

EDUCATING YOUR 22ND CENTURY CHILD



Gershon and Jacqueline Aitchison

The Boutique School Educating Your 22nd Century Child

WHY WE WROTE THIS BOOK

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PREFACE

We live and breathe education and the fact that you're reading this tells us that your child's education is important to you too. What a fantastic way to start a relationship!

Over our many years in education we've heard ourselves repeatedly answering the same questions asked by parents just like you. This book was written in response to the hundreds of parents we have had the privilege to speak to about their educational goals for their children. We found that their most common goal is that they want the best possible education for their child to ensure a better future for them. Their concerns held distinct commonalities and we felt the need to highlight two things in particular to not only reassure parents that they're not alone, but also to provide meaningful information and concrete strategies that help them to be better informed when making education-related choices.

The two most important things you should know at the outset are:

1. You are not alone! The questions and problems you have are not unique, nor is the feeling of being on a roller-coaster ride at times.

2. There are people who understand - and can help! Educating children is a service and often a calling. If you think back to your own schooling, you'll probably remember at least one special teacher who really loved what they did and somehow made those lessons better. The good news is that there are still many, many of these people around and available to assist your child to prepare for the ever-changing world they will face.

It is widely discussed that the current South African education system is not working as it should. This is constantly highlighted in the media, discussed publicly and is similarly occurring in many countries around the world as we all grapple with what it means to educate children in this fast-paced digital world.

Currently, most schools and education systems continue with a Dickensian style - based on the 19th and 20th century industrial worker supply and demand cycle - which is no longer suited to the children of today simply because it is not geared to prepare them for tomorrow. When we say tomorrow, we are referring to the ICT age (information, communication and technology): a fast-developing phase that most players in the education system simply cannot conceptualise, nor are they prepared for it. Finland and Singapore are part of a handful of countries that have realised this challenge and are actively rethinking their existing education systems. Much of the rest of the world seems to be lagging, however, and South Africa is no exception. No longer can we hide behind statements like, "It could never work." and "It has always been done this way." The evidence is clear - our methods are failing, and we need to evolve.



When we set out on our journey to establish Education Incorporated Boutique School we did so knowing that much of the time we would be swimming upstream. Our intention was to do things in a manner better suited to the children of today and the world they will face, and would therefore go against the grain of traditional classroom practice at times. To do this successfully we would not only be educating children; we would also have to continually engage parents, and the educational community at large, on a revised approach to education that is not necessarily the status quo and therefore has the potential to rock the boat.

Rocking the boat for the sake of it was never our intention. Rather, we are obsessed with improving education by sharing our educational views and experiences in a manner that makes a difference in the lives of the children we work with. Our ever-changing world needs independent, entrepreneurial thinkers who have been equipped to solve problems and function effectively within their chosen societies.

Our teaching journey includes several years spent in Asia (Taiwan) and we believe that the high status awarded to education in such countries clearly demonstrates their understanding of its vital importance. This status manifests in an attitude of absolute commitment from the educational community, as well as parents and the population at large, to each child's educational journey. It encompasses an incredible respect afforded to good teachers as recognition of the fundamental responsibility of that profession. We aim to see more of that here at home in South Africa: commitment, dedication and respect for the profession. These will lead to more practical, sustainable systems, more support from parents and education departments and ultimately, more meaningful results from South African matriculants.

This book gives a glimpse into how we are manifesting these ideals on a daily basis in our boutique school. We will share our vision with you on the pages that follow and show that a real, authentically South African school solution is available to you - today.

We welcome you on this incredible journey with us to educate your child for the 22nd Century.



CHAPTER 1

Symptoms of a misplaced child: Identifying the right learning environment for your child

A child's education starts the moment they are born, never ceases, and constantly requires attention. However, there are certain critical stages of their formal education that require specific attention. The 12 years of formal schooling that children go through to prepare them for tertiary education, and then the world of work, is crucial to the development and success of any child.

When it comes to choosing a school, there are so many options - but the choice usually boils down to whether or not a school's value system matches the family's, the fees fit the family's budget and whether the school can nurture and hone a specific, individual need. i.e. "My son is very good at rugby so I need a school with a heavy focus on sport."

Unfortunately, it does occur that even if all these boxes have been checked, it so happens (more frequently than you would think) that your child just does not settle into the school you have chosen together. Sometimes, over time, the school that started as a perfect fit, later becomes a barrier to your child's learning progress.

