ST MARY'S DSG

St Mary's Matters

We wish you a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

Table of Contents

Page 1	Acting Head's Message
Page 3	Chaplain's Message
Page 5	Boarding Article
Page 9	The Counselling Centre
Page 13	Alumnae Article
Page 16	Transformation and Diversity
Page 20	Junior School Academics
Page 22	Junior School IT Department
Page 26	Junior School Events
Page 32	Senior School Academics
Page 34	Senior School IT Department
Page 36	Day of Discovery
Page 38	Beneath the Baobab
Page 40	Valediction
Page 43	4IR and Music
Page 45	Sports Department

Acting Head's Message

In my address to the Junior School staff at the beginning of this year, when I joined St Mary's DSG, I explored the life lessons we could learn from the camera - having 20/20 vision. These included:

- The value of seeing things from a different perspective.
- Differentiating between when to zoom in and when to zoom out.
- Learning to live in the moment.
- The value of making connections and sharing with others.
- The importance of self-care and personal well-being.
- To role model that it is ok to fail and to learn from our mistakes.
- To just do it - don't second guess yourself - take the picture.

Little did I know at the time how relevant this conversation would be for the journey the school would walk in 2020. This has been a year of immense challenge for our school, from managing the impact of a pandemic and continuing to deliver an education of significance and excellence to addressing the call to take action in response to the allegations of racism, xenophobia and homophobia levelled against our school.

The journey we have travelled as a school these past few months has led me to read more about the history of this 141-year-old school and I take this opportunity to share some highlights from our school's story.

Firstly, the School's mission states that St Mary's DSG will be a community where care, compassion and service abound, internally and externally, and that the School will provide a home of beauty, safety and vibrancy for all. The School was founded in the home of Bishop Bousfield to educate his daughters. In my reading, I was struck by the word home - referenced in both the foundation story of the School and in our current mission - and in our current context believe that we are been called to review the concept of 'home' and re-establish a 'home' for all to belong.

Secondly, this School, known for its pursuit of excellence and a vision of raising women of integrity, has had "a more chequered history than most schools and can be justly proud of its resilience and adaptability". (Quote from the Daughters of the King 1879-1979). It is this resilience and adaptability displayed over again in the school's history, through five wars if my recollection is correct, that will once again see us through the challenges and adversity that the School has experienced this year.

A year such as this one, would not be possible without the commitment and varied contributions of many stakeholders to find solutions and to develop a strategy to address the challenges and ensure the future sustainability of our beloved school. Thank you to everyone - for offering guidance, leadership and wisdom as we steadied the ship and set her on a new course.

May these Christmas holidays bring much needed rest and restoration to all members of our community and may the season of Christmas be a time of blessing and renewal in preparation for a new year filled with hope and possibility.

Mrs Alison Jennings
Acting Head of School

Chaplain's Message

ALWAYS WE BEGIN AGAIN

There is a book by John McQuiston II on the Benedictine spirituality entitled “Always We Begin Again”. This book holds timeless appeal for those who hunger for a meaningful and creatively balanced framework for life. It offers a simple plan, based on the Rule of St. Benedict, to order one’s time and create physical and inner space, to step back from the demands and pressures of the moment, and to step into a place of peace. I hold this work before you after what has been a grueling year where all of us have been challenged to learn new skills, challenged to find personal spiritual, emotional and physical resources to manage, and challenged in some way or other to critically review our privilege and prejudices. There can be no doubt that many of us were left shell shocked, frustrated and asking the question, “where to from here?”

So here is my story for 2020. When I was asked if I was going to apply for the position of Assistant Chaplain at DSG I wasn’t sure if I should. I have always loved visiting this school and found it always to be a happy place. There was much to consider, chief amongst which I had only been in my last parish for two years and was only just getting into the swing of ministry there. And then there was the little matter of working with children when for the previous twelve years or so I had dealt mostly with adults and left the teaching to Sunday School Teachers and Youth Chaplains. To say that I felt a little under experienced would be a mild understatement. To put it in the words of one of our Grade 1s who was commenting on the cassock I was wearing, “what are you wearing Father Vernon? You look ridiculous.” Yes, my child, I felt a little ridiculous.

Little did I know, any of us know, what this year held in store for us. Coming and being excited to learn a new ministry only to be thrust, after two and a half months, into an entirely new way of doing that new ministry. Suddenly I was learning how to make videos for Chapel services. It is a story I guess all of us were experiencing. The students learning to discipline themselves to be diligent and to maintain their own routine and staff trying to help them do the same. It was difficult to get to know these Daughters of the King and I regret not getting to know staff members better who now make new beginnings as they move onto other things.

While I state the obvious here, the point that I'm trying to make is, as the Benedictine way puts it, always we begin again. At the end of what has been a tough year, the Church begins again with Advent, and we begin again by planning and getting things in shape for "2020 won". As we look forward to the new year, we carry the lessons of this year into the next. It is, in a way, the soil for the seeds we plant next year. No doubt the challenges of this year will continue to push us into new beginnings in the next. It is exhausting on so many levels, but I am not going to let that put me down. I choose to revel in those moments of challenge and to take time for rest, relaxation and reflection so that I can begin again. Let us all begin again and trust that our Lord will give us the resources to be the people we were created to be.

Rev Vernon Foster
Chaplain

Boarding Article

“Starting over is an acceptance of a past we can’t change, an unrelenting conviction that the future can be different, and the stubborn wisdom to use the past to make the future what the past was not.” – Craig D. Lounsbrough

I start my report with the quote above because I am a strong believer that the past cannot be changed but the future can indeed be different. 2020 brought many external and internal challenges to our School, which as a result affected our Boarding House since we do not work in isolation. However, if one had to think deeply about these challenges, they brought new meaning to who we are as a community.

