

Sounds @ Whispers

Our monthly newsletter to you

Our bumper November-December issue – the final for 2016!

We take you into our Afrikaans Junior and English Senior classes...

Enjoy our “Whispers in Wonderland” photo collage



Anything is possible, if you believe...

This month we give a huge round of applause to our children, their fabulous teachers, each one of our Whispers staff members and, in particular, to you – the wonderful, devoted, hard-working parents who keep things all together. We applaud each one of our joint and separate achievements this year and we celebrate our growth.

Congratulations to one and to all!

Who would have thought it possible – children with hearing loss singing, talking and performing? Our kiddies prove time and again that with hard work and courage, perseverance and belief, anything IS possible...

Turn to page 2 for our special photo collage of our beautifully performed concert. We thank and acknowledge Keslyn Schmid for her professional photography on the day and for sharing these lovely photos with us for this newsletter.

It is with a sad and heavy heart, however, that we say goodbye to one of our much-loved teachers, Teacher Nicole. Not only has she taught our English Senior class with outstanding talent, she has brightened our lives with her smile, effervescent joy and energy. Nicole, we will miss you sorely, and we wish you everything of the very best in your new and exciting teaching position. Thank you for all you have done for our children and for touching their lives with the gift of yourself.

We also bid farewell to all our school-leavers who are starting Grade R and Grade One next year. Well done to you all and best wishes for an exciting school career ahead!

This is our final newsletter for the year. We wish you and your families a peaceful, happy and blessed festive season, and a time of good and well-deserved rest. We look forward to seeing you in the New Year!

Happy Holidays and a fabulous New Year to you all!

Dates to Diarise

09 December 2016

Whispers Centre Closes

13h00

11 January 2017

Whispers Centre Reopens



Special Moments @ Whispers

"Whispers in Wonderland"

Photos courtesy Keslyn Schmid



It's the "Circle of Life"

in the Lion King class with Teacher Rous

From the moment one enters the "lion's den" of the Afrikaans Junior group, one becomes immediately aware of the fact that the kiddies in this Lion King class absolutely love and adore teacher Rous and her assistant Nancy.

It's not that they merely feel safe with Rous, or happy to be in her class – they literally LOVE her. Each one wants their special turn to sit in Rous' lap, to give and receive enormous bear hugs, to play with her hair and to beam radiant smiles at her. Just look into any of these children's eyes, and you can see that their little hearts and souls know, without a doubt, that they are unconditionally accepted, embraced and loved by her too.

The Lion King class could represent any typical "lion's den": there is playfulness, learning, trying, breakthroughs, mistakes and successes – each aspect as critical as the next to sustaining the ever-continuous cycles of growth. There is a hive of simultaneous activity in the den as each one of the lion cubs is busy listening, looking, vocalizing, doing, pointing and talking.

Like a calm, collected, wise lioness, Rous is all-knowing when it comes to her group of cubs: she is completely aware of every little one, their activity, individual needs, their feelings and moods, and what they are each up to in any particular given moment.

Make no mistake, in this lion's den amidst all the activity there is routine and order. First of all the class gets off to a solid start with the fundamental "Ling six sound test" giving the children opportunity to practice detecting, differentiating between and identifying the six sounds: an exercise which tests that all the children's technology is suitably working.

The language lesson is next. What is so remarkably special about Rous, who has been a loyal teacher at the school for nine years, is her absolute and wholehearted willingness to literally get down on the ground with her children, to do herself what she asks of them to do.



It is this, her ready-and-practical approach to teaching that keeps the young minds open, fascinated and engaged. Similarly, her own genuine joy and pride at any one of the children's successes or breakthroughs, no matter how small, sets off a wave of enthusiasm in the class, keeping little hearts motivated to keep on trying even when learning to talk can be enormously difficult at times.

Today the children are learning about dragons. Teacher Rous brings out a large blue tablecloth and covers herself with it. "Ek is 'n draak" (Afrikaans for "I am a dragon"), she says and begins to stomp around the room on all fours, dressed like a dragon. "Doef, doef, doef..." says teacher Rous in a low deep voice from under her blue dragon-canopy. "Ek loop soos 'n draak... 'n Dr-aa-k" ("Doef, doef, doef, I walk like a dragon..."). The children are delighted and each one wants their turn to dress up like a dragon.

The blue dragon-canopy gets swished over the first little girl. There's an extra treat waiting. Rous brings out a gorgeous bright orange cut of material to be used as the dragon's tail, which quickly gets attached. "Oooo!" says teacher Rous whilst the rest of the group looks on, each anticipating their turn. "Ons het 'n draak in die klas!" ("We have a dragon in the class!")... "Doef, doef, doef... Anna* stap soos 'n draak!" ("Doef, doef, doef, Anna* walks like a dragon!").