Bearing in mind that it is quite normal for children, especially teens, to swing between good and bad days, here are some signs that your child is no longer in an environment that serves them:

- **The bad days become much more frequent than the good.** While it is normal for teens to have mood swings, show irritable behaviour, and believe that "the whole world is stupid", this should not be a permanent or long-lasting position. Emotional changes and mood swings mean that they should also have good days, be excited about certain things and believe that there are still some awesome people in their lives. If it's all bad days with your child or teen you urgently need to investigate why. Bullying, lack of academic assistance, aggressive teachers or peers, or just several key friends changing schools can result in your child needing a change of environment, even if they are not sure how to ask for it.
- **Tears, sore tummies, excessive anxiety.** Any or all of these happening most days in the car on the way to school need further appropriate investigation. The behaviour is coming from somewhere, whether it is to play you for sympathy, or the opposite extreme where there is bullying, feelings of inadequacy or too much pressure and inadequate coping skills to appropriately deal with the problems.
- **Your child comes right out and tells you.** More and more children and teens today are very in touch with how they feel and what they want to do about it. Pay attention, have the conversation about not changing things for the sake of change, but listen carefully to what they are telling you. Many teens these days go as far as to do the research on the school they want to go to themselves - if they are going to take the time to present a researched proposal to you, they mean it when they say they want a change.

As a parent, when you start recognising one or a combination of these signs, take time to find the underlying cause of what the real problem is. Your child's emotional state is a major contributor to how receptive they are to learning.



Ronald's journey to academic excellence

In order to see if there is a good fit with Education Incorporated, every child is required to attend a trial week. This is a fully immersive experience of the school and allows the child, the family and the school to see if there is a potential fit before the school begins their investment in educating the child.

Ronald, a pupil in grade 6, was not enjoying his school experience. He was crying every day when his mom collected him from school. He always complained of a stomach ache in the morning. Sunday afternoons had become a nightmare of shouting, wailing and tantrums, especially if there was a test on Monday.

Ronald's mom had heard about Education Incorporated from a friend of a friend and set up a trial week for him.

Initially, Ronald was reluctant. He hated school! All school! His tummy was sore and he missed his friends! This is what he told the headmaster on his first day of trial week when they had their first conversation.

At the end of the week, in his second conversation with the headmaster, he was smiling. He had made a new friend and couldn't believe how friendly all the other students were. He liked the way the teachers explained things and he had done all the homework the teachers had given him. At the trial week feedback meeting, Ronald's mom asked what we had done to her son. "He won't keep quiet in the car on the way home! He keeps telling me about what he learnt at school and what this person said and what they did at break and and and... I don't even have to wake him up in the morning to get ready for school. He is dressed and waiting for me, telling me to hurry up so that he isn't late."

"The difference in my son in one week is just remarkable. He comes with me to his old school to fetch his sister and all the teachers are commenting on how happy he looks," she added.

Ronald completed an assessment for Mathematics and English in his trial week and the results showed that he had some catching up to do with his Mathematics. His reading and comprehension age were appropriate for his grade, and the teachers really enjoyed having him in their classes.

Ronald was enrolled at Education Incorporated and has had only one sore tummy in the last three years. He went home early that day with a tummy bug.

CHAPTER 2

Classroom Basics: Why very small and focused classes are the answer

When many schools advertise 'small classes' they actually mean 18 - 25 pupils per class. You only have to imagine having 18 children over for a birthday party to realise that this is not a small group at all! With these class sizes, it is almost impossible for a teacher to connect with each child, mentoring each one through the learning process, class after class, throughout her day. Ultimately, the familiar pattern of a teacher standing in front of a classroom, doling out information to pupils sitting behind desk-like barriers will persist, allowing some learners to fall through cracks in the system or simply fade into obscurity as yet another face in the room.

Genuinely small classes allow for a mentored style of teaching (supported by the parent because everyone is in the loop) that makes allowances for different learning styles. Mentoring allows teachers to push each individual when pushing is needed, affirm when affirmation is needed, teach, support and reinforce accordingly. It allows everyone to be very clear on their responsibilities and the expectations parents, teachers and learners have of one another.