As we close off 2020, we would like to thank the staff for their resilience amid the challenges faced throughout this year. Ms Genis and the whole catering and cleaning team made our lives easier and we were fed in a safe, nourishing environment. Our Security, Estates and Driver personnel had to meet unexpected demands from the Boarding House, and they rose to the occasion with smiles and support for our Team and the Girls. I do not have enough words to thank the Boarding Staff who went beyond the call of duty when they were short-staffed from earlier this year up until the end. We thank Mrs Jennings for the support she gave throughout. Finally, our girls, who tried their best to adjust to the new normal brought by the pandemic.

The current Grade 11 girls are very enthusiastic for the new beginnings that we all hope for, for the New Year. The plans that are in place give hope to a better sense of community and belonging in the Boarding House.

Boarding Farewells

It is with heavy hearts that we must bid farewell to our beloved mothers in the Boarding House. Mrs Pippa Pinker, who has been with us for about 9 years has not only been a fantastic colleague, but she has also been a great mother to our girls. There are not enough words to thank her for all that she has done for the Boarding House. She has given of herself with love and care in her motherly nature. The Boarding House will not be the same without you. She is always full of energy and happy to see everyone in the mornings.

St Mary's DSG Boarding House wish you the very best in the future. We know that whatever the future holds, you will excel and continue to be successful. Your good memory and connection with all the girls that have been under your care is amazing. We wish you all the best for the future and hope your next adventure is rewarding.

We are also saying goodbye to Ms Annalie Lotter, our boarding office assistant. We would like to thank her for the person she is as well as everything she has done for the Boarding House at St Mary's DSG. She started off here as a Housemother and the girls are still talking about the lessons they have learnt from her. Her contribution to this Boarding House has been immense and tremendous. We hope you keep doing your good work in your next job as well.Ms A, as affectionally referred to by the girls, is supposed to retire at the end of the year but we know that her energy cannot keep her still and she is ready to take on the next challenge and adventure that life throws her way. It was a pleasure working with her. Her great organisational skills are of note and we have no doubt that wherever you go, you will make a positive difference. We appreciate and will dearly miss your dedication while you worked with us. Best wishes as you embark on a new challenge.

Ms Dorothy Witham is another house mom we are losing this year. We would like to thank her for being such a dependable and honest colleague during her time here. Her calm nature has brought so much sanity to our Boarding House. While it pains us to bid you farewell, we sincerely wish you continued success in all your future endeavours. Ms Witham has been such an important part of us, and we hope that we will keep this relationship going even after she has left. All the best and we hope your dreams come true.

In the new year, we will be welcoming a new team in the Boarding House and they are all looking forward to bringing fresh ideas that will help our Boarding House grow.

Mrs Pumla Dlungwana
Head of Boarding

The Counselling Centre

How to survive difficult times

Henry Kissinger said: "A diamond is a chunk of coal who did well under pressure", but the question that needs to be answered is: How do we survive and even do well under pressure in order to develop diamond-like qualities?

With each challenge, we firstly need to draw upon our past experiences and remind ourselves of the skills we have obtained and used to overcome emotional and physical difficulties. Knowing and reminding yourself that you are resilient may help you develop the strength to pursue your life to the fullest, without feeling overwhelmed by fear and disappointment. Secondly, it will be wise to develop new skills and new ways of dealing with life to expand resilience repertoire.

The following ideas may be helpful in this process:

1. Be happy now

Things will not always go according to plan or will be managed the way you would have done it. Be flexible and explore your possibilities, adapt to what you cannot change, believe in yourself and do whatever you can to create an environment in which you can flourish and be of value to those around you. Remember to be who you would like to be and chase your passion...and do it now. Do not get side-tracked by external circumstances and difficulties.

2. Embrace Change

If you can accept that nothing stays the same and that there will always be flux and obstacles, you are much better equipped and ready to make a positive effort to stay confident in believing in your own ability to embrace change. Look for opportunities and new choices within the changed circumstances and stay true to yourself and who you are by living out your calling. Keep on chasing your passion. Do not define a moment of your life as your life...remember a moment does not define who you are.

3. Stay positive and take care of yourself

Do not dwell on negative thoughts. It is not always easy, but if you can gain a handle on your thoughts, especially your negative ones, you are much better equipped to take some positive action. Negative thoughts do not just keep you worried and anxious, but may prevent you from finding positive solutions to problems. You can easily get caught up in negative thinking patterns that will wear you down and leave you without enthusiasm and new creative ideas if you do not make a conscious decision to change your perceptions and views in order to stay positive. Choose what you would like to focus on that will bring joy, happiness and fulfillment in your life and silence the critical voices that will bring you down. Take time to do things to support and feed your body and soul.

4. Create and achieve new goals (Do not choose through default – choose to design)

Goals can be set on different levels. Life goals are complex and long term, but must be kept in mind. However, during difficult times it is important to set reasonable short-term goals that can easily be accomplished. These goals can include creative and family projects, health-related projects or activities that will bring fun and pleasure into your own and other people's lives. Achieving self-set goals will assist you in focusing on self-motivation and encouragement, and less on external evaluations and circumstances.

5. Become a problem-solver and take action
Learn how to put specific situations in perspective by seeing them in relation to the bigger picture of your own life. Will the situation that is consuming so much of your time and energy remain prominent in your life or thinking or will it pale with the passing of time? Can you use this experience to grow, change old perspectives and try new ways of thinking and operating, or try new ventures?
Instead of re-chewing the problematic situation or difficulties, take action and put in an effort to do something to mitigate the problem. Small steps in the right direction will help you to move forward in order to accomplish your goals. Each accomplished small task will add up to accomplishing the much bigger task at hand.

