



From 17-21 August, DSS celebrated Green Week, a special week dedicated to appreciating the natural world and exploring the many ways in which God's creation enriches our lives.

Throughout the week, our school grounds became an extended classroom. Learners and teachers embraced every opportunity to take learning outdoors. Classes spent lessons outside, enjoying the fresh air and natural surroundings while engaging with their academic subjects in creative and meaningful ways.

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GREEN WEEK AT DSS

learning, growing & wondering in creation

Teachers integrated themes from nature across the curriculum.

In Mathematics, learners measured, estimated and investigated patterns found in the natural world. In Languages, they read, wrote and discussed topics inspired by creation. Science lessons explored living things, ecosystems and the wonders of the environment, while Arts lessons encouraged learners to express their appreciation of nature through creativity. Even our assemblies reflected the theme, reminding us daily of our responsibility to care for the world God has entrusted to us.

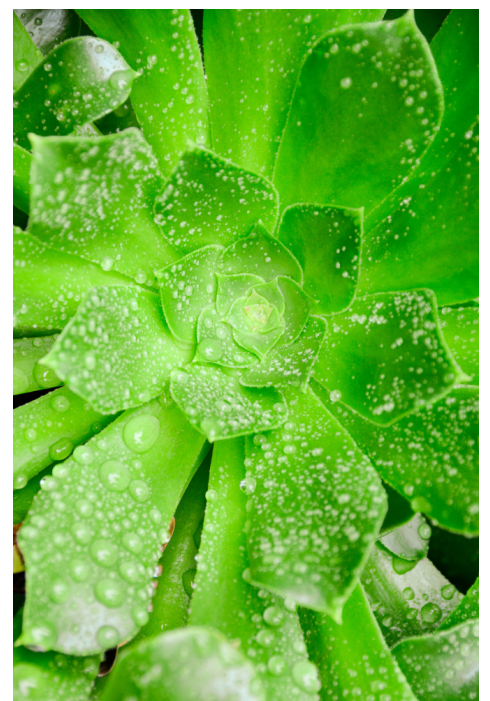
Green Week was not only enjoyable, but also deeply beneficial. A growing body of scientific research shows that spending time outdoors and in natural environments supports children's physical, emotional and

intellectual development. Studies have found that children who regularly engage with nature often experience improved concentration, better emotional well-being, reduced stress levels and enhanced cognitive functioning. Researchers have also found strong links between nature exposure and increased physical activity, healthier lifestyles and improved mental health.

Other studies suggest that time spent in nature can improve attention, memory and learning readiness, helping learners remain engaged and focused in the classroom. Exposure to green spaces has also been associated with greater resilience, self-esteem and social well-being among children and teenagers.

As teachers, it is encouraging to know that allowing children to learn outdoors is not merely a

pleasant change of scenery. It is supported by research and contributes positively to their overall development. More importantly, it reminds learners that learning extends beyond the four walls of a classroom and that God's fingerprints can be seen



throughout His creation.

At Domino Servite School, Green Week was ultimately about much more than plants, trees and the environment. It was an opportunity to pause, observe and marvel at the greatness of our Creator. As learners explored the natural world, they were continually reminded that every leaf, flower, bird and breeze points us back to the One who made it all.

The book of Job reminds us of God's immeasurable power: *"He spreads out the northern skies over empty space; He suspends the earth over nothing"* (Job 26:7).

As reflect on this astounding truth, we are reminded that if God can hang the earth upon nothing, then surely He is more than able to hold our lives securely in His hands.

Lessons from a farmer

ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Farming has always been big in South Africa. From the vineyards of the Western Cape to the wheat fields of the Free State and the sugar cane of KwaZulu-Natal, farming forms part of who South Africans are. It's a bit like Bafana Bafana, the Springboks or having a Saturday braai: something deeply ingrained in the South African DNA.

Like the royal lineage among the Amakhosi, farms in South Africa are often passed down from generation to generation. My great-grandfather, my grandfather, my father, and now me. Having someone to inherit the farm has always been regarded as very important, and for that reason a strong emphasis was often placed on having a son.

Knowing a farmer in the Free State who farms more than 5 000 ha, yet whose son has no interest in farming, makes me wonder: who will inherit this generational wealth, and why is there no desire to continue the legacy? One of the main reasons for such a lack of interest surely lies in the failure to nurture it. The question must be asked: as a child, did Dad ever tell me stories about farming, or take me to see the crops and the cattle? Did he teach me the ways of the land, or take me for a ride on the tractor? As a boy, was I prepared for what I should one day become?