At Edu Inc, when we say small classes, we mean small enough to identify and engage with each learner in the room, every day. Every learner is different: they have different learning styles and different needs. This is a reflection of the society young people are growing up in. In the 21st century, a child can search for anything they want on the Internet and chances are that someone has it or has done it or is in the process of learning how to do it. Our children are able to customise their entire existence and are starting to expect the same from their educational experience. The advent of the Internet is primarily responsible for training them to expect customised experiences that are delivered in a manner that recognises their individuality.

With around eight learners* in a class we are able to achieve this learning experience with no-one falling through cracks, being left unnoticed and no wiggle-room when the going gets tough and learners are required to step up. It sounds daunting, but learners tend to thrive when they believe that the people teaching them are invested in them, their thoughts and their ideas, and not just the textbook content required by the curriculum. This leads to broader critical thinking and problem solving instead of rote regurgitation of basic facts.

*** Maximum of up to 10 learners per class in grades 4 to 9 and elective grade 10 to 12 subjects
12 learners per class in grades 10 to 12 compulsory subjects (Eng, Afr, LO)**



There is something wrong with Charlie

Charlie attended a private school from grade R and by grade 5 had repeated a year, was regularly seeing an occupational therapist, a speech therapist and a psychologist. As if this weren't enough, he also had an assistant throughout his school day to help him read, organise his books, stationery, classwork and schedule and help him with homework. Despite all these measures, he was still performing poorly and in danger of failing another year.

We advised Charlie's parents that the constant assistance, repeated psycho-educational testing and arguably intense therapies had reached a point of reinforcing only one thing in Charlie: that there was something wrong with him. His parents were frustrated at spending so much money every month for what seemed like very little progress. Charlie was perhaps even more frustrated as he had lost all sense of independence and control over his school work and educational environment.

Charlie came to Education Incorporated at the beginning of his grade 6 year. His therapy schedule was reduced to occasional visits to the psychologist and he no longer had an assistant in class with him. The first two terms were tough for Charlie. He had to learn to start thinking for himself, to take ownership of work and to experience the consequences of his decisions, both good and unpleasant. He was taught how to study effectively and how to manage his time and organise his work space. He was expected to make an effort and work. Within two terms Charlie's marks had improved dramatically (including a couple of distinctions) but most importantly, he was happy and enjoying school, feeling in control and completely able to cope with his academic schedule and requirements. Getting his academics under control meant that he could focus more time on his passion - cricket - earning himself cricket colours by the end of grade 7. His parents kept commenting on how family members and friends could not believe this was the same child.

The ability to streamline Charlie's academics and allow him to excel in his chosen sport is another byproduct of the very small classes and how they allow us to customise a child's educational experience around their talents and passions, allowing them the opportunity to turn these into professional careers. Education Incorporated has students who have already excelled in their sporting disciplines to provincial and national levels, even representing South Africa as Junior Springboks.

These students are taught to understand the value and significance of accountability - the school assists them in structuring their academic schedules around their tournaments, travelling and gruelling training schedules, but expects commitment and dedication to their academic performance in return for this flexibility. This ability to find balance and a manner in which every person can customise their purpose in life is a vital 22nd century skill.

CHAPTER 3

Curriculum 2.0 – Education for the 22nd Century

We read an article published in the year 2000. The premise of the article was that by 2010, 60% of the jobs or careers people would have had not yet been invented. 2010 has come and gone, the 22nd century is on the horizon and there are many currently alive who will celebrate the year 2100. Yet people still seem to have much of the same careers and jobs they have had for decades. What is all this hype about preparing children for jobs, careers and opportunities that don't exist yet? What does this actually mean?

The old computer programmers will regale you with stories about punch cards and room-sized computers. They even remember when computers had actual insects (bugs) in the cards that caused malfunctions. When you ask them what they are doing now, they will tell you that they are still programming computers, just using different languages and interfaces. They will also tell you that they have had a new job title with each merger, decentralisation and restructure over the last thirty odd years.

The changing job titles and the job descriptions don't really change what these people actually do. They write code that tells computers what to do. What has happened over time, however, is that they have changed the way they do things and the way they provide their services. Are they doing what they did thirty odd years ago? Yes. Are they doing it the same way? No. What skills did they need to acquire to evolve and adapt? The ability to learn new behaviours. The ability to critically analyse the old way of doing something, ask the right questions and then learn a new skill so they could change the way they were doing it.



