



***Dominican
Vision Statement***

And

Education Policy

Vision Statement

Dominican schools aim to provide forward looking education of the highest quality based on a tradition that goes back over seven hundred years of commitment to education.

Our schools seek to care for the whole person in order to develop in young people:

- a love for learning**
- an enthusiasm for truth**
- a love for others**
- respect for the culture and religious values of all**
- a willingness to serve in a spirit of healing and reconciliation,**

flowing from an appreciation of the Word of God and a deep commitment to Christ.

HISTORY

Dominican Education draws its original inspiration from a Spaniard, Dominic Guzman (1170-1221), founder of the Order of Preachers or Dominicans, who based his ministry and that of his followers on the life and work of Jesus, the teacher and preacher.

Dominic, a man of prayer, had a well-trained mind as a result of his years studying the liberal arts, philosophy and theology. His mission took him to Toulouse in the south of France, where at every level of society, he met ignorance and confusion of thought, particularly centred around the heresy of Albigensianism, which stressed the inherent evil of anything physical so much that the goodness of creation was almost totally denied. Dominic believed that preaching the truth of the gospel was essential to dispel the confusion that was widespread at the time. As he went joyfully about his task, Dominic attracted a group of helpers, in the first place women, converts from the heresy, then in due course, men. These immediately arranged that the formal study of theology would become part of their daily lives, so that they could carry out their mission with confidence.

Many famous Dominicans throughout the centuries, for example St. Thomas Aquinas, stressed that all truth eventually leads to God who is Truth. For those imbued with Dominic's spirit then, to study should be simply part of the joy of being fully alive.

The Dominican Order gradually spread throughout Europe. Although Dominicans were soon found in Ireland, the first record of Dominican women there is only found in the turbulent times of the mid-seventeenth century when religious persecution was rife. Records show that the sisters started schools, were forced to disband them, and when a measure of calm had returned, were able to open them once more. With Catholic Emancipation in 1829 came more foundations in Ireland. In 1863 the Cabra Convent responded to the invitation of Bishop Thomas Grimley of Cape Town by sending six sisters to establish the first Catholic School there, beside St. Mary's Cathedral. In 1867 a new foundation was made in Port Elizabeth.

Over the years many more Dominican Schools were established in the Western and Eastern Cape, and later in Gauteng and also in Swaziland. The Dominican Sisters shared their love of truth through their schools for the children of Catholic settlers, their mission schools, and their schools for deaf children. They tried to remain faithful to the gospel challenge by continuing this work through the years of apartheid and by opening their schools to all races in 1976.

EDUCATION POLICY

THE MOTTO

The motto of all Dominican schools is VERITAS – TRUTH. Our aim is to enable our students to reach their full human potential and to lead them to the Truth which is Christ. In pursuit of this aim, Dominican schools strive to develop the thinking and reasoning powers of their students and to help them become people of honesty and integrity. A well-balanced curriculum should be maintained, in which religious education is of paramount importance. Individual subjects are valued because of their intrinsic worth as revealing some aspect of Truth.

THE STUDENTS

In our work as educators in the Dominican tradition, we value the importance and uniqueness of each person, helping our students to realise all facets of their potential: physical, emotional, social, cultural, intellectual, moral and spiritual. This is in order that they may live in accordance with Christian principles, aware of and committed to their Christian mission in the world, capable of using freedom responsibly and of interpreting reality in the light of faith.

We seek to cultivate in our students respect for self and others; a spirit of trust and tolerance, of independence and initiative; the ability to think constructively, to choose wisely and to take responsibility for their decisions.

We try to ensure that our students acquire the skills of learning and communication, and have experiences which will lead to a sense of wonder and an appreciation of the beautiful. We strive to develop citizens who express their love for the country through a commitment to justice, reconciliation and service to the community, as responsible stewards for creation.

In the tradition of St. Dominic, a man rooted in prayer, our aim is to help our students develop a spirit of prayer and worship, to deepen their response to God, to recognise Christ as the centre of their lives, and to grow in understanding and love of the Church of Christ, as a Community Serving Humanity.

THE PARENTS

A genuine appreciation of the role of parents as the first educators of their children is basic to our educational philosophy.

We recognise the influence of the home environment on the development of our students; the better the understanding of the background of our students, the more fruitful will be our work as co-educators with the parents. Parents render invaluable service to the school community by their involvement in all aspects of school life. Their co-operation on Boards and on Parent-Teacher Associations is essential to the good governance of our schools.

TEACHERS

All the teachers in our schools are challenged to understand clearly, to share willingly and to implement faithfully our Dominican vision and Education policy. This requires not only professional competence and personal dedication but also a commitment to the Catholic ethos of the school, while respecting the multi-faith dimension of our society.

High priorities for educators in Dominican Schools are:

- to develop a love for learning and critical independent thinking;
- to practise self-discipline and self-motivation;
- to promote reflection on the experiences of life:
 - suffering and joy, success and failure.

Professional development and the sharing of educational experiences and ideas are encouraged, leading to responsible involvement in decision-making and a well-integrated teaching team. It is in an atmosphere of good relationships and mutual respect that real learning and creative ministry can take place.

THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

We strive to create school communities where people can be themselves, be accepted and be happy. While endeavouring to maintain a high standard for all our students, we have particular care for the less able, the gifted, and those who are unable to hear the spoken word. The school atmosphere shall radiate genuine love, trust, justice, and a spirit of reconciliation, so that our students can learn their own worth and discover and develop their talents, aided by a realistic and integrated curriculum.

We shall endeavour to respect the various languages and cultures represented in our schools, thus being true to ourselves and earnest about seeking our identity as people of South Africa.

Dominican-educated students will ideally be people of integrity and responsibility whose potential has begun to be realised. Our students should be ready to take their place in the world, using their gifts more just society and to build the Kingdom of God.