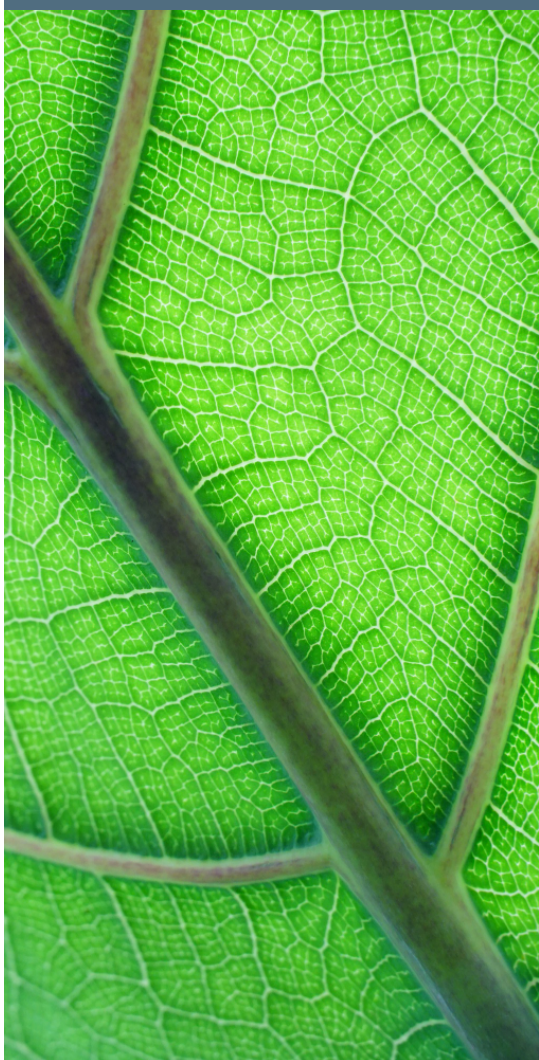
From an educational perspective, artificial intelligence presents parents and teachers with a



similar challenge - one that demands similar solutions. If AI can give children all the answers, how should my child approach homework, and what should be taught at school?

With AI increasingly undermining the purpose of traditional homework by answering almost every question that can be asked, not perfectly yet, but becoming more accurate by the day, the emphasis should no longer be merely on completing homework and acquiring knowledge. Rather, it should be on instilling the skills needed to acquire, evaluate, and apply that knowledge; not simply on learning, but on developing the skills required to engage with knowledge effectively.

Just as the farmer should have prepared his son for what he should become one day, parents and teachers should guide young



people towards what they should become in spite of a world overflowing with knowledge that is freely available and a myriad of AI tools.

AI is here, and it is here to stay. Not necessarily in its present form, but certainly in the form it will become. Amid this uncertainty, we should teach our children how to verify what AI presents as fact, how to phrase questions carefully, how to protect their privacy, and how to use these tools responsibly.

KPMG, a global organisation of independent firms providing Audit, Tax and Advisory services, provides parents with eight tips for using AI safely, helping their children navigate this new world of artificial intelligence.

1. Protect personal information: Do not share sensitive personal details online.
2. Check privacy settings: Understand and adjust privacy settings on AI platforms.
3. Avoid oversharing: Be mindful of what information you make public.
4. Think critically: Verify facts and do not assume AI is always correct.
5. Report harmful content: Flag inappropriate content and tell a trusted adult.
6. Be cautious of AI messages: Avoid suspicious conversations and requests for personal information.

7. Use AI wisely: Let AI support learning, not replace it.
8. Stay informed: Keep up to date with AI's opportunities, limitations and risks.

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BATTLING *to balance*

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Although homework does not guarantee a child's success, it still nurtures intellectual growth because it enables a child to determine whether he understands the work when doing it independently. It serves as a form of consolidation. So, if a child takes a long time to complete homework or often needs to spend time on homework, what happens to his chores? Chores are equally important because they help build character.

Homework falls within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), as stated by Vygotsky. Chores too are in this zone. Vygotsky refers to the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance. When these two responsibilities are balanced, a child will potentially reach, or be in, the "sweet spot of learning", where they are challenged to think but not to the point of frustration.



What is even more amazing is that studies show that when children are exposed to doing chores, they are likely to perform better academically as well. When a child is freed from chores to make more time for homework and sports, they may be deprived of important soft skills such as prioritising, critical thinking, and time management.

As children grow up, they must understand that there is only a set number of hours in a day. Commitments must be honoured, while responsibilities do not simply disappear. In this way, they will make better choices about how they spend their afternoons when balancing school commitments and home responsibilities.

The kind of generation produced through this approach will be a better one because children will understand that success is earned through hard work; it is not simply about being given the right of way at every roundabout.

So, the takeaway is that chores are not undervalued. Instead, they should be appreciated, especially when they fall within a child's ZPD, helping to balance homework, which is aimed at the same developmental level.

Let teachers give homework and parents give chores to create the "success trap" that helps a child develop into a successful and responsible adult.

MANNERS MAKETH A MAN

This phrase dates to the 14th century and was famously used as the personal motto of William of Wykeham, the Bishop of Winchester.

Being grateful, courteous, kind, generous, thoughtful and respectful are hallmarks of a well-mannered individual. These qualities create a positive impression and leave a lasting impact on those around them. Clarence Thomas stated, *"Good manners will open doors that the best education cannot."*

Good manners are first learned at home and reinforced at school from an early age. Teaching children proper manners equips them for future success and encourages them to contribute positively to a respectful and civil society as adults.