6. Keep a sense of humour

Even very serious things do not have to be taken too seriously. Humour helps to lighten up our moods and to forget for a while what bothers us. It also provides a counterbalance to the seriousness of the circumstances.

7. Surround yourself with supportive people

Take care of yourself by anchoring yourself to a committed and supportive social network. Having reliable, caring people around you who will listen to and encourage you, will help to take the burden off your shoulders so that you don't feel alone. Look out for and connect with people who are your supporters and advocates, people who cheer for you, who help raise you up, give you reassurance and strength and who will help you increase your resilience, especially during rough times. Enjoy time with people who love and care about you.

Remember to follow your dreams, to believe in yourself and to never give up!

Dr Marthé Pienaar
Educational Psychologist

Alumnae Article

In spite of COVID-19 and the restrictions placed on meeting in person, the Alumnae Committee met regularly during 2020. Just as the school faced a period of turmoil and has had to try and plot a way forward, so too the committee has had a period of introspection. A strategy session is planned to review the constitution and address issues of transformation and diversity.

Three new alumnae have agreed to serve on the committee and have already been attending meetings and giving their input. Sadly, the committee bids farewell to Liz (Greaves) Sommerville who has served for many years but is moving to Franschoek and feels that the time has come for her to step down. Sadly Jean McIvor is also stepping down at the end of the year.

The committee for 2021 will be as follows:
Tiffany van Tonder (2001) joined the committee as the treasurer in 2018, and took over as the chairperson in 2020. She will continue as chairperson in 2021 and will also serve on the Governing Body.
Olive (Pilane) Ndebele (1988) is a long-standing member of the committee who will serve as vice-chair and also represent the alumnae on the Governing Body.
Nonny Mokoena-Chimhandamba (2001) joined the committee this year and will take on the role of treasurer in 2021.
Bianca van Loosen (2001) has served as secretary for the committee for the past two years and has graciously accepted the role again for 2021.
Manini Madisha (1996) and Kgomotso Moalusi (1998) joined the committee this year.
Dionne de Villiers Smith (1985) joined the committee in 2010 and has served as the chairperson.

Carol (Lumley) Viljoen (1966) joined the Alumnae Committee in 1995 and has been a stalwart in arranging functions, especially the Big Walk for the Junior School.
Fiona (Harris) Pienaar (1987) has served on the committee for a number of years. She is instrumental in the organisation of the Big Walk for the Junior School.
Pat (Davidson) van der Valk (1958) has served on the committee since 1972 and provides a fount of experience and wisdom. Pat has also been largely responsible for the Old Girls' Essay Competition.
Fran (Fletcher) Dreyer (1981) previously served on the committee both as secretary and chairperson. After a short break she rejoined the committee in 2020.

This year the Governing Body established the Interim Transformation and Diversity sub-committee. Christine Msibi (2001) and Luyanda Khumalo (2015) were elected to serve on this committee representing the Alumnae. Minutes will be made available and will be shared to the Alumnae WhatsApp group. If there are old girls interested in being included in that group, they can email their names and numbers to missmsibi@ymail.com, with the subject "WHATSAPP".

Please contact Carol Stedall (the alumnae administrator) at cstedall@stmarys.pta.school.za to update your information for the alumnae database, or with any queries about the committee or functions in 2021. A new website will be launched on the AlumNet platform in 2021.

Farewell for long-standing Alumnae Committee member Liz (Greaves) Sommerville from left to right: Fran (Fletcher) Dreyer, Tiffany van Tonder, Jean McIvor, Pat (Davidson) van der Valk, Liz (Greaves) Sommerville and Carol Stedall (Alumnae Administrator).

Transformation & Diversity

A Wave of Change

2020 was a year not one of us will forget.

Flexibility, adaptability, facemasks, Microsoft Teams, Zoom... and sudden change are some of the first thoughts that come into mind when I think back on this year. Yet, at some point in my reflection, I am filled with a surge of emotions when I think back to some of the challenges that our own community has had to endure this year.

Change is often scary, inevitable and evident in daily life. Even in the most established of routines we still find remnants of change. Some of this change can be in the unexpected return to the school reception area to drop off a forgotten lunch bag or in an urgent work meeting that somehow cannot be scheduled in any other time but in your lunch hour or... the 2 minutes before your knock-off time!

While we all think of how inconvenient these moments of sudden change are to our routines, the change undeniably brings with it some positives. When you arrived at the reception area to drop off the lunch bag, you were met with a beaming face and a grateful hug from your hungry little human. At that urgent work meeting, you received some interesting news about your organization that will make for some or another positive change in the future.

Is it, therefore, safe to say that change can bring with it some kind of positivity?

Our school in recent months has been challenged to transform, to embrace diversity and to promote inclusive practices for all its members. This in my eyes is a challenge that requires change. When the wave of change first hit, our school was shaken. All the members of our community felt unsettled, scared, confused and hurt during this time. For some, it felt like the heaviest few months of all their time at the school. Learners, parents and staff alike felt the same uneasiness in a place where they were all faced with a common challenge.

CHANGE.

What followed the wave of change were town halls, conversations and mediation sessions in which we all had to stop and reflect. Whether internal or external reflection what became more evident is that each of us needed the next person to keep our feet and hearts strong as we took a few more steps forward in our new journey.

The Grade 7s in the Junior School joined the conversation with their weekly Ubuntu Conversations which helped them create a safe space amongst themselves to explore a variety of topics that were on their minds. The Senior School girls also paved the way for honest conversations, hope and healing during their mediation sessions and in conversations they had with their parents, teachers, the school management and the Governing Body.

