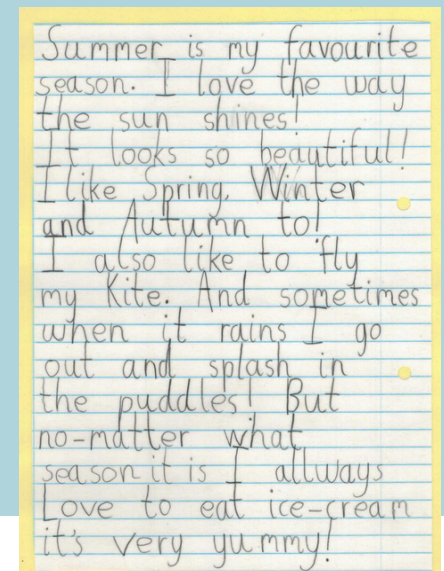


Grade 2:

In a recent Science lesson, the Grade 2's learnt about the importance of looking after their bodies and eating healthily. Inspired by the wisdom of the story of the Berenstain Bears called "Too Much Junk Food!" they thought about the importance of making good food choices to sustain both body and mind. The reading and discussion were followed by an activity in which the students decided which healthy foods they would choose for a meal, which they then coloured, cut and pasted on a dinner plate.

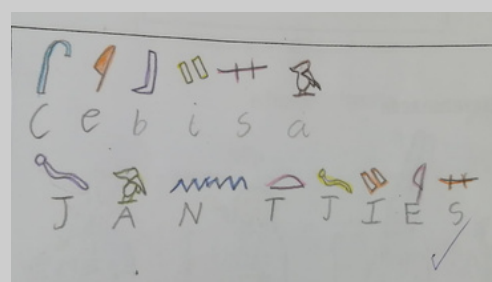
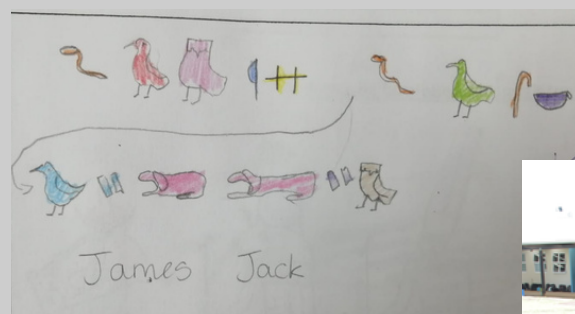


They also reflected on the seasons of the year in a creative writing piece. Look at this imaginative piece of writing by Abigail Chitsike:



Grade 3:

The Grade 3's have had fun in History this term. In the very first week they undertook an archeological dig in the school grounds looking for hidden artifacts that their teacher, Mrs Rodo had hidden in advance. This activity helped them to think about the important role that archeologists play in helping us to discover more about the past. They have also been learning about Ancient Egypt and had some fun practicing how to write their own names in hieroglyphs.



Grade 4:

The Grade 4's were challenged to present a science experiment to their peers in Afrikaans, providing them with the opportunity to expand their fluency in Afrikaans and learn some Science at the same time. Some of them dressed up for the occasion and had lots of fun!

In Picture Study, they learned about the artist Henri Matisse this term and enjoyed some creative time this week designing their own Matisse "cut-outs".

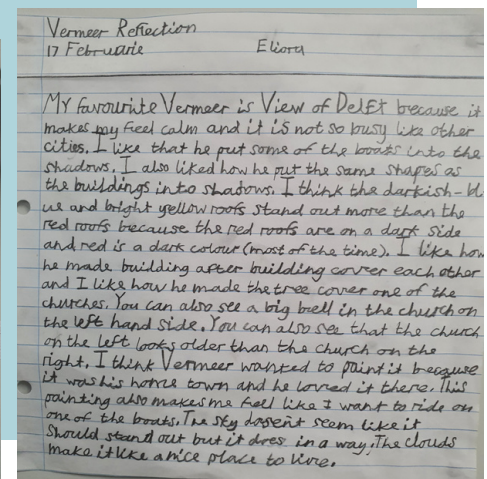


The Grade 4's have also enjoyed learning more about feathers during their Science and Nature Study lessons. They first learnt about the different parts of feathers and spent some time looking at these under the microscope. They also learnt about the difference between flight feathers, contour feathers and down feathers and considered how each type is suited to the role they play.

Grade 5:

The Grade 5's have been learning about the countries of Asia and were interested when their History curriculum covering Early Modern Times looked at the origins of the Moghul Dynasty in South-East Asia. They learnt about how the awe-inspiring Taj Mahal in India originated in a fairy-tale love story between Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Muhal and today is a World Heritage Site.

The Grade 5's have also enjoyed learning about the Dutch artist, Vermeer this term. They were asked to write a descriptive narration of his painting called 'A View of Delft'. Read this contribution by Eliora Tregenza-Hall.



Grade 6&7:

The Grade 6&7 classes enjoyed an outdoor field study in the Silvermine Nature Reserve recently. Excursions are a key aspect of the nourishment that we believe to be critical to a well-balanced educational diet. They are a reminder to the children that education is not just about academic achievement, but is about opening their eyes and ears to the wider world around them and understanding their responsibility and place in it. The Grade 6&7's definitely had their eyes and ears opened to some of the beautiful fynbos in this reserve and their responsibility to protect it. The excursion was guided by a representative of the Center for Conservation Education who exposed the children to the biodiversity of this region, even introducing them to one of the local spiders at quite close range! They enjoyed their mid-morning snacks next to the dam and were able to take their shoes off and paddle in the water. Appreciating nature and learning from a young age that we have a responsibility to be good stewards of it were good ideas for their minds to chew on!