Digitising an analogue process

Flowerfield High School's governing body decided that in order to remain relevant and appear progressive, they would create digital classrooms and a paperless administration process. When prospective parents asked what the school's technology policy was, the answer could proudly be that every student had a tablet and thus did not need textbooks, that every classroom had a smart board, and that the teachers' administration was all completed electronically. Millions of Rands were spent and Flowerfield High School was the very epitome of a digital school.

Flowerfield High (and many other schools like them) have spent vast amounts of money on digitising an analogue process: the textbook was replaced by a tablet. The chalkboards were replaced with smartboards. The teacher's lesson plans and mark sheets were replaced by word and excel documents. Except, nothing actually changed in the way the teachers taught in the classroom. Nothing changed in the way the learners were expected to engage with their work. Nothing changed in the way management wanted to see data and information. And most notably, nothing changed in any of the processes.

Teachers were probably as excited decades ago by the introduction of the green board and coloured chalk as they are today about tablets and smart boards. Fundamentally, teachers are still teaching in the same Dickensian styled classrooms and manner as they did a hundred years ago. Teaching is not only about the "what" (information) but also about the "how" (method). How are the students required to demonstrate their knowledge and skills when they write their tests and exams? They are required to write their tests and exams with a pen on paper; an incremental step up from parchment and quills.

The correct use of technology and the digitisation of information allows for us to fundamentally change the way we teach, change how the learners experience the learning process, and how management can collect, review and analyse data and information. It is in this exact experience that learners are prepared for the 22nd century: by learning to do things differently and adapting to the rapidly, ever-changing environment around them, not just applying Dickens 2.0.

One could go so far as to say that if new technologies are correctly and effectively applied in teaching, then the method is the lesson itself.

CHAPTER 4

The Winning Trifecta: Child-Teacher-Parent

Like any other functional relationship, communication is the key to making a success of the child - teacher - parent triangle. A parent once said to us, "I'll believe 20% of what my child tells me goes on at school if you'll believe 20% of what he tells you goes on in our home." We really laughed at that because we've been in this game long enough to know how true the statement is.

Parents often hear their children telling them that their teachers shout a lot, or that their teacher never lets them ask a question, or that they were not given assistance when they said that they did not understand something. Well, teachers are humans too and in big classes this probably happens more often than we would like because the teachers simply do not have the capacity, time and classroom management training to constantly be the perfect professionals.

All most parents want from a school, and more specifically from the teachers, is someone to share their family's educational journey with – that includes all its ups, downs, bumps and hoorahs. Most parents are looking for a teacher who will invest in their child and get to know them as a person - a unique individual. Someone who will see the potential they themselves see, believe in that potential and make an effort to nurture and grow it.

Children on the other hand want a teacher who will be consistent in their expectations, forgive them when they cross the line, allow them to make mistakes and encourage them to try new things. Children also want teachers to believe in them and actually listen to what they have to say, give them recognition for their successes and be attentive to their individual needs.

Small classes allow for more focussed and frequent communication between the teacher and the parents that is specific and relevant to each child. Fundamentally, it is an effective partnership between teachers and parents that grows children into the best versions of themselves.

Asking meaningful questions: Teaching children the value of forming an opinion.

One of our interview questions for all potential Edu Inc candidates is: "Is there such a thing as a stupid question?" The responses are remarkable!

The older students either answer with immediate certainty and without any reflection, "There is no such thing as a stupid question." Or, they spend a couple of agonising minutes trying to find the "right" answer, the answer they think we are looking for ... it is an interview after all. Regardless of the response, we always ask them to validate their answer with an example. The older students spend a lot of time finding a rationale or narrative, no matter how complex, that will justify their answer.

The younger students are a treat. We still get the immediate answer with absolute certainty when the answer is no. More often than not though, they will answer after a moment's reflection that there is such a thing as a stupid question. As is our usual *modus operandi*, we ask for an example.

Surprisingly, the example is instantaneous: “Can dogs fly?” or “Do hamburgers talk?” and often classic: “You just have to listen to my brother and sister fight to hear loads of stupid questions!” The point of the question is not the answer they give, but rather to see if the child is able to think, even if the thinking goes against social norms, conventional rhetoric or even if the answer flies in the face of everything they have been taught.

There is no right or wrong answer. The purpose is to see if the child can form an opinion and justify that opinion through a process of thought and reasoning.

The by-product of the question is the observation that younger children find this easier to do than older ones. They seem more comfortable with making mistakes and finding creative responses, even if they seem like ridiculous examples. This is something that should be nurtured and encouraged.

