



## Thinking Schools South Africa Quarterly Newsletter

Welcome to the second newsletter of the year. I hope you are enjoying your break - most of you are either on half-term or mid-year holidays. Educators always deserve their breaks! After a busy start to the year with Whole School workshops at Durban Girls' College and Curro Midrand, and the three online courses offered by TSSA trainers, it seemed as if the online World Education Summit was suddenly upon us. TSSA is a partner to this event, and from the feedback I received, attendees found the presentations worthwhile and meaningful. There is something for everyone at this Summit, with four days of live sessions with world-class speakers. Registration includes access to all presentations for a year, which provides a great opportunity for professional development. As a partner, TSSA manages to secure tickets at hugely reduced rates and I suggest you factor this into the school budget for 2025. This year the tickets per person were R3000, and with the rand looking a bit stronger (let's hope!), this price might hold for the March 2025 Summit.

Julie Dunstan (reFLEXions, Bermuda) and I ran three 6hr online workshops for the Primary Science Programme, and the feedback from these sessions demonstrated that a meaningful impact was made. Julie presented a workshop on "Strategies for mindfulness, self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills", and I presented on "Developing a culture of motivated learners" and "Cultivating Growth Mindsets in Education". This was a wonderful experience and we hope to continue this partnership next year. Elmarie Petersen, a subject advisor for WCED, continues to present workshops on Thinking Maps® in her district, and this is making an impact on the teaching and learning in this area. TSSA is the sole representative of Thinking Schools International, and as such, Sally James (deputy head at SACS Junior), Sabrina Stammers (SACS Junior), Elmarie Petersen (subject advisor at WCED) and I have been working with David Hyerle to up-skill and work in-depth on the Thinking Maps® and their implementation.

James Nottingham's Webinar series in May was well attended and certainly made one re-examine one's practices in the classroom. James's first session was on student engagement, and by this he means cognitive engagement. The second session on student efficacy brought in the Learning Pit, - a firm favourite of mine. The final webinar was on celebrating progress as well as achievement, and how this is a motivating factor for students to be resilient and rise to challenges.

Please read about my visit to Mountain Cambridge School in Hartbeespoort, and how thinking skill strategies fit seamlessly but explicitly into their teaching and learning.

There are some very exciting events planned for the rest of the year, as well as the first "International Conference on Building Cultures of Thinking" planned for May 2025, so please read the rest of this newsletter to find out more.

Enjoy your break!

Dr Sonja Vandeleur



# UPCOMING EVENTS



TSSA is a non-profit organisation dedicated to empowering schools to develop a culture of critical, creative, and collaborative thinking, fostering independent lifelong learners and problem-solvers. We promote thinking skill strategies that integrate easily with classroom practices through webinars, roadshows, online courses and conferences. Take a look at what is on offer in the months to come:

## SPRING ROADSHOW WITH SUSANNAH COLE BUILDING CURIOSITY THROUGH PRODUCTIVE PUZZLING



Do you want your students to be critical, creative, and innovative thinkers? Come and find out how to get your students on the path to becoming deep thinkers by being able to adapt to new situations, solve complex problems, and stay resilient in the face of challenges at the Spring Roadshow 2024. With Susannah Cole, co-author of "Flexible Mindsets in Schools: Channeling Brain Power for Critical Thinking, Complex Problem Solving, and Creativity", you'll explore how grappling with challenging concepts not only stimulates cognitive engagement but also fosters resilience and deepens understanding. Don't miss out on this opportunity to unlock the mysteries of productive puzzling and unleash your student's cognitive potential!

### Dates and Venues

- 7th October: Roedean School (SA), Johannesburg
- 9th October: Springfield Convent, Cape Town
- 11th October: St Andrew's Preparatory, Makhandla
- 14th October: St John's D.S.G., Pietermaritzburg
- 16th October: Uplands College, White River

### Time

8:30 - 15:00

### Cost

- R1595 pp for TSSA Network School members
- R1875 pp for non-Network School members

**SPECIAL: 4 for the price of 3!**

[Find out more here!](#)

**[REGISTER BY CLICKING HERE!](#)**



# UPCOMING EVENTS



## Webinars

### TEACH Brilliantly Webinar Series

#### James Nottingham

After the hugely successful webinar series presented by James Nottingham in May, in which he spoke about student engagement, enhancing student efficacy and celebrating progress, James has agreed to run another series of two webinars for TSSA in September. Sign up now to take advantage of the special offer!

