

“Success is the perfection of detail”

Sunday October 1, 2023.

Dear HSS Stakeholders,

In light of a recent unfortunate incident that occurred last week involving a high school student from St. Elizabeth, we are reminded of the critical importance of upholding our core values here at Heinz Simonitsch School, namely **respect and tolerance**.

The incident in question, where a Grade 8 student was severely beaten for a seemingly trivial reason – stepping on another student's shoes – is a painful reminder of the consequences that can arise when we lose sight of the values that define our school community.

**Respect** is at the heart of our school culture. It means valuing each other's dignity, differences, and personal boundaries. It means treating one another with kindness, empathy, and consideration, regardless of our backgrounds or circumstances.

**Tolerance** is equally vital. It entails accepting and embracing the diversity of our school community. We are a diverse and inclusive family, and our differences should be celebrated, not cause for division or violence.

In the face of such an incident, we are presented with an opportunity to reflect on our own actions and interactions within our school community. We must ask ourselves:

- Do we treat each other with respect, even when disagreements arise?
- Are we mindful of the impact our words and actions can have on others?
- Do we celebrate the rich tapestry of backgrounds, cultures, and experiences that make up our school?

As a community, we must commit ourselves to reinforcing these core values of respect and tolerance:

1. **Speak Up:** If you witness or are aware of any situation where someone is being treated disrespectfully or unkindly, do not hesitate to speak up and seek assistance from a trusted adult or authority figure.
2. **Promote Inclusivity:** Embrace the diversity within our school community. Get to know your fellow students, appreciate their unique qualities, and stand up against any form of discrimination or bullying.



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3. **Conflict Resolution:** Learn and practice healthy ways of resolving conflicts. Violence should never be a solution. Communication, understanding, and empathy are essential tools for resolving differences.
4. **Support Systems:** Our school has dedicated staff members available to support students who may be experiencing difficulties. Reach out and talk with someone.
5. **Parental Involvement:** Parents, please engage in open and honest conversations with your children about the importance of respect, tolerance, and non-violence. Reinforce these values at home.

Let us remember that we are a community founded on principles of learning, growth, and mutual respect. Our commitment to these values defines who we are, and it is a collective responsibility to ensure they are upheld.

Together, let us renew our dedication to creating a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment where every member of our Heinz Simonitsch School family can thrive.

**Charge for Parents and Caregivers:** Let us join hands in ensuring our schools remain safe havens for learning by fostering open communication, teaching conflict resolution, and promoting empathy among our children to combat violence in our educational institutions.

**Charge for Teachers and Staff:** You play a pivotal role in creating a safe and nurturing environment for our students, so I charge you with the responsibility of being vigilant, proactive, and supportive, guiding our students towards empathy, conflict resolution, and a culture of respect to counteract violence in our schools.

**Charge for Students:** I challenge you to be the champions of positive change within our school community by promoting kindness, empathy, and respect, and by rejecting all forms of violence and aggression, ensuring that our learning environment remains a place of safety, growth, and excellence.



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## **Prayer for the Week:**

**Heavenly Father,** We come before you with hearts full of gratitude for the gift of knowledge, the joy of learning, and the blessings of our school community. We thank you for the opportunities that education provides and for the privilege of being a part of this vibrant HSS family.

**Grant us wisdom,** as students, teachers, staff, and parents, to always strive for excellence in our pursuit of knowledge. Help us to be open to new ideas, to embrace diversity, and to foster an environment of respect, understanding, and kindness.

**Guide us, O Lord,** as we navigate the challenges and triumphs of each day. Give us the strength to overcome obstacles, the courage to face uncertainties, and the perseverance to reach our goals.

**Bless our teachers,** who dedicate themselves to nurturing young minds and shaping future leaders. May they find joy and fulfillment in their noble calling, and may their efforts bear fruit in the lives of their students.

**Protect our students,** watching over them as they embark on their educational journeys. Keep them safe, healthy, and inspired to explore the wonders of the world around them.

**Unite us in purpose that** we may work together as a cohesive and supportive community. May our bonds grow stronger, our friendships deepen, and our shared values unite us in harmony.

**Heal those in need,** especially during these challenging times. We pray for those who may be facing illness, hardship, or uncertainty. Grant them comfort, strength, and resilience.

**Lord, we thank you for the blessings of each day,** for the gift of education, and for the love and unity that define our school community. May we continue to strive for excellence, nurture compassion, and inspire greatness in all that we do.

In your name, we pray. Amen.