The other reason we ask this question is that we use it as a departure point to discuss why asking meaningful and well thought out questions in the classroom is so important. Asking questions garners information and asking good questions garners better information. This adds to our knowledge and is indispensable to the learning process.



CHAPTER 5

How to Listen: The value of your child's voice

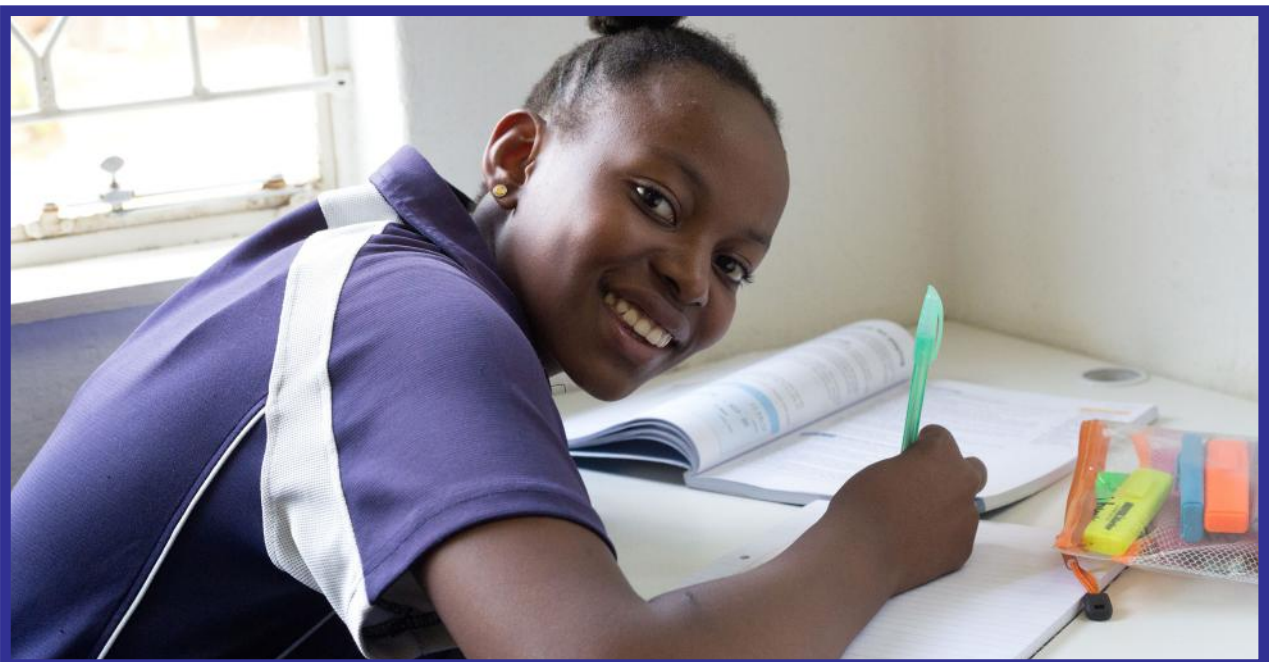
The 21st century child expects and is expected to have their own viewpoints, opinions and to ask questions, especially when it comes to upholding their fundamental rights. We refer to this as your child's voice or your child having a voice.

Many grandparents (and in some unfortunate cases, teachers) cluck their tongues and shake their heads at this notion: children are meant to be seen, not heard. The reality is that our children are going into work environments where age, experience, bureaucracy and hierarchy don't mean much anymore: the best idea wins.

BUT... our children need to learn how to bring the best idea to the table. How to navigate the quagmire of age, experience, bureaucracy and hierarchy so that their ideas and viewpoints are heard despite these filters and are taken seriously. It is as important for our millennial children to learn to be flexible and gracious with the path the idea may follow, or as the case may be in many instances, not follow. This foundation of self-expression is best laid at school level and must be nurtured as the individual gains more exposure through increasing opportunities to air their ideas.

With all of our communication platforms; email, voicemail, text, messaging etc. it is often easy to lose the ability to connect with people, to look them in the eye when talking and make an interpersonal connection. More ideas are sold with passion and the appropriate body language than with cold hard facts.

We are each responsible for what we say and do and the effect our words and behaviours have on the people around us. Good leaders know this and use this influence to motivate and lead. Equipping your child with skills and knowledge on how to conduct themselves appropriately in various settings will give them a competitive advantage in the market place later in their adult life.