The Interim Transformation and Diversity Sub-Committee (ITC) is another space for conversations of change. The 18-member committee holds elected representatives from various stakeholder groups in our community whose shared goal is being at the forefront of the positive change that will emerge from this journey that our school is on.

While the wave of change continues to flow through the corners and crevices of our beloved school, the words of one of the ITC's members reign true; "This transformation, diversity and inclusion journey must be a part of all our lives. It needs to become part of our school's daily practice and every member of our community should embody this change".

I couldn't agree more. If our noble journey is to be worthwhile and truly successful, the message of transformation, embracing diversity and promoting inclusivity must become a shared investment for us all. We should actively embrace all the great potential that this wave of change has presented to our school and strive for a truly inclusive school for all our community members. Imagine the possibilities that will come from the intentional creation of a learning environment where every child, every parent and every staff member feels that they truly belong. Where every single member of our community, big or small, feels that they are an important, valued, dignified, appreciated and celebrated piece of our St Mary's DSG puzzle.

Yes, we all have our own fears and perhaps some reservations, as these are unchartered waters that flow through our school. Even so, we must always try to remember that the change these waters bring will surely be positive. The next few years in our school will be exciting, challenging, undeniably unforgettable and hopefully face-mask free!

As we all break off for our December holidays, I invite you to continue praying for our school and all its members, past and present, as we look forward to taking more change-making steps in the year 2021.

I wish you all a lovely and restful festive season and a prosperous new year.

Miss Idah Makhafola
Educator and ITC Junior School staff representative

Junior School

Academics

Our new school year had just begun when the world was faced with an unprecedented health crisis. COVID-19 spread across the globe, bringing with it sickness, death, uncertainty, anxiety and economic upheaval. The world stopped like never before. When South Africa was placed in Level 5 Lockdown in March, our academic plans for 2020 were questioned. The Junior School Academic staff accepted the new challenge and within 3 days were ready to continue with the academic programme online.

Unlike many schools in our country, St Mary's DSG was fortunate in being able to continue with educating our girls. We made history and learnt with the rest of the world to deliver a virtual, blended approach to learning. Together with past experiences of using iPads and enhancing lessons with digital apps, as well as attending webinars with teachers from around the globe, our staff delivered lessons remotely. The assistance and support that we received from our parents at home contributed to the success of our online experience.

When the girls were finally allowed to return to school there were still restrictions on social mobility and interaction. We accommodated this by alternating with days at school and days at home, there was no sport or singing, art was restricted, and we had to move back to the traditional seating arrangements by replacing flexible seats with individual desks.

In all of this our staff and girls have learnt resilience and the ability to adapt to make the most of any situation. Lessons, curriculum and approaches have been changed throughout the year to deliver content in a meaningful way that the girls can benefit from it wherever they may be learning. Learning was different in 2020, but just because school looked different, it does not mean that it was ineffective. Many of the new teaching protocols and strategies will remain with us and will continue to be used.

To quote Herman Hesse, a novelist, poet and painter:
"... whatever good or bad fortune may come our way, we can always give it meaning and transform it into something of value."

We were fortunate that we were able to continue with our academic programme in a time when so much came to a standstill. I would like to thank our parents, girls and especially the staff for remaining patient and for persevering throughout the challenges of this year. Our teachers continued to create the 'magic' that is necessary for learning to take place and found new innovative ways of teaching the girls.

You all deserve a good holiday and I wish you a relaxing holiday and to our Christian families a blessed Christmas.

Mrs Louise Whitelaw
Deputy Academics: Junior school

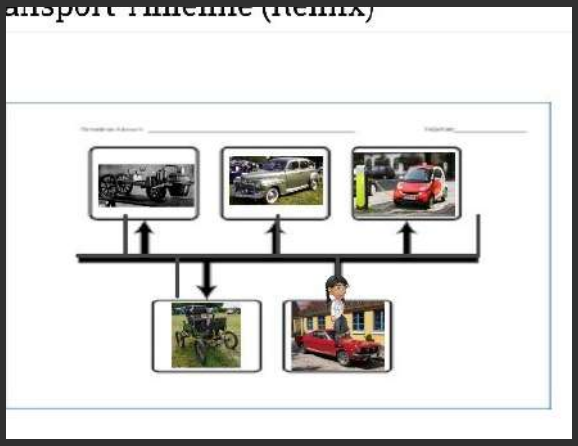
Junior School

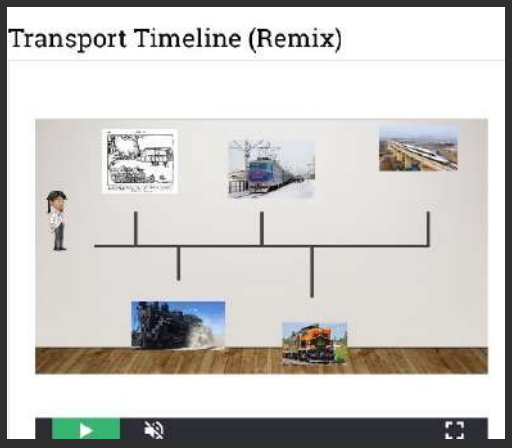
IT Department

This year has been awesome for IT. The students' skills have exponentially increased and I am awed by what we have achieved after hearing "we are going online". At the beginning of lockdown my computer exploded with calls but we soon settled into a rhythm and students and teachers got going. Hybrid teaching and using Class Notebook and Teams Assignments became the norm.

