

# From the Desk of the Executive Head...

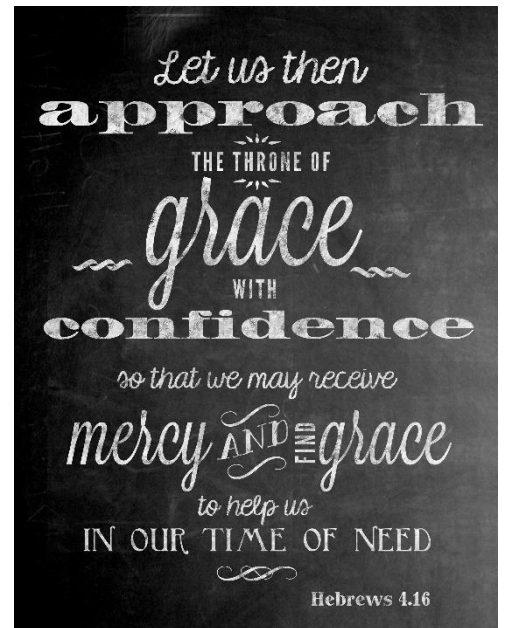
14-3-2021

Dear PEPPS families

Grace is given and not earned and we continue to give thanks for the Grace that favours our school.

'By God's Grace' is our theme for 2021. I reflect on the decreasing COVID numbers and our ability to educate our pupils in person this year. What a blessing this is amid what remains, uncertain times. Our current fortunate circumstance is not guaranteed and we pray that should circumstances change we continue to receive God's Grace. Let us move forward positively in confidence that we are doing God's work and therefore we shall enjoy God's support in our vocation.

*Hebrews 4:16* Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.



I am pleased that we have enjoyed relative stability in schooling so far this year and this has resulted in me not needing to write to you all as often. After a year of seriously disrupted education, we are able to reflect as teachers and as a school. **We have observed that many pupils have found it challenging to return to the demands and rigour of daily classroom learning.** This is to be expected and I have asked our teaching teams to be understanding as pupils consolidate missing knowledge and skills from 2020.

The knowledge and skills are not all that we care about at PEPPS. We are committed to **developing whole, happy, and healthy humans.** Many pupils have lost people that they care about, to this vicious virus, and the circumstances of many homes have changed as some people have altered employment. PEPPS works very hard to ensure that we **look after the emotional, physical and spiritual well being of our pupils,** over and above their academic progress. If you believe that your child is in need of some extra support, please bring it to the attention of the class teachers or Grade Heads so that we can help.



<https://www.askideas.com>

It is not possible to ensure the guaranteed safety and well-being of every pupil, but **we do our very best to do all that is reasonable** in terms of our protocols, practices and procedures. We continue to check temperatures as pupils arrive at school daily, we sanitise throughout the day and keep our classrooms and other spaces well cleaned. All people on campus are expected to wear masks and, to date, we are fortunate to have had no viral spread at our schools. Please speak to your children about caring for themselves and not waiting for a teacher to remind them to straighten their mask. Pupils must also be told **not to share any food and drink.** Teachers are continually having to remind pupils of these basic safety protocols.

General Safety on campus is a priority too and we receive annual certificates which attest to our school safety compliance on all campuses. Unfortunately, **we cannot be held responsible for pupils who are dropped off before teachers are on duty or collected after activities have ended for the day.**

**Our operational hours are:**

**Polokwane Prep School and College: 6h45 – 15 minutes after the last activity (academic or sport) ends.**

**Polokwane ECD School: 7h00 – 13h00**

**Ga-Ledwaba Prep School and ECD School**

**Monday and Wednesday 7h00 - 13h45**

**Tuesday and Thursday 7h00 – 14h15**

**Friday 7h00 -12h45**

**Mokopane Prep School and ECD School**

**Monday and Wednesday 7h15 - 15h15**

**Tuesday and Thursday 7h15 – 14h00**

**Friday 7h00 -12h45**



<https://www.learningresources.com/>

**Pupils must be enrolled in Aftercare if they need to be cared for beyond these hours.**



<http://capl.washjeff.edu/>

Also, on a matter of safety, we have noticed increased traffic in our car-parks now that we have all returned to campus. The nature of schools is that the traffic is heavy at the start of and at the end of the school day, however, the congestion is made worse if vehicles do not adhere to the regulations and stop in the flow of the traffic. **Vehicles should move into a parking bay** if they are going to drop multiple children or if they are going to get baggage out of the boot of the car. We ask that our parents and transport providers honour the traffic regulations on our campuses and **drive very slowly** to protect our pupils. It is

also respectful and appropriate to **obey the requests of any traffic marshalls or security personnel** who are trying to manage the traffic flow. If we all work together on this, we can ease everyone's frustration.

This year is **PEPPS Schools in Limpopo's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday** and we are looking to pay tribute to our Alumni. If anyone is aware of a pupil who matriculated from PEPPS who we can write a short biography on and publish a photo, please send the details to [naidoom@pepps.co.za](mailto:naidoom@pepps.co.za). It would be lovely if we could have short biographies and a photo of families who have had multiple pupils matriculate at PEPPS. Please remember to include

the year of matriculation and in the case of some of the ladies, their maiden name. We look forward to many submissions that we can share with our community. **PEPPS believes that we set our pupils up for success in their adult lives**, not only in their careers but also we hope that our pupils go on to be responsible family members, good parents and contributing members in society at large. It will be wonderful to document this throughout 2021. Thank you in advance for helping us with this project.



