



REPORT

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EDUCATION RENAISSANCE TRUST

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Since we last wrote...

- ❖ St James has reached its half century. This edition of Report celebrates 50 years of the philosophic education around the world.
- ❖ The ERT has been helping to fund schools and teachers since 1997.
- ❖ In this special issue we reprint a couple of articles from our past, showing why the St James philosophical education is so highly prized.
- ❖ We also reprint a letter from a grateful parent. It captures just why this education deserves another 50 years.
- ❖ We've just paid the final instalment of a three-year grant to Neda and Luciana. They have been taking their practical workshops Una Educación Consciente to schools and teachers across the length and breadth of Argentina. See page 2 for Luciana's amazing back story.
- ❖ We continue to receive generous donations and legacies to help make all these things happen. Thank you!



Attentive study at St James Durban

Why is this education uniquely valuable?

A parent whose children were educated at Erasmus School, Melbourne, was moved to write to the Principal to explain what was unique about the educational philosophy.

'First is stillness. I can genuinely say that my children know how to internally regulate themselves when they are feeling truly anxious (for example, before tests or playing competitive sports etc) by tapping into their inner stillness, and centring themselves before getting on with the challenge.

But it hasn't happened because the school talks about it, or because it dedicates one class to it. It is because asking children to tap into their inner stillness permeates every activity at the school – assemblies, parent events, at the start and end of classroom activities and finally through learning and practising traditional meditation in Year 5 and 6. It is through these thousands of repetitions over the 7 years that my children have become adept at centring themselves.

Another thing I have noticed about my children is that they are observant of their actions, and actions of other children – and are not led into activities because they want to just fit in. They control when they say 'yes' and 'no' to their peer – and they are not led by them.

This has been particularly true of my daughter who joined a very large girl's high school after Erasmus and was suddenly faced by many, many influences – some girls tried to bully her, but she observed and analysed their behaviour and found the inner resilience within herself to ignore their words and actions, and not let it affect how she saw herself.

She also waited to find other girls with whom her values matched instead of racing into whatever friendships were being offered to her. While it took her sometime, her friends are girls who – like my daughter – are not vulnerable to fads and trends.

The philosophy taught to children from Prep to Year 7 is about how to 'act' in a good and true way in a world that may not always 'appear' to reward them. Some of this learning comes through the study of world religions, while others come through the study of traditional classics like Plato, Shakespeare, Mahabharata.

When we set out to find a primary school for our children, we wanted a school that would build their character – not just their academic skills. In Erasmus, we found it'.



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The Education Renaissance Trust promotes schools and supports teachers around the world who provide a spiritually-based education. This ERT newsletter REPORT is published twice a year, to keep friends and supporters in touch with our work. If you no longer wish to receive it, please contact the editor, Hugh Venables.

A father's story

This inspiring story from Durban came from a conversation between the headmistress and Jessica Renisson who was UK fundraiser for St James Durban.

“When I spoke to the headmistress, the riots in the city were at their worst. The school had broken up for the holidays a week or so earlier and everyone was barricaded in their homes. Fires were erupting throughout the city. All shops, including food stores, pharmacies and doctors’ surgeries were closed or had been abandoned to looters. Today St James re-opened for a new term, all students and teachers present and correct, ready to carry on as normal. I asked what I could share with St James’ supporters around the world, and she told me about Shaun.

What Shaun’s father said stood out for its heartfelt honesty:”

‘I would like my son to be a respectable, intelligent human being. I would like him to be the best he can be. In my own education I was not equipped in areas that mattered. St James is giving my son the opportunity to excel by giving him a strong foundation. My hopes are that he will become a productive member of society and will feel wanted.’



Six years, on Shaun was offered academic scholarships to two of Durban’s best High Schools.”

Shaun (pictured here with his parents) says of his time at St James:

‘I value most my teachers and the life lessons they have taught me because that is what has nurtured me and given me the confidence to be who I am today.’

Luciana’s Journey

In 2011, we sponsored Luciana Garate, from Argentina, to teach (and learn) for a term at St James Prep School in London.

What happened next inspired us all at ERT.

Luciana went home to teach in a bilingual Catholic primary school. She wrote to us about the influence the St James philosophy can have.

“I applied the philosophical principles: I greeted every child individually. We paused before and after every activity. We took time to reflect on our virtues, and I encouraged applying them. I chose the best material for teaching, and I even encouraged healthy eating, swimming hard against the current!”



Luciana with her St James class

Over the years, the impact in my class was very positive.

The head and most parents were very happy with the effects. Children paused spontaneously at home with family, before playing sport, and even before surgery for a broken leg!

A couple of other teachers tried my ideas, but the impact in the school was, I thought, insufficient. I wanted the whole school to join in. But that seemed impossible.

And so I decided to quit. I would find something new. One day I hope to set up a school myself.

But the Head said ‘Please don’t leave,’ and he put me in charge of two weeks of pre-term training sessions with all the teachers... head, deputy, secretary, 19 Spanish teachers, 16 English teachers, five RE teachers, five art teachers and 14 PE teachers.

I usually hate the limelight! But I presented my alternative methods from St James, to inspire the teachers to renew their work in the school and with each discipline, with the welfare of the children in mind. We rediscovered our principles together.

So the school has adopted the initial greeting, the pause, providing a good environment, and teaching according to the children’s potential. Teachers now see teaching as developing children’s qualities in all directions, instead of merely transmitting information. They have worked as a team, meeting all together for the first time, and deciding together what they want to do.

All of this is the effect of the powerful teaching and the many committed people making efforts for children around the world.

Thank you to ERT for allowing this to happen!”

HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you agree that the St James education is worth supporting for future generations of children, here is how you can help.

Many readers support our worldwide work through regular standing orders. Some help with the development of St James Durban. Others donate to the wider work of the ERT. The Chancellor kindly increases every donation from a UK taxpayer by 25%, via Gift Aid.

Contact us (see overleaf for details) and we’ll send you a Gift Aid form.

One-off donations, large or small, are equally welcome, cheques or cash! Or you can donate by bank transfer to our account at HSBC: The Education Renaissance Trust, sort code 40 11 58; account no. 90125105.

You can also support us via [PayPal](https://www.paypal.com). There’s a button on the ERT website – go to the How You Can Help page and then to Becoming a Donor (or click <http://www.education-renaissance-trust.org.uk/help2.htm> if you’re online.)

Lastly, you could remember us in your Will. Thank you.