When we returned to school, students started with enrichment periods, one of which was IT and we used this for coding. Girls took part in 'The Hour of Code' and enjoyed the challenges that Dragon Dash and Debugger presented. I enjoyed the ardent "Yes!!" uttered and sometimes shouted as they managed to conquer the code. The Grade 7 students amazed me with their Python coding skill and have all mastered the basic concepts of Python. They also made the most beautiful PowerPoint presentations as a final showcase of their skills. They also learnt how to format pictures in MS Word.

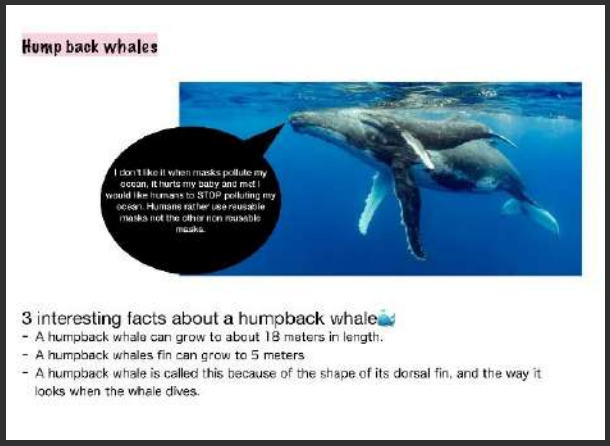
The Grade 4s had coding integrated into their History lessons and coded a timeline on transport.





Back at school, the Grade 4 to 6 classes foucused on iPad skills such as Pages, Keynote, iMovie and Clips. I am sure teacher can look forward to creative projects next next year. The students had great fun using the applications.

Scan the QR code to view some of the Grade 4 and 5 videography work.

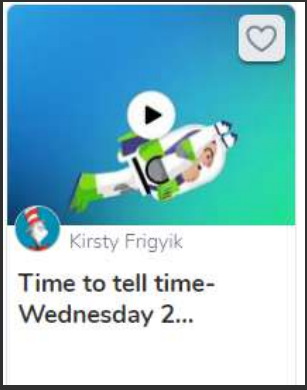


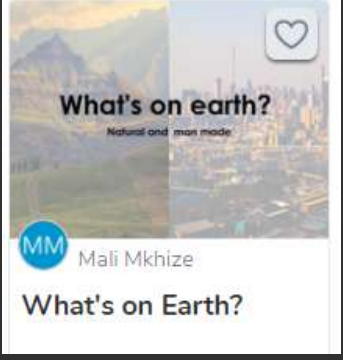
IT Foundation Phase

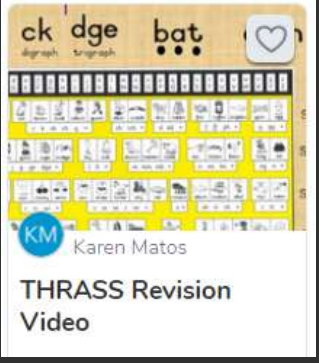
The need for teaching and learning online and off campus quickly saw the staff and learners from Grade 0 to 3 sharpening their IT skills. All staff were trained to meet with their girls in Teams, and to create a curriculum on **Seesaw** that our girls could engage with. Hours of work have gone into preparing each lesson and our girls have certainly benefited from this. All staff were glad to finally have their girls back in the classroom to end off a very tough year.

Thank you to the teachers, girls and their parents for embracing learning online and I am sure we can all agree that at St Mary's DSG we are truly blessed to have had the IT resources and tech assistance that was provided to all of us.

Well done girls, parents and teachers.







IT Foundation Phase

A peek at some of the amazing work of the Foundation Phase girls.

Ona Moloi

https://app.seesaw.me/pages/shared_item?item_id=item.58cc3916-a21e-4cc0-8934-2cfd268e554e&share_token=DmJKKnr2Tc6OXXKPKfQYnQ&mode=share

Ikanyeng Pephoti

https://app.seesaw.me/pages/shared_item?item_id=item.7e7e5b29-815f-4df7-8a4b-ff785991596c&share_token=717I_T6-QGGcfDYBn7F_Eg&mode=share

Maryam Ebrahim

https://app.seesaw.me/pages/shared_item?item_id=item.abc9ba95-d2ce-4ea7-80b5-1fc986130bc6&share_token=tWN7yO1jRdemXdEp7dnpcA&mode=share

Thabile Moropa

https://app.seesaw.me/pages/shared_item?item_id=item.65d16c6d-37fa-4ba9-bd48-feee7dce39eb&share_token=qKMUpJ1xREWJnH_7ofuiHA&mode=share

Junior School

Events

Living though a pandemic and teaching art remotely is not what any of us expected this year to look like. However, we carried on with making art as best we could. 2020 thus became a challenging year for my learners and me, but the manner in which I facilitated interactions with the girls brought about a unique and creative lens to the table. After the Grade 7s attended the virtual tour to Inscape Education group in Pretoria, which became the foundation on which we could foster collaborative learning, through developing their creative, imaginative and innovative minds, they then used the broader theme of “Biomimicry” to formulate their own concept for the Design exhibition. This year, the girls were introduced to a PAT (Practical Assessment Task) which consists of 2 items, namely a Sourcebook in which they could record their thoughts, record notes, and ideas, and a final design product. They could choose to create solutions to human challenges by emulating designs and ideas found in nature by using any of the four design categories:

1. Visual Communication

Includes, but is not limited to, sectors such as advertising design, animation, digital design, film and video, graphic design, brand communication design, illustration, information design, packaging design and applied photography.

2. Environmental Design

Environmental design includes industries like architectural design, urban and landscape design, display, event or exhibition design, interior design, theatre and set design, interior decorating.