[sourcing-opps.com](http://sourcing-opps.com)

The parents and teachers at PEPPS are united in our quest to **set the children in our care up for success**. Our communication with one another and our common vision are important if we are to reach our admirable goal. I encourage parents to email teachers if they have a specific concern. All teacher email addresses are available on myHomework. I remind parents that the world is imperfect and although the teachers at PEPPS try our very best to do all that we can to support every pupil, working with people is not a perfect science. Please hold us accountable to excellence, but not to perfection.



<https://marketbusinessnews.com/>

Setting pupils up to be digital citizens and capable participants in the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution is part of what PEPPS strives to do. We can all agree that **being tech-savvy is a necessary skill** for future generations, but the development of these skills is coming at a dangerous price. I attended a presentation this week by **Dr Anke Brand** called '**Digital Cocaine**'. The staggering statistics were eye-opening and disturbing.

The first thing we need to realise is that devices (phones, tablets, laptops and computers) are here to stay. They can make life more convenient and often enhance learning, so to get rid of them completely would be tossing the baby out with the bathwater. **PEPPS does not allow phones to be used by pupils at school** (unless with the explicit permission of a teacher) in an effort to encourage our pupils to socialise with one another when they have spare time. ECD and Prep pupils have limited exposure to computers and tablets on different campuses so that they can start learning some digital skills. From Grade 7 in Polokwane pupils are asked to bring laptops to school. **The laptops, in College, form an integral part of the learning process and the homework process.**

So, if we cannot get rid of devices how do we manage them. They need to be managed for young people, by the adults in their lives, because **they are addictive**. Digital platforms are designed to draw people in and they encourage addictive behaviour patterns. A person is struggling with Digital Addiction Disorder if they have a compulsive need to be on their device and their **compulsive behaviour interferes with their daily routine expectations**.

**Sleep deprivation** is a major problem in our youth because they stay up half the night on devices. Parents need to set boundaries on device hours and if necessary lock devices away at a certain time. Research is clear that **pre-pubescent children need 9-10 hours of sleep per night to allow for optimum brain and body development and tweens and teens should be getting 8-9 hours of good quality sleep in order to function effectively and learn**

**well.** Give some consideration to whether your home is setting up systems and routines that allow for these good sleep patterns to develop.

There are five major forms of digital addiction:

1. Social media
2. Compulsive Internet usage
3. Obsessive information gathering
4. Gaming
5. Cybersex/porn

Of the five, the last one is the most widespread. 35% of worldwide internet traffic is porn and the most dominant age group of first-time porn exposure is 9-11-year-olds. A group of 3 000 Gauteng 13-year-olds were asked in a survey who had never been exposed to any nude or semi-nude sexy pictures or videos yet. Not one was able to say they had not! Along with this shocking news, statistics tell us that anxiety and depression have increased by 70% over the last 20 years and attention spans have decreased significantly over the same period. What are we doing to ourselves and our children?



[www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com)

As I said we cannot, and I would argue we should not, get rid of digital devices, but as adults, we must regulate the use of these devices in our homes. Self-regulation is the last developmental stage of the brain and is only fully developed in most females by around age 19-20 and in most males around 21-22. This fact reminds us that **we need to help children and teens to regulate by setting appropriate boundaries around their device use.**

Dr Anke Brand highlighted that children are most vulnerable to inappropriate digital behaviour when they were **alone and in the dark.** Devices should not be with children and teens at night and ideally, they should be used in public parts of the house or the door should be left open where adult eyes can regularly see what is happening on the screen. Phones, in particular, should not go to children's bedrooms.

The problem of **chronic multitasking was also presented as problematic.** Modern children and teens almost always seem to have more than one thing on the go. They are doing their homework while checking on social media or watching TV. **Multitasking has unequivocally been shown to be counterproductive.** The brain is significantly more effective when it concentrates on one thing at a time. As a result, work is completed more efficiently and effectively if only one task is engaged in at a time.

**Younger children are more negatively impacted by digital devices.** Learning for young children takes place largely through integration with the vestibular system and this system needs us to move. Learning to read via a real book has been shown to be more effective than learning to read off a screen. The theory suggests that just the act of tracing with fingers and turning pages is beneficial.

We were challenged by Dr Anke Brand to find the **'Goldilocks Zone' for digital use in our schools and homes.** Not too much and not too little – just right! The addiction is the result of dopamine (happy hormone) levels being elevated by up to 400% when we are on a screen, so we crave more and more of that 'happy' feeling. Children and teens are exponentially more vulnerable to these digital cravings and parents, caregivers and teachers owe it to

these young people to help them to moderate their digital use. **Restriction of hours of use, tech-free zones in our homes and ensuring that digital devices are not used in private spaces are all mechanisms to protect our children from the dangers of Digital Addiction Disorder.** There are also Apps available that set restrictions and monitor what happens on our children's devices.

**I also challenge us, as adults, to critically consider our own digital usage. To what extent are we modelling poor habits of always being on a screen and habitually multitasking on more than one device?**

Below are three well researched and helpful articles if you want to know more about appropriate digital use for children of all ages.

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/may/23/screen-time-v-play-time-what-tech-leaders-wont-let-their-own-kids-do>

<https://theconversation.com/why-screen-time-before-bed-is-bad-for-children-46464>

<https://www.nytimes.com/guides/smarterliving/family-technology>

On that sobering note, I wish you all good health and happiness as we continue to navigate through ever-changing times. I hope that you join me in praying for God's Grace and abundant blessings on our schools, pupils and families.

Yours in healthy and safe education,

*Annabel Roberts*

PEPPS Executive Head

