



March 2020 Newsletter

Welkom by ons nuusbrief!

In summary:

Read about our site closure and reflections on lockdown below.

We launched the Explorers' Club – a lockdown programme for kids. Click here to learn more: <https://bit.ly/2RvQPsO>. Reflections on this online learning programme from Andy's pen below.

Our vacancies will be advertised coming Tuesday, 14 April. All applications will go through this portal: <https://bit.ly/2wpjvfb>

Our open days are postponed. Further details will be shared after lockdown.

Kortliks:

Lees oor ons terreinsluiting en gedagtes oor grendelstaat hieronder.

Ons het die Verkennersklub geloods – 'n aanlyn-program vir kinders gedurende die grendelstaatperiode. Klik hier om meer uit te vind: <https://bit.ly/2RvQPsO> Nadenke oor ons Verkennersklub hieronder uit Andy se pen.

Ons nuwe poste word op Dinsdag, 14 April adverteer. Alle aansoeke gaan deur hierdie portaal: <https://bit.ly/2wpjvfb>

Ons ope dae is uitgestel, en ons sal herskeduleer na die grendelstaatperiode.



Dear Green School community

These are interesting times. This month we started with much speed to get out of the ground with our building process. Our foundations are in – after hours of discussion and debate about what a Green School foundation is made of! Just as we started with the preparation for our rammed earth walls, the news of Covid-19 and the first official President speech happened. We've made a few videos from our construction team members to get the perspective of different communities. These are available on our social media pages. There was some denial, lots of uncertainty and an uneasiness about what this means.

Click on the pictures below to see some of the videos on our Instagram page.

Liewe Green School-gemeenskap

Dis baie interessante tye waarin ons ons nou bevind. Hierdie maand het ons begin met geweldige haas om uit die grond te kom met die bouproses. Ons fundamente is gegooi (na ure se besprekings oor waarvan 'n Groenskool se fundamente gemaak moet wees), en net toe ons reg is om met die vasgestampte grondmure te begin, kom die eerste Covid-19-aankondiging. Ons het 'n paar videos gemaak van ons konstruksiewerkers om 'n perspektief te kry van wat gebeur oor verskillende gemeenskappe heen. Dis beskikbaar op ons sosiale media bladsye. Daar was 'n goeie verspreiding van ontkenning, twyfel en onsekerheid or wat dit als beteken.

Klik gerus op die foto's hieronder om van die videos te sien op ons Instagram bladsy.



Then the news came that we'll have to close the construction site for at least three weeks.

So, now our building site lies quietly and bakes in the sun and our team wonders about the impact of this lockdown on our country, our economy and education in general – this year and in the foreseeable future.

Our last day on site was almost festive, almost like a December close. During lunch, we handed out food parcels to everyone and Andy spoke about each of our roles in this time: protect yourself, protect the people around you and in this way, you protect our country.

En toe kom die nuus dat ons alle aktiwiteite moet staak vir ten minste drie weke.

So ons bousterrein lê stil en bak in die son, en ons span wonder saam oor wat die impak van hierdie sluiting gaan wees op ons land, ons ekonomie en onderwys in die algemeen – vir hierdie jaar en die voorsienbare toekoms.

Ons laaste dag op terrein was amper feestelik, amper soos net voor 'n Desember vakansie. Tydens middagete het ons koskakkies uitgedeel aan almal en Andy het gesels oor ons elkeen se rol in hierdie tyd: beskerm jouself, beskerm die mense om jou, en sodoende beskerm jy die land.



EXPLORERS' CLUB

In unusual circumstances, such as a national lockdown, we look at things differently and subsequently reach new conclusions. Such as the fact that we don't need a physical school to start teaching.

That was the birth of the Explorers' Club! Read below the story from Andy's pen on how we developed a lockdown-programme to serve parents and kids.

VERKENNERSKLUB

In ongewone omstandighede, soos 'n grendelstaat, kom mens soms tot nuwe gevolgtrekkings. Een was dat mens nie regtig 'n skoolgebou nodig het om skool te gee nie.

En dit was die geboorte van die Verkennersklub! Lees hieronder meer uit Andy se pen oor hierdie grendelstaat-program wat ons bring het om tot diens te wees van ouers en kinders.