3. Product design

Which is usually 3D (functional or decorative). It can include industries and applications such as basketry, beadwork, carving and wood turning, ceramics, fashion and costume design, industrial design, jewellery design, paperwork, puppetry, wirework, furniture and glass blowing/design, constructed textiles, tableware.

Events

We have been able to host two very special Grade 0 events.
On 23 October we welcomed our Grade 0s for 2021. Although we had to do it differently to ensure we stayed within the COVID-19 rules, we were very happy to meet our "new girls" and enjoy some interaction with them.

On Friday 13 November a very excited group of Grade 0s performed "Starry Night", our Nativity Play with a very special African twist. The girls put on a spectacular show which showed how much they enjoyed performing and singing to a wonderful audience. This was followed by our Prizegiving.

A wonderful way to end our year. Thank you Grade 0 2020.

Ms Boipelo Sikhosana
Junior School Art Teacher

Grade 0 Nativity Play

Stop and Start: The Arts in 2020

When we returned to school after lockdown, the Junior School girls had a lesson called 'Enrichment' as part of their adjusted timetable. The purpose of the lesson was therapeutic as lessons such as Divinity, Art and Music and Drama were used to help the girls adjust to the ‘new normal’. In many of these lessons, the girls asked to do Tik Tok dances. At first, I couldn’t understand the purpose of the short 15 second videos to which the girls were dancing. However, as I researched this social media phenomenon, I was again struck by the power of the arts on the human race in times of hardship. Tik Tok videos spread like wildfire across the world, as people tried to stay connected during heavy lockdown. I also saw the ‘stop and start’ effect of the short videos as a symbol of what our lives had become, as we were thrust from one routine to another.

The Arts industry has been hit hard by the pandemic, but there are a few highlights that stand out for me, where music has been able to unite us across the world. The South African song, **Jerusalema**, became a worldwide hit, as people got together, socially distanced, and did this line dance together. For a few weeks, our form times were abuzz with girls’ laughter as we danced together and it was very exciting to have us all out on the sports field performing this song with great enthusiasm.

Since the start of lockdown, our cultural extramural sessions had to take place online, and it has been difficult to have choir rehearsals and orchestra sessions virtually. A very important part of these activities is the social connection that creates team spirit amongst the participants. However, many girls attended these sessions enthusiastically on a weekly basis. We learnt to sing together online, with delayed connectivity, and we were even able to record virtual items. It is with a great sense of relief, that we look forward to next year as the government has given permission for these cultural activities to continue in person, and we have a few tentative dates for in person performances later in 2021.

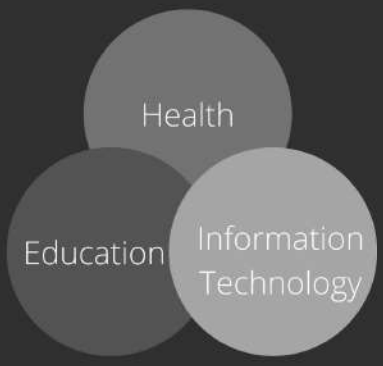
We can look back on a year where the Arts did make a difference to our hurt and fragile world, even if it was in different formats. Moreover, we look forward to a new year, with great excitement, as the possibilities for creating and performing on different platforms are now endless.

Mrs Hildegard Joseph
Head of Music and Drama

Senior School

Academics

If I let my mind wonder back to 2020, I cannot help but notice the interdependence of health, education and information technology.



Education creates opportunities for better health because with education, better jobs, higher income and more resources for better health can be obtained. The reverse is also true: poor health can put education at risk by causing setbacks and interfering with schooling. This was evident from the worldwide pandemic we experienced during the last couple of months. "The equivalent of more than 200 million school years are lost each year in low income countries as a result of ill health, and the impact on learning and cognition is equivalent to a deficit of more than 630 million IQ points" - Schools and Health, March 2020.

Technology can make education more accessible and make learning more impactful, while technological innovations transform healthcare globally with remote health monitoring and artificial intelligence.

COVID-19 acted as catalyst and has shaken education institutions worldwide. In a very short period, an often lecture-based approach to teaching had to make room for innovative solutions such as remote learning and digital classrooms. Yes, online learning took our teachers' voices to homes all over South Africa and some neighbouring countries in Africa. Mrs Singh even taught from her family home in London. You can ask me how health fits into this? Well, I can tell you it certainly didn't happen without a few aches and pains. On the contrary, I am very proud of our teachers who rose to the challenge, found innovative solutions and made sure our girls were not left behind.

COVID-19 also reminded us that we live in an unpredictable world and that we need to teach our students creative problem-solving, informed decision making, dealing with fake news, resilience and above all, adaptability.

As technology continues to transform society, those responsible for our current systems of healthcare as well as education, are facing overwhelming pressure to adapt. By embracing the power of technology during this 4th Industrial Revolution, it is evident that we can enhance our education, not just here at school but also make a difference in the education of our country.

It is with heartfelt gratitude that I look back at this year and report that thanks to the technological resources that our school is fortunate to have, to our dedicated teachers' corps and good health, we were able to complete the past academic year successfully.

Mrs Jomari Miller
Vice-Principal: Academics

Senior School

In and around the Knowledge Centre

2020 has been a challenging year especially when looking at the demand on the use of Information Technology. Our reliance on technology has escalated exponentially and our relationship with electronic devices has been altered beyond any expectation and understanding. 2020 has been a year of change and embracement in terms of technology.

Thankfully we are fortunate to have stable and reliable IT systems in place and all our students could seamlessly merge into the full use of Microsoft Office 365 without too many hassles and glitches. We could continue with full time teaching and learning because our students and staff have integrated technology into their lessons for a number of years. Microsoft Teams became prevalent for most of the teaching, learning and collaboration remained possible even if we weren't physically in each other's company.