**9th Sept:** Can Growth Mindset Really Help My Students?

**16th Sept:** Teaching Students How to Use Feedback Effectively

**Time:** 16:00 - 17:30

**Cost:** R1100 pp per webinar

Special offer: 10% discount for registering for both

Network Schools: 15% discount

James is creator of the Learning Pit and author of 12 books on teaching and leading. In 2006, he set up Challenging Learning, an independent consultancy group. He has worked closely with professors Carol Dweck (Growth Mindset) and John Hattie (Visible Learning), and since the pandemic, he has returned to what he loves most: giving keynote speeches, leading practical workshops & webinars, and working longer-term with schools.



**[REGISTER BY CLICKING HERE!](#)**

**[Find out more here!](#)**

## Network Schools Webinar

### Trevor MacKenzie: Inquiry Based Learning



**Date:** Thursday, 12th September

**Time:** 19:30 - 20:30

**Cost:** R750 pp; free for Network School members

**[REGISTER BY CLICKING HERE!](#)**



# UPCOMING EVENTS



## International Conference on Building Cultures of Thinking

**Herschel School, Cape Town: 9th & 10th May 2025**  
**Kingsmead College, Johannesburg: 13th & 14th May 2025**

The aim of this conference is to intentionally promote essential thinking skills as well as inquiry-based teaching and learning, so that teachers are able to implement these and ultimately improve student outcomes. It is the small shifts with what we do in the classroom that can lead to powerful changes.

**COST: R3 200 pp**

**R2 720 pp for TSSA Network Schools and students**

**REGISTRATION: Opens on 1st October**

**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST: Sign the expression of interest to get priority booking.**

### KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

**Mark Church** is currently a consultant for Harvard Project Zero's Making Thinking Visible and Cultures of Thinking initiatives. Mark works throughout the world with schools that wish to create cultures of thinking in their classrooms. He believes in the difference teachers can make for students when they strive to make thinking visible, valued, and actively promoted as part of their every-day experience.



Trevor MacKenzie is an experienced teacher, author, keynote speaker, and inquiry consultant, who has worked in schools around the world, including Australia, Asia, North America, Europe, and South Africa. His passion is in supporting schools in implementing inquiry-based learning practices. Currently, Trevor is an inquiry practitioner as a teacher with the Greater Victoria School District in Victoria, Canada.

**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**

**FIND OUT MORE HERE!**





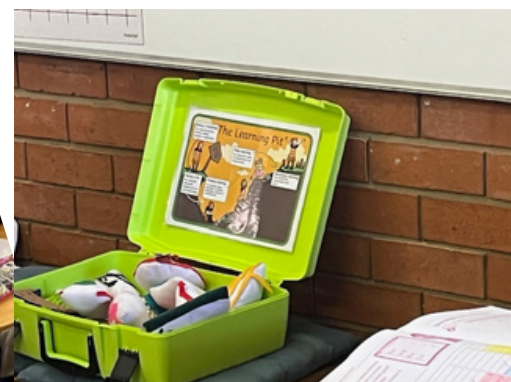
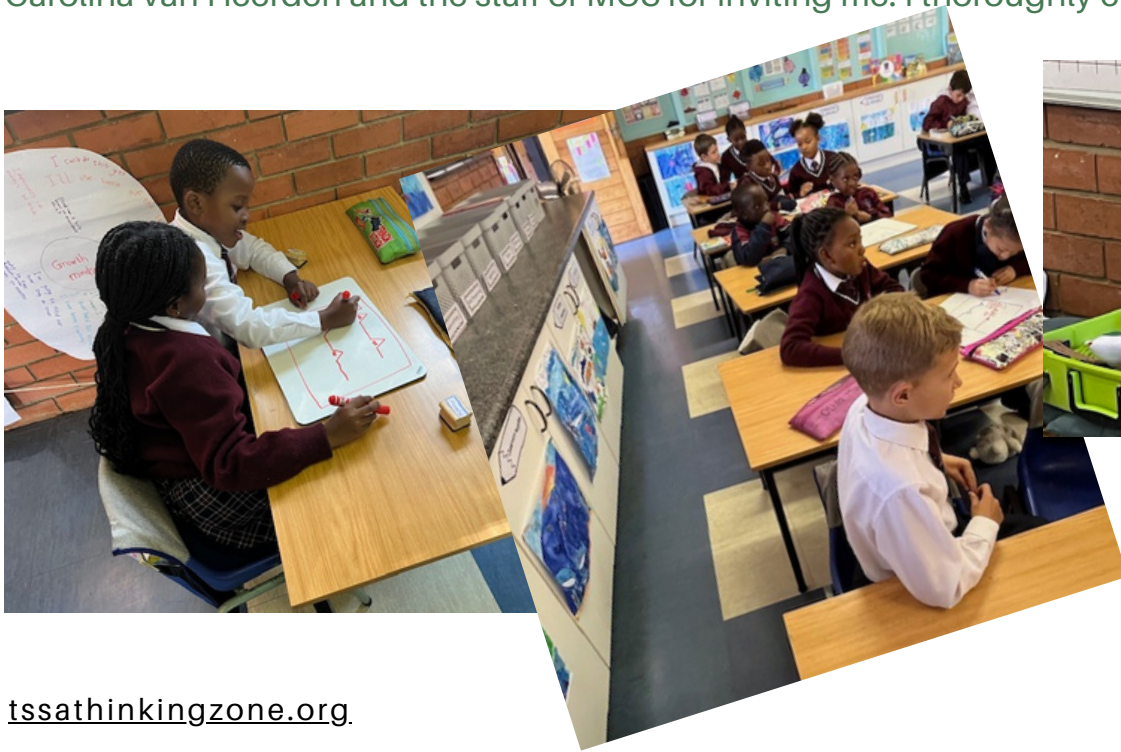
# SCHOOL VISIT