Here are some basics to help your child get along.



Avoid offensive habits

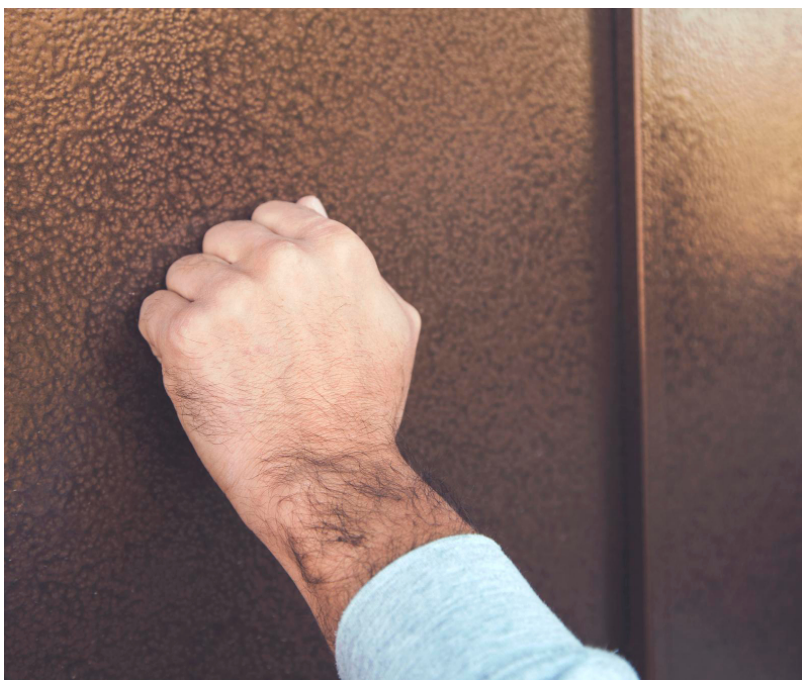
Don't chew with your mouth open or talk with food in your mouth. Cover sneezes and coughs. Blow your nose in private. Don't pick your nose. Don't put your feet/shoes on someone else's seat. Clean up messes that you make. Cover your mouth when you yawn.



Be considerate during a conversation

If there are more than two people in a conversation each person should speak less so that everyone gets an equal chance to be heard.





● **Small courtesies**

The simple, yet often unused words of *please* and *thank you* are becoming scarce. Today's children are more likely to say, *no problem*, *OK* or even *whatever*. The proper response should always be *you're welcome* or *my pleasure*. Open doors. Offer your seat to someone who needs it. Wipe your shoes.

● **Do tasks without grumbling**

It's not always easy to do tasks when you don't feel like it. But negativity can make matters worse, so even when you feel grumpy about tasks, you should try to complete them without grumbling.

● **Apologise**

When you make a mistake, you should offer a polite apology. Bad apologies add more hurt, good apologies are a balm on the wound.

● **Knock on closed doors**

Doors are for privacy so if a door is closed, you should knock before entering. It is not enough to knock and barge in. Wait until there is a response then get permission to enter.

● **Don't tease**

Just like mean names, teasing can lead to hurt feelings. Good etiquette means not making fun of anyone for any reason.

● **Speak kindly**

Speak kindly to others. Two rudes don't make a polite. If someone is rude to you, don't respond in a similar way. A big part of good manners is good self-control.

Manners matter. Good manners help children build positive relationships and leave a lasting impression.

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Head, heart & hands

There is great joy in watching children learn and grow. What a privilege it is to see them gain confidence and to witness the delight on their faces when a new concept suddenly makes sense. There is deep fulfilment in observing new skills being mastered and, through godly guidance, seeing a child develop and mature spiritually. Every child is unique, and it is clear that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to education.

Swiss pedagogist, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746 - 1827), often referred to as the Father of Modern Education, believed that every child has the ability to learn and thrive. He advocated for a holistic approach to education, one that extends beyond academic achievement. His philosophy centred on the development of the Head, Heart and Hands, ensuring that children's intellect, emotions and values as well as practical skills are nurtured in harmony. The result

is an educational experience that addresses the needs of the whole child, equipping young people to become capable and responsible adults.

Pestalozzi's educational reformation is so profound that it remains evident in schools today. His ideas helped transform education from a system characterised by rigid rote memorisation and harsh discipline into one that is child-centred, inclusive and experiential. Through sensory-based learning, children are encouraged to discover and explore through practical experiences. Rather than being passive recipients of information, children become active participants in their own learning process.

As teachers and parents, we can look to no greater example than Jesus Christ, the Master Teacher. His use of storytelling, relatable examples, thoughtful





questions and everyday experiences engaged both the minds and hearts of His listeners. Most importantly, He taught through His own example. His life demonstrated that genuine learning is not merely about acquiring knowledge, but about the transformation of the heart. In this way, His teaching remains the ultimate model for purposeful education.

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SOURCES

Text 1

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Text 2

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