Our library was able to provide online books to all our senior school students through an App called Sora. Students are encouraged to keep reading this December holiday. "You can find magic wherever you look. Sit back and relax, all you need is a book" – Dr Seuss.

In terms of our new very exciting subject, Digital Technologies, our syllabus had to be changed significantly as we had to implement robotics and coding away from the classroom but still allow the learning of Arduino, robots and the Lego EV3. Coding and design tools such as Tinkercad, Scratch, Cura Ultimaker allowed us to expand on what the students would normally be exposed to. Our Grade 9 Digital Technologies students created a version of the popular flappy bird game and created beautiful final practical exam projects using Arduino to build access control systems.

This year, more than ever, we have realised what a pivotal role Information Technology plays in our daily lives especially in teaching and learning. We encourage parents to get involved and ensure online safety and we undertake as teachers to boost engagement.

We are excited about the new possibilities and looking forward to a technology filled 2021.

Mrs Lizelle Bothma
IT Manager

Day of Discovery 4.0

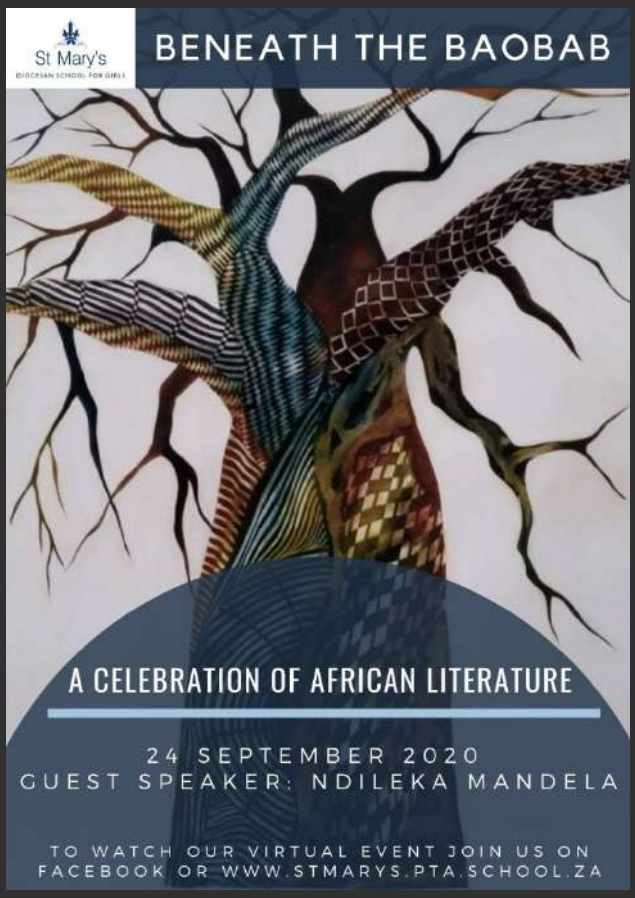
The Greek philosopher Heraclitus said that “life is flux” which, when translated, means that “all things change”. There is no doubt that 2020 has proven this to be accurate and so, in the spirit of this, it was decided that this year’s annual ‘Day of Discovery’ held by the school would become ‘Day of Discovery 4.0’.

The focus would, therefore, be on introducing all of our learners to the careers of the 4th Industrial Revolution, or Industry 4.0. As we found out, not everyone is in total agreement with us living this revolution or what the exact processes and consequences of this revolution will be, but there is no doubt that our society is going through profound changes in its technological, cultural and psychosocial aspects of life. Some of these aspects were explored through a variety of speakers on the day. The technological aspect was explored through speakers like Dean Fossett who specialises in robotic surgeries and Tracy Pretorius who is a Senior Director at Microsoft in the United States of America. Maaike Bekker and Nene Mahlangu provided interesting insight into the impact of this digital revolution on the arts and culture space, and David Conradie and Professor Norman Duncan shared some valuable insight into how this 4th Industrial Revolution may impact on our psychological and social wellbeing. The keynote speaker, Simon Dingle, is a celebrated, knowledgeable and lateral-thinking entrepreneur and writer who is a great proponent of the decentralisation of financial institutions and argues that a change in the way we think about problems may allow us to solve some of the world’s biggest crises.

The day was an important learning experience and although it is impossible to remember all of the detail, there is no question that the young people of today will be completely immersed in this world tomorrow and that this day was only the first step on this exciting journey. We look forward to seeing how our learners embrace these changes, today and in the future, and to watching them change our world.

Mr Tian van Wyk
Miss Carinne Downard

Beneath the Baobab



Our beloved former president, Nelson Mandela, once said, "If you talk to a man in a language that he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart."
With Heritage Day on the 24th of September, the Special Events Portfolio, along around the with the help of the Transformation and Diversity, and Academic Portfolios, decided to celebrate this special day and embrace African heritage, by hosting a week of appreciation of African literature and indigenous languages.

From the 21st to the 24th of September we celebrated various books and poems written by African authors. At the end of the week, we held a virtual literature evening "Beneath the baobab" where Ndileka Mandela spoke about her book and the importance of embracing African Literature.

Language is important because it is a tool to learn, transmit information, express feelings, emotions and ideas, forge cultural ties, and construct social identity. Poetry and literature enable us to plug into what people are experiencing and provides for a way of articulating experiences. African languages embody within them a wealth of knowledge. Indigenous languages keep people connected to culture and this strengthens feelings of pride and self-worth. Cultural knowledge, kinship, song lines and stories are reliant on language for these important cultural elements to be passed on from generation to generation.

