

From the Desk of the Executive Head...

20-1-2020

Dear PEPPS Community

I would like to start by extending prayers to those infected and affected by the virus. There are very few people who do not know someone who has been ill or passed away and we need to pause in the busy-ness of our lives and ask for strength and comfort for so many families. Our condolences go to those who have lost loved ones and may the souls of the departed Rest in Peace.

Ephesians 6:10 tells us to "Be strong in the Lord and His mighty power." Let us pray for wisdom and calm as we navigate forward once again amidst uncertainty.

I also wish to take a moment to sincerely thank those people working on the medical frontline and related services. Driving past the hospitals, it is clear that they must be working harder than ever, under incredibly stressful conditions, since the queues of cars and the tents in the car parks tell a very grave story indeed.

The Government Gazette of Educational Expectations for 2021 has yet to be published and is only expected on Friday. As much as we wanted to wait for the Gazette before sending any plans out to our community, we do believe that, in the interest of transparency and to help families to plan, we need to present our current intentions to you. Please be aware that due to circumstances beyond our control, some of **these plans may have to change**.

PEPPS spent 2020 doing our very best to continue to provide an excellent education amidst the perpetually changing legislation and lockdown levels. We do believe that we traversed these rough seas with relative success and we certainly know that we learnt a lot. We lost zero academic days in 2020 and intend to maintain this record in 2021. **Academic milestones will continue to be met** so that pupils remain set up for success in being tomorrow's leaders.

2020 was incredibly challenging and stressful for pupils and their teachers. With that in mind, PEPPS sincerely wanted to return to school and provide on-campus face-to-face education in 2021. We are confident that our safety protocols in terms of masks, sanitising and physical distancing are appropriate and effectively implemented. It was the desire to normalise our education this year that motivated us to move our start date out by two weeks, allowing for Covid numbers to reduce and for families to isolate after any travel and then return to school healthy.

Inconveniently, our dream has not come to fruition, so we are once again recalibrating. I feel like a GPS that has a driver that keeps taking unexpected turns. **It is now against the law for us to return to on-campus schooling** until possibly 15-2-2020. We also have no guarantees that we will be permitted to reopen on that date. Remember lockdown was only going to be three weeks and it is we are now on day 300, with no end in sight. Other countries around the world have kept school campuses closed for many many months and seemingly do not intend to re-open soon. It is quite possible, especially with the pressure of teacher unions, that the school closure will be further extended.

We realise that things are different now to when we were in hard lockdown. Parents need to go to work while children are not allowed to go to school. This is not ideal and we have petitioned these concerns to the government. **We wish it were different, but it is as it is.** Genesis 13:14 reminds us to "Lift your eyes now and look from the place that you are".

We can bemoan this circumstance, however, ultimately, we need to try and make the best of an un-ideal situation. One improvement in this prohibition of on-campus schooling is that the campus itself is open. This allows for a slightly different approach from last year. This year PEPPS would like to **allow pupils to come to collect textbooks, workbooks, worksheets, resources and note packs from school** from time to time. Pupils can also drop off work, that needs to be marked, at school. Some online support will be available but **pre and primary school pupils will NOT be expected to work completely online.**



There will be **NO CLASSES OR LESSONS ON CAMPUS**, but when pupils are dropping off and collecting work they will have the opportunity to meet their teachers and have some brief physically-distanced face-to-face interactions. This will assist in the development of relationships which would be very hard to build exclusively online.

College pupils do all have devices and **will revert to a predominantly online programme** until they can return to campus. They will also be able to come onto campus to collect all of their academic resources.

Troubleshooting assistance with online work can also be facilitated briefly on campus.

Obviously, **all Covid protocols will apply when collections and drop-offs are done** on campus. No mask - no entry. Sanitising and temperature screening will be done on entry and everyone will be expected to remain at least 1,5 meters apart. Where possible and reasonable, interactions between people will take place outdoors. **Pupils do not have to**

wear their uniform to collect or drop off work.