Dear Green School families

When the national lockdown was announced we realised that across the country, and many parts of the globe, busy parents would be trying to carry on their lives and careers online with their children cooped up indoors all day, every day. We saw the opportunity to support these families and at the same time to give children a taste of Green School by launching an online programme.

In the preceding weeks we had met with a number of teachers who are excited to move out of traditional education and join Green School. The sort of educators who are able to think creatively, teach in a style that encourages children to see the interconnectedness of things and ensure that there is plenty of fun and laughter into the classroom. We connected with the Green School international team in Bali to provide professional development for our teaching team. We workshoped topics such as 'what does an outstanding Green School lesson look like?', brainstormed ideas and planned collaboratively.

We believe that life isn't only a journey, it should be an adventure. Building on the adventure theme, we called our programme the Explorers' Club. But what to call the teachers? 'Sir' or 'Juffrou' was far too formal, so we decided on 'Captain'.

We researched a number of online learning platforms and decided that video conferencing spaces like Zoom allow for the most realistic classroom 'feel' with live discussions that the whole class can join into. We decided to offer classes in three age groups, each for two one-hour sessions a morning. Seven lessons a day, 5 days a week.

Our social media team sprang into action and the logistics were, like so many things, more complex than we first imagined. One of the many links in the chain was creating a mechanism for parents and children to sign up for the classes. This required a separate IT platform with its own parameters.

The response was extraordinary and within a day or two had attracted enough interest to make Explorers' Club viable. Within ten days we had launched the programme. On day one there were a few login and teething issues, but children are quick with technology and soon got the hang of it.

The children enjoyed making new friends and connecting with peers, sharing childish jokes and laughing together. For those who love social contact this was a breath of fresh air. It also made the children feel important. Mums and dads have their business calls and now they had an important meeting of their own to attend, work to do and follow-up assignments. The older children enjoyed starting school at 9.00 am in the morning and not having to get up early.

The activities allowed for many cross-curricular links. Building obstacles courses or marble runs incorporated physics (gravity and levers), design, mathematics and collaboration. Seemingly simple activities called for some serious creative thinking and problem-solving. I enjoyed watching the delight of a group of children as they learnt to make and crack codes.

I, too, had a chance to get into the hot seat and present a class, which was lots of fun, although I was initially apprehensive about my untested abilities as an online teacher. It was a creative writing class called 'Portable Magic' and, in a workshop format, we explored different genres of writing. Learners shared some inspiring work and gave feedback on what they enjoyed and the next steps. I was a little unsure about how presenting the course in both English and Afrikaans would go, but children are wonderful and we communicated just fine (I did enlist the help of an Afrikaans colleague who is a published author to help with the finer nuances of the language).

Reflecting on the week, one of our teachers said, 'It was a challenging task putting together lessons that catered for kids in the age bracket of Gr R to 2, as their skills are at such different levels - but man, oh man, was it worth it! I prefer being in a class, but it surprised me how quick we can get to know one another, and a bond can be built between complete strangers because of a shared love for learning. Never did I think I would teach children remotely from the Winelands, Boland, Cape Town, Johannesburg and even London, all in one time slot.'

There were some lighthearted moments. Some parents forgot that the video camera was on and walked around the house in their nightwear, whilst others did loud woodworking projects close by which sounded like the house was being demolished. Managing behaviour was different: how do you get children to pay attention? Waking a sleepy class up first thing in the morning online with some stretches just does not work: the children look at you like you're a news presenter. And how do you get to talk when someone else is talking? Those awkward gaps and muted snippets of conversation?

Our daily teachers' meeting was laughter-filled as everyone shared the highlights and funny moments of their lessons. A sense of team began to develop.

It hasn't been plain sailing. We missed person to person contact, both in the classroom and in the playground. Online learning meets a need, but screen-time lacks warmth, it has a sense of quarantine, and that there is no substitute for face to face contact. There's no opportunity to sit next to a friend at breaktime or to kick a soccer ball around.

It has been a fascinating experience and adventure, one in which we have explored what the future of education could look like. Thank you to the teachers and backstage crew of administrators who made it all possible and to our brave children and parents who joined us on the journey. Green School South Africa has started.

All the best

Andy Wood
Head of Green School South Africa