From beneath the Baobab tree, we paid homage to African writers. Through their novels, and poems, they have given us a view of society from their contemplation of social life, reflecting it, mirror-like, but also reflecting upon it, simultaneously.

Finally, the week concluded with the addition of more isiZulu and Sepedi books to the school library, by the Special Events Portfolio and the school. We hope that these books will transport, inspire and connect our learners, revealing to them the great joy of reading and writing literature.

Tatum Damons and Ms Carinne Downard
Heads of the Special Events Portfolio

Valediction

Now Ready- Matric Valediction 2020
~a short piece by Idah "SunflowerTheWriter" Makhafola

By now you are aware that the world awaits you.
It has surely been a long wait and I must stress that
the world cannot wait any longer.

Halls and collaboration spaces stand in anticipation for change-makers
whose decisions and opinions will finally give them life.
Young woman, I hope you are aware that the world awaits you.

Perhaps the thought of preparedness comes into one's mind.
You've seen the headlines; you are aware of the times.
Our world has forgotten to cherish its greatest treasures,
Young women, like you and I.

Yes, the fear you feel now is shared by us all, as you venture out into
the world and finally heed the call.
But with those clenched fists and a shaky voice, sis,
Enter those halls and spaces and announce yourself!
I am sure that you are aware that the world awaits you.

I dare not include in this piece what a rollercoaster this new journey will
be, like you I once sat in that very chair and thank goodness for all the
pieces of advice but even though the world awaited me, I
wish someone had just told me this **one** truth!

The truth in that I am enough.
I will always be enough.

The world is very forgetful but believe me it won't
forget to remind you at every turn that you simply aren't "**the best**".
You'll lack this and that and won't fit here or there.
But young woman you must not forget that the world- **still** awaits you.

You who possess a strength with none we can compare.
You whose presence will illuminate even the darkest of spaces.
You whose courage will be admired by all who claim to be brave.
You who will shake rooms and tear down walls all while people stop, stare and ask
How dare she?!

How dare you not, when the world awaits you.

See, I need you to understand that these are the kinds of things you **must** do with no fear or reserve because you are inherently enough.
You must doubt nothing because you have long been told that this world awaited you!

In closing this piece, I am going to need you to affirm that you are:
Ready to announce yourself without shame.
Ready to stand firm in what you believe because you are determined to drive change.
Ready to add to this world that is lacking in so much.
Ready to stand up and stand out without any doubt.
Ready to spread kindness and love in the space of hate.
Ready to project your voice where silence has engulfed the space.
Ready to remind the world why it needed to wait.

Matrics, as you walk out of this space
Remember that the world has waited.
And you are now, ready.

Valediction

4IR and Music

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is defined as a fusion of tehnologies and a blurring of the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres. It has been dominating headlines and debates in recent years.

There is a strong push in the music technology world, to have computers and robots produce music. Most recently it has been AI, or Artificial Intelligence, getting involved in the music production. If you have listened to any attempts of machines writing music, you will probably agree with most other people that it is very boring and sometimes even annoying!

Google launched a research project aimed at what AI can do in the arts. They use various technologies, algorithms and models to teach computers to generate music. The leading researcher says: “There ‘s been increased focus on using computers as assistance to human creativity rather than as a replacement technology,” Let me repeat that: Assistance rather than replacement.

But then there seems no reason to push computers to write music if they don’t have feelings. They have assisted for a few decades already. So what is the point? The reason is MONEY. Music has been a commodity that is constantly pushed on consumers. Not to play, listen and enjoy, but to consume. So that it can be ‘monetized’. According to a study by Music Week magazine, it not takes an average of 4.53 Writers to create (manufacture) a hit single. An extreme example is Beyonce’s Hold Up that had 13 contributors.

In 2005 Gerd Leonard and David Kusek wrote The Future of Music: Manifesto for the Digital Music Revolution. They forecasted music to become omnipresent and available for consumers like water. We have already reached that point. Try Spotify, to name one of many.

While there is little doubt that technology will replace much of what we currently do, this will allow us to evolve our role in the creative process and enable us to do more.

As a perfect example, the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (EBIT) held their annual Dean's Concert in October 2019. The concert celebrated the dreams and opportunities the different industrial revolutions have brought about, as well as the hope Africa embodies as the fourth industrial revolution reveals itself. The sounds of the UP Symphony Orchestra inspired the audience to seize the multitude of opportunities offered by this new chapter in the story of our world, and encouraged them to dream with their eyes wide open. The social act of communicating through music makes it possible to dream about the opportunities the 4IR presents to build the Africa that so many dream of.

I don't see any particular reason to worry about the future of music. As with any new technology, people will find many different ways to use it to make music. And vice versa, that technology will impact music and will help it move forward and change. But the creative input and emotions that music expresses and induces – those will remain in the human domain.

Mrs Celia Burger
Director of Music

Junior School Sports Department

As we wind down the year that was 2020, most of our regular programmes had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. As the Junior school sport department we understand the impact this pandemic has had on our girls' wellbeing.

Our learners went through online Physical Education, where they had fun activities which they had to complete. This was a huge success as most of the girls engaged with the programme and benefited immensely from the activities. As a school we understand the importance of physical activity and also using sports as an outlet away from our screens.

When we welcomed our girls back on campus, it was crucial that we get them moving through programmes that encouraged social distance and adhered to all the COVID-19 safety protocols. Our girls were very excited throughout the remainder of the term as they got a chance to play and be physically active at school. We hope to fully participate in 2021.

Mr Neo Mothiba

We wish you a Merry Christmas
and a prosperous New year!