

# Nella Pella Educare

## Mooi River

**A 10 year plan to become a place of excellence,**

**and the best Educare centre in Mooi River**

Background. Mooi River is a small town situated in the Kwa-Zulu Natal Midlands of South Africa, along the N3 Freeway. Bruntville is a small township alongside Mooi River. It consists mostly of cheap government houses which are given to the poor. Over the past few years, Bruntville has grown quickly in size, but the provision of services has not kept pace with development. New houses are continually added, but there has been no corresponding upgrade of schools, clinics, water, sanitation, and essential services. Many people have moved to Bruntville to occupy a free government house, but now the settlement has a dire shortage of services for these people. One of the biggest problems is the provision of schools, especially pre-schools for younger children. Many young children do not attend a pre-school simply because there are so few pre-schools in the area. Older children can catch a bus to a school out of town, but this does not work for a 3 year old child, who is too little to travel alone. Thus hundreds of children are simply kept at home, or sent to crowded schools where quality education is non-existent.

Nella Nowlan has lived close to Bruntville for the past 18 years. God has given her a passion to help these children, and in 2010, she resigned from her Graphic Design career, and took a step of faith to start Nella Pella Educare at her house. The school has grown in leaps and bounds, and now has almost 70 children, age 2-7. The school initially moved to a cottage along the Mooi River, and then in 2014, it acquired the premises of the old St John's Church building, built in 1870, but no longer used as a church. Both the cottage and the church are now fully utilized, and the school is exploring options to build classrooms.

The school first offered Grade R in 2013, and expanded to Grade 1 in 2014. The plan is to grow one grade per year, which means there will be a Grade 2 class in 2015. The pre-school is still called Nella Pella Educare. The primary school is now called Bridge View Primary, named after the old Helen Bridge close by.

### Funding

The school is currently funded entirely by school fees. The children pay R700 per child per month. An additional amount is charged for a taxi to transport the children each day. Those children who stay in the afternoon pay an additional fee for aftercare. All this money has to pay rent, water, electricity, and salaries. Currently there are 6 full time workers who assist Nella. In addition to these expenses, each child is given breakfast, a snack at tea time, and lunch. Food makes up a large portion of the budget.

Nella Pella Educare has been registered as a Non Profit Company. The company has applied for a Public Benefit fundraising number. This will make any donations to the company tax deductible. The school has also been fully registered with the local Municipality.

### **Future Vision.**

A boy once caught a fish and then he threw it back into the river. His friend asked why he had thrown such a big fish back. He answered that his frying pan was too small and he would not fit the fish into the pan, so he was trying to catch a smaller fish. This is exactly what happens in life. There are hundreds of children in the nearby community desperate for education, yet we turn them away because our classrooms are full. The directors of Nella Pella Educare are committed to getting a bigger frying pan. We will never turn a child away even if we have to have school under a tree. We will keep expanding, keep growing, and keep improving our facilities.

Over the next few years our vision is as follows:

1. Property. The church property is zoned education, making it easy to have a school. The aim is to get a long term secure lease, and build classrooms. In addition, we are keen to purchase the land behind the Old St John's Church building. This will be useful as we expand, and it is flat enough to construct a sports field. A company has already promised to donate us classrooms, and we are waiting for plans to be approved. Once this is finalised our next step will be to fence off the area that will have the new classrooms.
2. Once classrooms are erected, they will need furniture, whiteboards and equipment.
3. Outdoor equipment. The school needs a jungle gym, sandpit, push bikes, and possibly a trampoline.
4. Reading. We live in an age where books are no longer a priority. We wish to change this, and create a love for reading by having a dynamic library, and quality Grade 1 and 2 readers.
5. Maths is also very important. We wish to purchase Maths games and manipulatives to give children a solid grounding in Maths.
6. Educational Barriers. There are many children that have barriers to learning or learning disabilities. Most of these children never get properly assessed, and end up dropping out of school. Nella Pella seeks to have specialist people available to help these special needs children. This will enable them to catch up lost ground and eventually cope with main stream education.
7. Eco Schools. Nella Pella School is very near a polluted stream, and the town rubbish dump. The aim is to take children and clean up the local environment. In addition there is a need to plant food gardens, and become involved in a recycling program.

8. Training of teachers. Nella is already lecturing ECD. There is a need to expand this and provide quality teacher education and training.
9. Feeding scheme. Nella Pella currently provides 2 meals a day. To make this possible, there needs to be better equipment, pots, stove, freezer, fridge, plates, mugs and other equipment.
10. Sport. Currently the school offers soccer. The taxi driver coaches soccer once a week. In addition there have been some days when the Grade 1s went swimming. A dream is to open a sport centre with basketball, gymnastics, soccer, volleyball etc. This could later expand to include a pool to teach swimming.

Angus Buchan once said: “If your dream does not scare you, then it is not big enough.” I look at this list and say “Wow” this is scary. There is no money in the bank and our wish list is in the millions. We will just tackle things one step at a time. In 10 years’ time, we will look back at this list and tick off all 10 things achieved. It boils down to one item per year. I am sure we could push through and achieve this.

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