Dragons are also able to fly and so, before long, the Lion King's den is transformed into a sky of flying dragons – two, sometimes three children at a time all squash under the blue cloth with their arm-wings flapping up and down, whilst the others are happy to play flying dragons simply as they are.





Rous quickly observes that the children’s attention is starting to wane and so, in a moment, she skillfully introduces a change of activity to regain their focus and involvement in the lesson. The practice of numbers, colours, days of the week, shapes and the naming of body parts follows. Each child is expected to produce what they are capable of – no more and no less. In every activity there is lots of movement involved to keep the children engaged. It is all so much more than merely rattling off the words to be learnt. Every activity is an entire experience on its own.

Whilst all this fun is going on, Rous is meticulous in making sure that every child uses their voice to vocalize the necessary words and, if appropriate, short sentences. In some cases the use of voice is easy to entice, whilst in others a little more effort is needed. For today, one little boy has chosen to only use his voice when he can talk into the big toy microphone. No problem. Playing pretend “journalist” teacher Rous brings out the said microphone and, after talking into it herself, she holds it up to the boy’s mouth to elicit that much sought-after speech. Without fail he speaks into the toy device, the satisfaction and pleasure evident on his face.

This is what it is all about. The understanding, tender, patient and cajoling expectation of the teacher upon the child creates the space and opens the way for learning, growth and progress. Oftentimes, in order to see the progress one knows is possible for the child, one is required to let go. To let go of one’s own planning and agenda and to fall in-sync with the child, flowing in their line of interest and moving with their choices for that moment.

It’s 10h00 and time for a snack. Teacher Rous can have no doubt in her mind that her work is producing results. One of the little boys notices that his sandwich is cut into the shape of a triangle. He proudly stands up, goes to the shapes board, and points to the triangle. Placing the sandwich over the triangle on the board, the little boy confidently says, “Driehoek” (“Triangle”). “Ja!” (“Yes!”) says teacher Rous, “Dis ‘n driehoek! Jou broodjie is in ‘n driehoek gesny! Baie mooi!” (“It’s a triangle! Your bread is cut into a triangle! Well done!”).

There’s absolutely no denying that the smile beaming back from the proud little boy said it all: “I can and I will!”

**Names have been changed to protect confidentiality*



We appreciate Nancy

The quiet, friendly, unassuming lady who greets everyone, children and teachers alike with the biggest and sweetest of smiles, is teaching assistant Nancy, who has been faithfully supporting teaching staff at the Centre for twelve years.

Nancy reminds one of what it means to have hidden depth – almost akin to an iceberg, showing only her humble, reserved and unobtrusive self to the world, whilst below the surface of what is seen, she is strong, enduring, loyal, non-judgmental and immensely loving and kind.

The children likewise love and adore Nancy, and clearly feel safe and secure in her care. They run into her waiting arms knowing that their tears will be wiped away and their little hearts warmed as she touches their “ouches” and “einas” with her comforting, healing care.

Nancy and Rous have also journeyed a long path together and, as a result, they work perfectly in tune with each other. Nancy is the one who is “always there”, always ready to reach out in support. She can see when Rous needs a helping hand: either to keep some of the children occupied whilst others may require more intensive attention in a given moment, to help calm and quiet the “den, or to keep things clean and tidy when little “oopsies” might happen – Nancy quietly steps in alongside.

Nancy, thank you so much for your loyalty and for everything you have done for us all – teachers and children – for so many years. We see your hard work, we are enormously grateful to you and we appreciate you dearly.



Preparing for life

With Teacher Nicole in the Jungle Book Class

“Teacher Nicole?” the excited young voice asks.
“Can we go to the big school now?”

“Not now,” says Nicole with a calm and steady reply. “Big school is closing soon. When you are finished at this school and Christmas has finished, then you can go to big school”.

“Aaaawww...” replies the singsong voice with a note of disappointment.

A few minutes pass by...

“Teacher Nicole?” the same young voice chimes up. “Can we go to the big school now?”

“Not now,” replies Nicole with a friendly, assuring smile whilst her gentle eyes speak volumes as to how deeply proud she is of her children.

And, in a breath, the excited little boy is embracing his all-time favourite teacher with enough love to fill all the oceans.

“Miracles start to happen when you give as much energy to your dreams as you do to your fears” said one Richard Wilkins.

Visit the Jungle Book class, that is, the English Senior group and one can, without a doubt, feel and experience the reality of these powerful words. It is an undeniable truth that in this Grade R class, miracles happen. And they happen as a result of hard work as teacher Nicole and her children focus entirely on investing every ounce of their energy into the building of dreams. Hence the uncontrollable excitement at the prospect of “big school”, a dream soon to be realized for those children graduating from Whispers at the end of this year.