As soon as it is legal to do so, we shall start welcoming pupils back onto campus. Some resources will continue to be shared online once we are back on campus for those pupils who may be isolating or are unwell, but we intend for our focus to revert to in-person education in 2021. As we did last year, **we shall adhere to all legislated Standard Operating Procedures** for schools. Pupils are screened and sanitised regularly at school and masks are obligatory. Also, pupils are continually reminded to stay 1,5 m -2 m away from one another. In line with safety protocols, there will, unfortunately, be **no extracurricular activities** initially when we return to school.

PEPPS always has, and always will, make it a **priority to safeguard the safety of our community.**

In a year, PEPPS completes the education of pupils in that grade. **The fee charged is calculated based on the annual expenses** to accomplish that task. The annual fee may be paid by the end of January as a lump sum, in which case an 8% discount is granted or in 11 equal instalments from January to November. These instalments are not only due in months where pupils attend school since they are intended to spread the payment of an annual amount.

Please ensure that your **fee account is kept up to date so that the school remains sustainable** and when we do return, we still have our full complement of qualified and competent staff.

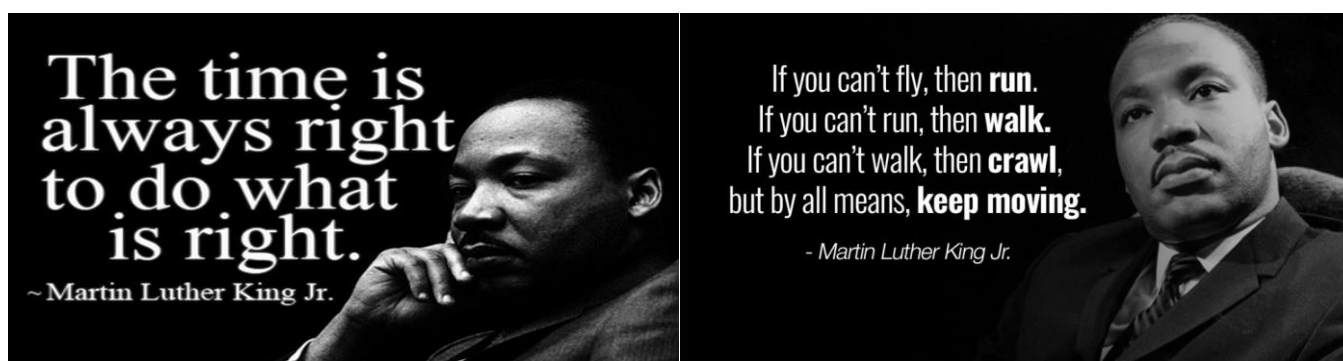
We continue to offer **technical support** on tech@pepps.co.za and **psychological support** at masotem@pepps.co.za or afonsom@pepps.co.za. We trust that these value-added services assist our pupils to engage in learning more effectively.

Please keep an eye open for **email correspondence by 26-1-2021** which will tell you exactly when to collect resources and work. **The academic programme will begin from 27-1-2021**. Please consider if any of your **contact details** have changed. If they have, ensure that they are **updated** so that the school can communicate effectively with each family.

Please do not let your children go to parties or socialise during this period. We really want healthy children to come back to campus once this enforced closure is over. Social gatherings (big and small) have been shown to be the biggest spreaders of this disease. I do want to highlight that no conclusive evidence has been presented showing that schools are epicentres of the spread of Covid. It is also interesting to note that this second wave hit our country when schools were closed and children were not spending most of their days in a structured disciplined environment.

We cannot say that schools are 100% safe, but they are exponentially safer than many other settings that young people find themselves in. Teachers are committed to ensuring the compliance of pupils with regard to the safety measures that are expected. This generally protects the pupils in our care.

Monday was Martin Luther King Jr Day in the USA so I have chosen to end this letter with a couple of quotes from him. He is arguably one of the most inspirational and powerful speakers ever and when one is looking for wisdom his quotes are a fine place to look. His meshing of important political ideals with spiritual character makes for an enviable ability to lead with conviction and by example.



PEPPS will endeavour to do what is right and no matter the obstacles we shall continue to move forward in our committed effort to excellently educate the pupils in our care.



Yours in healthy and safe education,

Annabel Roberts

PEPPS Executive Head