Susan, the angry teacher and a visit to the headmaster's office.

It is ten past nine on a Thursday morning and there is a knock on our office door. Susan enters and informs me that Mrs. Tshabalala has asked her to leave the class and come and see me. Naturally I ask why. Susan's response is pretty typical: "All I did was ask a question, and she shouted at me to get out of her classroom and come and see you."

Interestingly, Mrs Tshabalala's class is right next door to our office, and we didn't hear any shouting. It is not our policy to ask children to leave a classroom and see the headmaster unless the child is disrupting the class and hindering the ability of other learners to learn. So our dialogue went as follows:

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- Headmaster:** What were you doing that made Mrs. Tshabalala angry enough that she asked you to come and see me?
- Susan:** Nothing. All I did was ask a question and you told me when I came to this school that I could ask as many questions as I liked and as many times as I liked and it is my right as a child to ask questions. I asked the same question five times and she didn't answer me.
- Headmaster:** Of course you can ask questions as many times as you like until you understand. What was her response to your question?
- Susan:** She told me to try on my own so that she could see what I didn't understand. I told her that you had said that I could ask as many questions as I like and that she had to answer me.
- Headmaster:** What were the rest of your class doing while this was happening?
- Susan:** Laughing and joining in.
- Headmaster:** So you were sent out of the classroom for asking a question? That's why you think you are sitting here in my office?
- Susan:** Yes
- Headmaster:** You are not sitting in my office for asking a question. You are sitting in my office because of the manner in which you asked was inappropriate and you disrupted the lesson for the other learners.
- Susan:** But I am allowed to ask questions.
- Headmaster:** Yes, you are. But not in a disrespectful and disruptive way.
- Susan:** But Mrs Tshabalala doesn't like me.
- Headmaster:** You disrespected her efforts in her class and you disrespected your peers' desire to learn. You disrupted a class to have a moment on a soapbox and have ended up in my office instead of finishing your class. How should you have approached this situation?
- Susan:** I don't know.
- Headmaster:** Would you have approached the situation the same way if I was teaching the class?
- Susan:** No.
- Headmaster:** How would you have approached that situation in that instance?
- Susan:** I would have tried, and if it didn't work asked you to help me.
- Headmaster:** And if you still didn't understand?
- Susan:** I would have asked you if you could take some time during break or after school to help me further.
- Headmaster:** Please apologise to Mrs. Tshabalala for disrupting her class and let her know that you understand your error. Then after class, follow your plan of action. If it doesn't work, let's talk about another strategy and involve Mrs. Tshabalala if necessary.

CHAPTER 6

Legacy Students: Choosing a school based on values versus family tradition

Despite our quickly changing world, when it comes to education many parents still have quite old-fashioned pictures in their heads of what good education looks like. For many, a school looks like it provides good education because of the old buildings, demure looking teachers and strict uniforms and Code of Conduct. Further to this, the school is chosen because it is dad's, granddad's, uncle Joe's and cousin Minstrum's alma mata. Naturally it is the right school for Paul. Besides, his name has been on the waiting list since the day he was born.

There are many other oft-quoted and logical rationales for a child to become a legacy student in the 'right' school, but many of these legacy students end up deeply unhappy and underperform in an environment that is all wrong for them. Many parents view their child's journey through the filter of their own educational experience. They make educational decisions for their child based on their experience at school, and not the individual child's needs and experiences.

It is fortunately becoming more common for parents to explore different schooling options for each individual child based on the child's personality, interests and strengths. Further to that, parents are increasingly looking for schools where there is a meeting of the minds as well as shared expectations pertaining to the promotion of critical thinking and reasoning in their child. More and more parents are investigating the values of various schools and interrogating the legitimacy and execution of these values.

We are seeing many more children taking an active role in choosing their schools. In the information age the internet offers these children the opportunity to research a school, read testimonials and reviews and to see pictures or video clips of the schooling environment. In the case of false advertising on the part of a school, children are becoming "myth busters" and taking on the role of driving their own educational process.

Making important decisions like which school your child should attend should not require your child to suspend their thinking and reasoning so that they can comply with the parents' perceptions and prejudices. It should require the child to be a part of the process of establishing whether a school's values are congruent with the family's as a whole.



