

From The Desk of...

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Maheshwari Lall



Looking Back at 2023's Reality Bites Programme

What do you get when you take an entire grade,
a couple of crazy ideas and three days?

Well, usually just your average half-week on campus, to be honest. But in this case, things ran a little bit differently. Reality Bites (the new iteration of Get It Week), is a three-day experience for the Grade 9s to gain exposure into the real world. While the program is educational in its focus, it is completely unrelated to any curriculum pursuits, allowing the students to relish the experience of

diving into learning without marks attached. By removing the pressure of assessment, students are no longer concerned about the possibility of failing and can throw themselves into learning and focus on the process and their progress, rather than the product. Students chose between five different projects, all connected to real-world applications.

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Josh Kopel: I really enjoyed learning about different types of parks. I enjoyed how peaceful it was being in nature.

Luca Lopes: I really enjoyed the team building exercises, and can't wait to visit the bank and stock exchange.

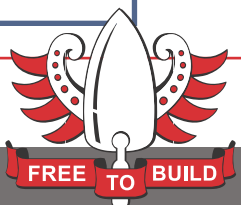
Ayana Notshe: I had so much fun and got to bond with different peers whilst learning about French in a new environment.

Erin van der Zon: I loved going off campus and winning in our escape room. It was really fun having a laugh with new people.

Valentina Fernandes: I really liked challenging my brain and really enjoyed the outing to the lab. I loved the team work!

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1stgroup

First up, program director Adam Golding ran 'The Green City', looking at how parks service their communities in Johannesburg. Students visited the Wilds to explore the beautiful area and learn about its various green spaces. If parents' ears are pricking up at the mention of The Wilds, it's for good reason. In the 90s, The Wilds was infamously unsafe but has been reclaimed by community effort and transformed into a place of relaxation, physical activity and a haven for birds and other wildlife. After exploring the East and West side of the park, students enjoyed a well-earned picnic lunch, before heading off the James and Ethel Grey Park in Birdhaven. Students were invited to draw comparisons and contrasts between

the two parks, considering the reason for each park, community involvement and safety. The next day, students were presented with their project. They had to seek out a green space in Johannesburg that is currently derelict and develop a plan to turn it around. To do this, they researched dimensions, the surrounding community and designed the space to include safety, cleanliness, activities and aesthetics – presenting all the above in a formal proposal. Students then built 3D models of the reworked park, either digitally or physically. Students presented their models and explained their reasoning for refining their ideas. We learned first-hand what it takes to revamp a park – and why it's so necessary.

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2ndgroup

Our second group, The French Connection, was run by Monsieur Cedric Wembe. Our students explored our local haunt, the Morningside Shopping Centre. Students were tasked with discovering the secrets behind how a shopping centre operates. Redhill has a longstanding relationship with the management of Morningside Shopping Centre, allowing our students front-row access. The day of discovery started with a video that explained just how chaotic shopping centres can be. Students played detective and tried to spot all the different components in a shopping centre. Next, the students created topic webs, diagrams that helped them understand all the different parts from what's visible to what's hidden. Day 2 held a treasure hunt, where students

scoured the shopping centre for clues in both the seen and unseen parts of the building. After the treasure hunt, students ordered their lunch at a restaurant entirely in French. This minilanguage challenge was aided by our students, declared "c'est incroyable" by Mr Wembe. Our students visited the Neighbour Root Hydroponic Farm on the roof of the shopping centre to learn about hydroponic farming from Zandile. After cooling down with some ice cream, our students gained special access to the security control room, seeing how the centre is kept safe. They interviewed management, finding out how new stores come to the centre and more. Finally, the students made presentations about their discoveries. There's more to shopping than you think!

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3rdgroup

Our third group of students tried to escape. Yes, literally. Dean Heyman took the Escape group to an escape room, where they experienced puzzles, adventure and mystery, while building problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration and time management skills. While experiencing an escape room is one thing, building one is an entirely different obstacle but our students rose to the occasion! Students were tasked with designing and creating an escape room from scratch. If you've ever done an escape room, you know that it can make or break friendships! Luckily, our students put collaboration over competition

and used each other's strengths and ideas to construct a cohesive and engaging experience. Students honed their abilities to compromise and communicate, shaping the room's storyline, puzzles and overall atmosphere together. Using active listening and empathy, students exchanged constructive feedback to make their escape room even better. Along the way, students had to overcome obstacles with out-of-the-box thinking, logic and creativity. Innovation became the name of the game and our students did not disappoint. We loved seeing their escape rooms in action!

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4thgroup

Our fourth group, Brilliant Brains, were able to delve into their own brilliant brains with the guidance of Dr. Angie Mullins. During the first day, students learned about various neuroscience concepts like neuroplasticity, amygdala hijack, fixed and growth mindset, the ages model, universal design for learning, and active learning through games, experiments, and research. This was followed by a trip to NeuRL (Neurosciences Research Lab) at Wits University on the second day, giving students the opportunity to attend a postgraduate-level neuroimaging seminar. They also completed various neuropsychological tests, learned

about brain anatomy, and engaged with honours, masters, and doctoral neuroscience students and professors. After this incredible academic exposure, our students used their recently expanded brilliant brains to design their ideal learning environment, incorporating the principles and concepts discovered over their previous two days. Once their designs were honed, they were presented to a panel of peers and teachers, demonstrating their insights. These presentations will inform a professional development seminar in Term 3 where the Redhill staff will engage with our students' discoveries.

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5thgroup

Our fifth and final group, Fantastic Finances, was headed up by Alex Fraser. Our students spent their first morning completing the *Minute to Win It* Challenge with Beach and Bush Adventures. This required teamwork, using individual strengths together to put each team in the best position to win. After the fun and adrenaline of the game, students watched a film that unpacked the 2008 Financial Crisis. This useful documentary provided our students with insights into the banking and control failings which allowed for the subprime mortgage crisis to occur. On the second day, students had the opportunity to gain unique industry insights while listening to several investment and retail banking

specialists who visited the school. Students were engaged while listening to what a day in these industries looks like and their questions showed their critical thinking and curiosity. The students concluded the day with a film study and a session on budgeting and investing – crucial skills in the real world! On the third day, the grade 9s completed a number of problem-solving tasks and completed an assessment and reflection on the previous days. The three-day exploration of Fantastic Finances primed our students for their third-term visit to the JSE and a bank. Students will also be entering the JSE Investing Challenge as a team, and we can't wait to see what they achieve!

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Next year, Reality Bites will be bigger and better than before. Adam Golding is excited about the growth he has planned for the program, especially after a few years' hiatus due to COVID. The learning potential is endless and so is our staff and students' enthusiasm. We can't wait to see what 2024 holds for Reality Bites!

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