The atmosphere in the Jungle Book class is unique to any other at the Whispers Centre. The work is more advanced and teaching approach more formal whilst yet, at the same time, the environment is friendly, light-hearted, live-and-let-live.



It is the place where children are prepared for school – and not only for school, but for the next phase of their lives out there in the big wide world. The children are growing up. They are inquisitive and curious, ask intelligent questions, demonstrate healthy competition and are eager to showcase their skill and ability.

When Nicole asks a question during language time, all the young hands fly up, each one reaching out with an “I know! I know!” in their quest to be the first to answer, the first to be heard.

The classroom itself is happy, colourful, ordered and beautifully laid out – a perfect balance between the child-friendly safe haven ideal in a preschool environment and the more formal learning setup to be expected at primary school level.

In every way, teacher Nicole skillfully and resourcefully walks the fragile walk of growth with each one of her children across the bridge that links their early young beginnings to the days and moments awaiting them in their future childhoods.

It is the end of the year and school is almost closing. The feeling of Christmas dances through the air like a type of electricity only tangible in December. In keeping with this heightened and jovial spirit, the theme for today’s lesson is “Christmas”. First up is the sing-along song “Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer”, which the children sing out with heartfelt gusto, their shiny little noses having all been painted with a beaming bright red dot.

What the kiddies perhaps deem even “cooler” than their own red noses is that their teacher has also painted a red dot on her nose, and is pretending to be a reindeer just like they are. It is not wonder the children absolutely adore her: Nicole is down-to-earth with them at their level, yet is also secure and strong in her leadership of each one, her very pulse attuned to the heartbeat of their individual needs, strengths, challenges, fears and dreams.

Spend some time with Nicole and it becomes quickly evident that her ready passion for the lives of the children she teaches stems from the very deepest essence of her being. Teaching is not simply a job for her, something she “does”. It is who she is. Her passion translates into an enormous sense of responsibility for her children’s education, which manifests itself as hours of selfless hard work to ensure that each individual child is provided with the best quality learning experiences possible. Watching her children make progress is not only Nicole’s deepest desire but is also what keeps her motivated and her soul nourished. To her, their advancement is the greatest reward for her labours.



Back to language time, and teacher Nicole reads the Christmas story to her group. In the process she also asks questions and takes every opportunity to teach, revisit and refine the children’s understanding of concepts such as the differences between a hospital- and hotel room versus a barn. More difficult concepts, such as “what does it mean to be born?” are also skillfully approached in a child-friendly way, perfect for the young and curious minds to grasp.



Today sees an interlude into language lesson time, as a visiting family looking to potentially register their little girl at the Centre, pop in to observe something of the class. The children are fascinated by the visitors and ask inquisitive questions of Nicole. With this unexpected change in routine, combined with the tired-excitement so typical at the end of the year, attention spans naturally start to wander.

With flexibility and grace Nicole calmly remains in control amidst all the activity and change, and indicates that now it is time to move to the tables for more creative pursuits – the decorating of end-of-year report envelopes. Before long, the children and their visiting friends have settled down and are colouring beautiful big reindeer in, according to personal preferences and tastes. Christmas trees are painted onto report envelopes using handprints – an activity carefully done one-at-a-time to avoid unnecessary spillage and mess.



For the children, this exercise is not necessarily so much about the painting itself. Rather, it is simply another opportunity for them to, each one, show their precious teacher Nicole just how much they love and appreciate her, as they embrace her with the unconditional and all-affirming warmth that only a child can. They look deep into her eyes with their own saying, “Thank you teacher Nicole for giving us the gift of our future.”



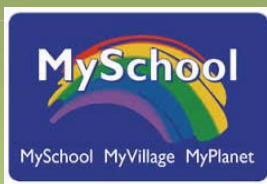
We are grateful to you for your generosity our supporters

MySchool Donations

Thank you for your fantastic support this month our loyal MySchool team! Your contributions amounted to a most welcome gift:

TOTAL October 2016: R 905,90

We sincerely appreciate your loyalty!



We give our special thanks to Mr. Hope SA, Medipost and the Dare to Care Project for their outstanding support having together raised and donated a whopping **R4000-00** in aid of our new sandpit!

We are **HUGELY** grateful to you all!

We also thank and express our immense gratitude to each one of our private donors for your generous financial contributions. Your kindness does not go unnoticed...

A big Thank You to all who supported us in our Beeld Kinderfonds fundraising initiative... Thanks to your efforts we raised **R3 390-00!** Thank you so much!

We visited Entrepreneurs Day @ Lynnwood Manor Private School

25 November 2016