Increase your word power!

Over the term, we give our senior and junior classes a new 'word of the week' to help expand their vocabulary. Our words this term have related to either the habit focus or to aspects relevant to the time of the year (e.g. arrival of autumn) or current events. Here are a few of the words we have introduced:

For the Juniors: habit; inquire; crisp; conclude

For the Seniors: etiquette; apathy; susurrous; culminate

Do you know what susurrous means?

Staff News

At the beginning of this year we welcomed back Mrs Grobler and Mrs Gregoriades who had both been off on Maternity Leave last year. Sadly, Mrs Grobler's return to Grace Primary has turned out to be all-too-brief as she learned during the December holidays that her husband's work would be moving to Luxembourg! They have already started the process of packing up to move and will be leaving Cape Town in the next couple of months. Mrs Grobler has been an outstanding teacher during her time at the school and will be greatly missed.



We are also very sorry to be saying goodbye to Miss Shumba who has decided to move into a different sector of education and will be teaching English as a foreign language. Miss Shumba has been a dedicated and hardworking member of our team over the past number of years and has been loved by many classes of children at Grace Primary. We are very sorry to see her go, but wish her everything of the best in her new endeavors.



While it is always sad to say good-byes, we are very blessed to be welcoming Mrs Jack as our new Grade 1 teacher as from next term. Mrs Jack already feels like part of the team as has volunteered in a variety of capacities since her children started at Grace Primary at the beginning of this year. She has a wealth of experience in both formal and home schooling and has given extensive time to thinking through the Charlotte Mason philosophy and so we are excited to welcome her in an official capacity to the Grace Primary team.



Miss Pretorious (or Miss P for short) is no stranger to the Grace Primary family as has taught Afrikaans and assisted in various aspects of school life for nearly two years. However, she will now be taking over as our Grade 2 class teacher and is looking forward to this more full-time role.



Some fun to make some funds!

The Fundraising Committee have already met to set plans in motion for fundraising this year, the major event being a sponsored Park Run planned for October. However, a fun civvies day with a silly hat them was organized this week to get some small funds trickling in ... and to give the children some fun at the end of term. Snack packs were also put together and sold as part of the Civvies Day deal - giving moms one less day to sort out lunch boxes. Have a look at some of the 'silly hats' that entered the Grace Primary gates on Wednesday morning.



Handicraft Week

Part of the broad and rich education provided at Grace Primary is exposure to a variety of handicrafts. At the end of a term, we often take the opportunity to draw on the expertise of outside parents or teachers to expose the children to different skills and spheres of learning. Practical activities involving fine-motor skills and creativity are so important, especially in our modern era where so much is done for us or is screen-based. Here is what our children have been busy with this week.

Our **Grade 1** children learnt to do some weaving, starting with paper weaving to gain confidence and then transferring to wooden looms, made by Mr Jack!

In keeping with their study of Egyptian History during the term, the **Grade 3s** made clay tablets with hieroglyphs or cuneiform with the expert help of ceramicist Nada Spencer, another one of our talented Grace moms.



Our **Grade 2s, 4s and 5s** all embarked on sewing projects, guided by Kate le Roux, one of our Grace moms who runs her own creative sewing business called 'Zizi & Jo'. She taught the Grade 4s and 5s how to make their own bows while the Grade 2s learnt how to make rainbow cloud ornaments out of felt.



Handicraft Week cont.

Our Grade 6's embarked on a woodworking project with the help of Russell Brown and his team from Tekioo Design & Technology and completed making a plant pot holder.



Finally, our Grade 7's were guided on a Tech project involving electric circuits, also led by Russell Brown and his team from Tekioo. This is part of their Science curriculum for the year so was a great practical experience.



Coding news...

We're excited to be introducing some coding into our Grade 6&7 curriculum as from next term! We will be using the curriculum called Code4Kids which is very user-friendly and includes teacher training for each course so that it can be done in the classroom as part of the daily curriculum rather than an extra-mural. The children will work on the Chromebooks at school and be given various tasks to do during the year. This adds yet another dimension to the feast of education at Grace Primary.



School Assemblies

We have so enjoyed being able to celebrate assemblies each week as a whole school together, as opposed to the separate junior and senior assemblies that were part of our COVID years. Each week we have been privileged to share in different devotions, some of which helped us to think about our core habits which were “Good Manners” and “Curiosity” this term and some of which celebrated particular days such as “World Africa Environment Day” and “National Story-Telling Week”. We particularly enjoyed the Grade 7 led assembly in which they helped us to think about the implications of Charlotte Mason’s Motto, “I am, I can, I ought, I will” by means of a variety of entertaining skits.

This term each class was given the opportunity to lead the assembly in a song they had learnt in class singing with Mrs Meyer. We were particularly excited to end the term with a special choir-led assembly with some special items sung by our choir. This has been the first year that we have been able to reintroduce our choir into the extra-mural program and we are very thankful for this aspect of our “return to normal”.

