

Finding the right school to fit the needs of your child can be a harrowing, heart-wrenching search for many parents. Bridging the gap between what we desire for our children, what is available and what best suits the individual can be fraught - long waiting lists, living within the catchment area, does the school match the needs of my child, and first and foremost, will my child be happy and thrive, not just survive.

Often, and I have seen it many times, we want the best for our children. We want them to have the things we never had or experienced, particularly when it comes to schooling and giving our children the best education we can afford. But what if the options presented to us just do not fit our children's needs. After all, education is not a one-size-fits-all solution. As an educator, I see each day how the learners of today are much more complex than the learners of yesteryear. The world in which our children are growing up is vastly different to the world you and I grew up in many moons ago. They are dealing with much more complex issues and social issues than we had to cope with. Today's children seem to have the world on their shoulders, are exposed to issues and concepts that, quite frankly, they do not have the emotional maturity to deal with. Playground breaks and sporting facilities are often a mentality of the survival of the fittest, brightest and strongest. Be the best and win at all costs mentality is encouraged not only by some educational establishments but also, sadly, by some parents.

Having moved to South Africa and experiencing this first hand, it has certainly opened my eyes to the fact that parents need options. They need alternatives to the education systems that are presented where they are trying to fit square pegs into round holes. Let's face it, not all of our top mainstream schools, both independent and government model c campuses fit the needs of every learner. For some they are fantastic, but some is not all. Not every child fits this mould and more importantly, thrives. As a parent we want our children to be happy. To receive an education where they can go on to be decent, successful human beings that contribute to society and, in their own small way, make a difference.

Upon moving to South Africa, a few years ago, we settled into the Southern Suburbs, enrolled our children into very good Southern Suburbs schools. One child embraced the new learning environment, whilst for the other, it just didn't "click". Every day was filled with angst, dread and fear in attending school. As a parent, watching your bright, articulated child slowly become withdrawn, upset and frustrated, was soul destroying. The children's educational institution, overseas, was much more forward thinking, co-educational and had a growth mind-set philosophy. Where learners were nurtured, challenged and inspired to develop a love of learning. Encouraged to think, contribute in a student-directed classroom, as opposed to a sit down, be quiet and listen to the teacher regurgitating facts from a text book. The school strived to provide an inclusive environment where each individual is valued and our sense of community is fostered. Very different to the environment that was then presented upon the move to Cape Town. Friends and family assured us "it was the best school" in the area, that he should do well there, "we were lucky to get a place", as there was a long waiting list for admissions. These facts cannot be disputed. All this aside, it became more and more apparent, that although this was an excellent school - excellent academic results, excellent sporting opportunities, it wasn't excellent for my child. After a year and a half

of trying to “stick it out” and trying to make it work (probably more for us the parents - it worked logistically - I could easily walk both children to school and not have to deal with the hum drum of southern suburbs traffic) it wasn't working for the child. We were now left with a child that had low self-esteem, hated school, and zero confidence in himself and his abilities.

Primary school education should be a time where children can explore, grow and discover without the demands that accompany higher education. The centre of learning should encourage them to have a go at new challenges and develop a positive growth mind-set where efforts lead to results. As a parent I was fortunate enough to have a ‘light at the end of the tunnel’, to have access to an institution that was reflective of **my child's** needs and was able to successfully rebuild my “broken” child and give him the confidence to repair, heal and go forward into his high school career.

It is important for parents to know that there are “options”. That there are a number of educational facilities available to us that suit all children's needs. I was fortunate enough to have Pro Ed House School and the benefits of placing my child into a learning environment that helped rebuild his self-esteem, his confidence in his abilities and his love of learning. After a year and a half at Pro Ed House my child was ready to attend mainstream High School, where he is flourishing, playing sport and happy – why? Because we finally found a school that reflected the needs of our child; that embraced his learning style and provided the support that he needed to help him do well. An environment that saw the good and gave him the confidence to believe in himself and his abilities. Pro Ed House School was our “light” – it is not just a school for those with learning challenges but for all children who want a more holistic approach to education. Where education is not just about academic results and where you sit on a class average list but where you are taught to problem solve, think and find solutions. Pro Ed House School was my solution. My saving grace.