“That will never be me.” – Unlocking Neil’s Potential

One of our favorite stories is about Neil, a grade 8 pupil who came to us from a private school in the area. Neil was very unhappy at his school. The family had chosen the school because it was a good private school which offered the sports that Neil was particularly talented in. A term into the new year things weren’t going well. There were tears in the car on the way to school and a general apathy towards everything; most disturbingly, Neil wasn’t even interested in his sports anymore.

I remember clearly in the first parent interview his mom saying, “Neil reaching 50% for all his subjects is good enough for me and I will be over the moon, I don’t expect much more. I just want him to be happy!”

At the awards evening at the end of Neil’s first year at Edu Inc his mom and I were chatting about his progress and how well he had done. She was almost in tears when she relayed a story to me:

As a family, they had gone to their eldest daughter’s university graduation near the end of the first term. During the ceremony, Neil leaned over to his mom and whispered, “That is never going to be me mom. I will never get into a university.” A part of her heart broke that evening.

She was sharing the story because a couple of weeks before our awards evening, in the car on the way home, Neil had casually remarked that he was thinking of studying a BSC at university after he matriculated. He also wanted to explore Occupational Therapy or Physiotherapy as a career option. His mom bit her lip and replied, “That’s great news.”

Neil has consistently achieved a B average (and occasionally an A average) since his grade 9 year at Edu Inc. He is set to finish Matric with us in 2017 and has achieved Honours for his sport by representing provincially for three consecutive years. He is also one of our prefects and has influenced the lives of many of his Edu Inc peers in a meaningful way.



CHAPTER 7

The Boutique School Solution

At Education Incorporated Boutique School our vision is to create a learning experience that grooms your child for the world they will experience after they have matriculated. We maintain tradition where it works (in our House system and uniforms for example), but adapt and change it where it does not (classroom setup and no school bells).

Information sourced from the internet does not translate into knowledge, nor does it qualify as a skill. Textbook knowledge is valuable but is only the tip of the iceberg and cannot be the sole contributor when producing matriculants. Equally important is how what has been learned fits into the development of the whole person; an individual who is able to adapt, empathise, see the big picture, think broadly, and critically assess their engagement with the world.

We pride ourselves on the results we are producing. There are many other children who are in Charlie, Neil and Ronald's earlier positions. We help to re-frame their reality and show them a path to an enjoyable and successful academic journey. It is an exciting journey and we want to share in this experience with more children and their families and ultimately change the narrative that is South Africa's education system.



CHAPTER 8

A basic qualifying checklist for enrolling into the right school

When searching for the right school for their child, parents often feel overwhelmed. There are so many factors to consider and wanting the best for your child is a fundamental drive. This often results in parents not thinking to ask certain tough questions when considering schools, and especially private schools. Parents assume that because they are private, they are legitimate and competent. Sadly this is not always the case and many families have suddenly found themselves in a position where their school has been shut down overnight, the Matric they thought their child was getting was not legitimate, or that the sterling results their child was achieving were not accurate or representative of the national grade level.

When interviewing at a potential school, other than the usual questions you will have, and even if you are interviewing at a school where the answers seem obvious, ensure that you ask these questions. The answers may surprise you:

Is the school **registered** with the Department of Education?

All schools, private and government, where children are not being taught under their own home's roof, should be registered with the department of education. They are issued a registration number and must be able to produce a corresponding certificate for you. Schools cannot be registered without the correct zoning permits, fire, health and safety permits, financial records that demonstrate sustainability etc. If the school is unregistered, there is a worrying reason.

Are the teachers **qualified**?

The easiest way to ask this question is to ask if all the teachers are SACE (South African Council of Educators) registered. SACE accredits all teachers, including students doing practicals etc. and including degreed professionals who have been reviewed and accredited to teach their specialist subject. (SACE will never accredit someone who majored in Physics to teach languages, for example. Only to teach the subject they are proficient in.) Asking this question ensures that your child is not being taught full-time by unqualified students and also prevents schools from placing teachers into subjects they have no idea about because the school is understaffed.

Is the school **UMALUSI** accredited?

All registered schools are required to register with UMALUSI. This is an exceptionally rigorous and expensive process that all private (independent) schools are required to undertake. (Government schools follow a different process at no additional expense.) This ensures that minimum quality standards are maintained on both academic and administrative levels.

Is the school a **registered** exam centre?

