

Guiding Principles

An exciting schooling experience and educational approach

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WHAT SCHOOLING EXPERIENCE would like to have had? What do you remember most from your schooling experience? What schooling experience would you like for your child?

We would like to share with you the core concepts of an exciting schooling experience and educational approach.

This is not 'new-age' schooling. This is not anything we as parents don't know already. We feel that much of this does happen in schools out there but to varying degrees of consciousness and emphasis. And it's not about out of the box thinking. It looks like they were never in the box in the first place. The approach to the way in which the school is run and the design of the curriculum is based on the following guiding principles:

1. Focuses on the quality of relationships
The school fosters the patterns, behaviours, understanding and skills needed to be in effective relationships throughout our lives. We integrate differences rather than having the pretension to eliminate them. We give value to negotiation as a 'strategy of the possible'.

2. Develops core values of dignity, respect, integrity, confidence and creativity
These values inform the content of conversations and encounters, as well as our behaviour and relationships as educators. Each person is supported in building self-esteem and sense of personal identity. It is the search for the self as well as for the other and others that surround each individual.

3. Incorporates the current and traditional educational expectations of primary and high schooling

We work with current educational systems to ensure maximum choice and options for further learning. We focus on the synergies between relationship, academic, and content learning approaches.

4. Draws on a wide range of learning experiences

Our methods include group work, casual conversation, play, activities, formal work, work with individuals, and case work. We also work with ordinary life experiences to create further learning opportunities. We use conflict and negotiation as drivers of growth, and build specific skills to facilitate



this. We encourage individuals to develop and articulate their own views and understanding.

5. Encourages enjoyment and brings a sense of achievement

We encourage laughter, enjoyment and fun, and develop these aspects as central to positive self-development and the schooling experience.

6. Takes place in all settings and times

We recognise the importance of the unexpected, and create an environment where there is no such thing as wasted time. Teachers know how to give all the time that is needed. We recognise the unpredictability of 'learning moments'. Here emphasis is placed on the questions, issues and feelings that are important to the individual, rather than what we think might be significant.

“Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.” – *Albert Einstein*

7. Works through and is driven by dialogue, conversation and communication

Conversation is placed at the centre of the activities. The quality of communication reflects the quality of the relationships.

8. A culture of living and learning

We regulate the relationships between the individual and community in which he or she lives in such a way to strive toward a place where culture is constructed and democracy is put into practice.

9. Active participation and active learning

We value creating a sense of belonging, not only for families but for everyone. We provide for a vision that engenders a sense of indefiniteness and ample spaces of possibility.

10. Develops partnerships

The responsibility for learning is shared. At the same time the teachers shape and construct this learning environment. Partnerships are developed between learner and teacher, teacher and community, teacher and



parent and between learners themselves. It is a choral effort with the participation of everyone, open to others, open to doubt, and open to acceptance of error and uncertainty.

11. Views teachers as dynamic people, facilitators and coaches

Teachers recognise and discover ways to communicate and document the children's evolving experiences at school. The challenge is for teachers to initiate and nurture situations that stimulate learning appropriate to each child's needs. Teachers offer themselves as resources to enrich the learning experiences of those in their care.

12. Accommodates family life

We work to create partnerships with parents and caregivers and take into account the practical demands of family life.

13. Encompasses a life-long process of learning and of learning the process of life

This approach supports personality development. Our individual construction exists with others and through others during encounters with the physical world, and through communication. We have the right to be who we really are, and we help make one another who we are by how we treat one another. These experiences help individuals grow in all aspects; in knowledge and skills, in health, in feeling and judgement, in sense of responsibility, and in creativity. It is life-long education.

We have truly left behind a vision of the child as egocentric, focused only on cognition and physical objects, and whose feelings and affectivity are underestimated or in some way diminished. ☺

More info: www.synergyschooling.co.za