## MOUNTAIN CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL HARTBEESPOORT



On 27th June, having just arrived back from visiting family in the Netherlands, which was wonderful, and to no water in Johannesburg, which was not, I headed off to Mountain Cambridge School in Hartbeespoort. It was such a delight to be there - I am always made to feel so welcome, and I revel in seeing a school that embraces thinking strategies so authentically. Mountain Cambridge School is an accredited Thinking School with the University of Exeter, and they are working toward their advanced accreditation.

In November 2023, MCS started networking with teachers from Žemyna, Lithuania, another accredited Thinking School. This school is a Kindergarten school consisting of 220 learners aged 2 - 6 years old. This collaboration culminated in a visit from 11 teachers from this school. I was privileged to meet this group of teachers, and to have a brief chat with them. My suggestion was that they should start up a Thinking Schools Lithuania, which sparked some interest! The teachers from both schools participated in professional development sessions, sharing innovative teaching strategies and showcasing ways to further integrate thinking skills into their classrooms. I was then invited to observe a Grade 2 Maths lesson - what a wonderful experience! The learners sat in pairs sharing a whiteboard, and spent the lesson investigating many ways in which the number 27 could be interpreted which they recorded on a Bridge Map. At the front of the class was a green plastic suitcase with a visual of James Nottingham's Learning Pit on the inside cover, so that when a student is at the bottom of the Learning Pit and stuck, they can go to the suitcase and find a suggestion of how to climb out of the Pit. Amongst the items in the suitcase were a big, white question mark, and the icons that the school uses for each of De Bono's six thinking hats. It was heart-warming to see a class of cognitively engaged, enthusiastic learners! Thank you to Carolina van Heerden and the staff of MCS for inviting me. I thoroughly enjoyed the morning!



# ARTICLES AND TALKS OF INTEREST

## Reinvent Inquiry with Kath Murdoch



Learn the secrets to successful inquiry & how it can revolutionise teaching & learning. A must-listen for teachers, students, & education enthusiasts to understand the power of inquiry in shaping the future of education.

[Click here to listen to Kath Murdoch](#)



## Teaching creative thinking: 6 considerations for practice

Teacher, 1st July 2024

There is growing consensus internationally that creative thinking needs to be cultivated to help learners succeed. Beyond identifying the importance of the skill, however, there is little guidance on how to develop and teach it,

[Click here to read the article](#)



## Compelling alternatives to traditional exams

TES, 1st July 2024

A new international sustainability diploma shows how Scottish educational reform might play out in classrooms.

[Click here to read the article](#)

## The Case Against Grading Homework

Edutopia, 6th June 2024

When homework is meaningful and contributes to their learning, students are more likely to complete it.

[Click here to read the article](#)



# FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT TSSA

TSSA is deeply committed to helping schools become sustainable agents of positive change in South Africa. By transforming schools into collaborative Thinking Communities that foster hope, resourcefulness, and resilience in challenging times, TSSA inspires teachers and students to create opportunities for innovation, growth, and to develop a more thoughtful society. The International Conference on Building Cultures of Thinking represents a unique opportunity to empower educators with the knowledge and tools to create transformative learning experiences for students.

TSSA is looking for sponsorship for this event at many levels and any contribution would be appreciated. If you are interested, please contact me for the Funding Proposal and Brochure.

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