For learners to write their Matric exams on the school campus, the school must first be accredited by UMALUSI and issued an exam centre number. This only takes place when once all the correct registrations and accreditations are in place, inspections have been conducted, and a myriad of administrative requirements have been met. Even if the school is registered with the Department of Basic Education (DBE), it is an entirely separate process of accreditation to be an accredited Matric exam centre. If the school's Matrics are writing their finals off-campus, find out why.

Which **examination board** does the school use?

UMALUSI prescribes that the South African education system follow CAPS. All South African Matrics write the NSC (National Senior Certificate) unless they are registered through Cambridge or another system that falls outside of the South African educational context (and requires SAQA equivalency to attend a South African university). The difference is in the examination boards. Most (but not all) government schools write the DBE (Department of Basic Education) NSC. Most (but not all) private schools write the IEB (Independent Examination Board) NSC. Some learners write the distance education NSC through SACAI, though this is often indicative of an unregistered school or tutoring centre that uses a home-school curriculum to avoid the rigorous registration process, and that's where things become grey and you need to investigate whether the school you are considering is actually registered and able to write Matric final exams on the school campus.

Is the school registered with **associations** like ISASA (Independent Schools Association of South Africa)?

It is not compulsory for private (independent) schools to be registered with associations like these, but quality schools usually are. Once again, a school that has been accepted as a member of ISASA has undergone a full accreditation process before being offered a membership, indicating that you are enrolling in a quality-assured school. Such associations come with additional fees which can be burdensome for small schools but the value they provide is immeasurable when it comes to support and the sustained quality of a school. These associations focus on professional development, support and sharing best practice for teachers, school administrators and heads of the school.



NEXT STEPS



To explore the prospect of your child joining the select group of learners at Education Incorporated on the cutting edge of learning, there are a few steps to follow:

Step 1:

Request a copy of the Education Incorporated Prospectus from our website.

Step 2:

Apply for a tour and admission interview. Provide all the requested information and upload the required documents so we have the information we need.

Step 3:

You'll receive an invitation from us to come and see the school, meet us and have an initial interview.

Step 4:

If there is a meeting of the minds, your child will be invited for a trial week and you'll sign some forms and indemnities. There is a fee for the trial week.

Step 5:

During the trial week your child will attend regular classes and complete some assessments. They will also have a one-on-one conversation with the headmaster so we can together explore their aspirations, goals, ideas and views on Education Incorporated and school in general.

Step 6:

You will be invited for a post-trial week interview and feedback session.

Step 7:

Based on the findings of the trial week, your child may be offered a place at Education Incorporated either immediately or at the start of the next term or academic year.

Step 8:

If your child has been offered a place, you'll sign the acceptance letter, pay the required fees and deposits and collect uniforms and books.

Step 9:

A brand new life as a student of Education Incorporated Boutique School begins.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Gershom and Jacqueline Aitchison founded Education Incorporated Boutique School in 2013. Before Edu Inc, they had successfully owned and built two Kip McGrath Education Centres (Bryanston and Kyalami) which they acquired in 2007 and 2008 respectively. Through the continual requests from happy parents for them to do what they did best on a full-time capacity, Education Incorporated was born.

Prior to taking over Kip McGrath Bryanston in 2007 from Jacqueline's father (himself a headmaster for many years) Gershom and Jacqueline spent four years in Taiwan teaching various subjects to students ranging from three years of age to fifty-plus. These were formative years for the Aitchisons and defined much of their attitudes towards, and aspirations for, South African education. Their adherence to, and belief in, the respect afforded to teachers and for growing citizens, not just teaching academics, was founded there.

Both of the Aitchisons walked an interesting and varied path that ultimately lead them to found the first boutique school. From working as a veterinary orderly in the Northern Cape, writing Forex training manuals for Standard Bank, working as a teacher's assistant in Bulawayo to a boarding school in the Northern Province, the Aitchisons have learned the value of gaining colourful and diverse experiences and applying them in the classroom setting for the benefit of the next generation. It has taught them the importance of imbuing every child they meet with the skills they need to cope with any situation, anywhere in the world - and to be happy, contributing citizens to whichever society they choose.

Gershom currently holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Industrial Psychology and English as well as various TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) qualifications. Jacqueline holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Clinical Psychology and English, a National Diploma in Marketing and various TEFL qualifications, completing her thesis on The Effects of Culture Shock on Foreign Teachers in Northern Taiwan.

