



14 December 2020

Dear Parents

Rhodes High School, its learners, parents, staff and friends are an exceptional community and will forever be a part of my life. It is a school that has constantly striven to embody the “rainbow nation” of which Madiba spoke. There are always many challenges but this is a normal aspect of life, and as each challenge is overcome the bonds and strength of the community grows.

My children never cease to be surprised by the warmth and friendliness of learners, ex-learners and parents when I go shopping or to an event. I am always delighted by the desire to connect and talk about the school and to catch up on each person’s life journey. I am always amazed by the willingness of so many parents, governors of the past and present, and business community to assist and support the school and in particular me as principal. I seem to have an endless list of willing people to give advice and support. This is also true of many officials within the education department and other education bodies such as the unions and SAQA.

Unlike the experience of many principals, the Governing Body and Principal have always worked well together. I have been privileged to work alongside chairpersons such as Mr Cliff January, Mr Basil Rickets, Mrs Desireè Rutgers, Mr Basil Arendse, Mr Sulyman Salie, Mr Sedick Davids, Mr Leslie Walters, and the current chairperson, Mr Brian Sulyman. A lot of hard work and many long hours have been spent by the Governing Body and PTLA in doing the work of building the school and raising funds.

Change has been part of the Vision of Rhodes High School and so we embrace it and the ongoing change of our own. My philosophy is always to move forward with new ideas. The management team and staff have been essential ingredients of success and so I thank each member of staff and my deputies, Quinton Rookledge, Rhona Elixer, Bilqees Moosa, and Wendy Jacobs. Rhona Elixer was a special person whom God called home, but to this day I miss her wisdom, love and support. It has been sad to experience the loss of Mrs van der Merwe, Mrs Saville, Mrs Zini and Mrs Elixer during my 22 years as Principal of Rhodes High school. I would not have been able to achieve much without the solid daily support and hard work of Mrs Jenny Fredericks and Ms Erin Gouvias.

I inherited a full-time staff of 22 in January 1999 and today the school has a staff of 59. The number of learners in 1999 were a little over 600 of mainly one group, and today the school has 1050 learners from all races, faiths and communities. The staff now represent all our communities, as opposed to little transformation in 1999. There was evidence of some movement to transformation, but since then it has been phenomenal. I believe that there is always work to be done. I firmly believe that everyone has positive things to contribute and that we fail when we do not help each other on the pathway of life. I do not give up on people no matter how complex some journeys are. Many of the previous members of the Rhodes High

School staff are Curriculum Advisors, Principals, business people and other senior officials of the WCED.

Change will come and my successor will have a different management style but I hope that the spirit of Rhodes High School will continue. I further trust that staff, parents, governors and others will continue to be valued, loved and appreciated for whom each person is. After all, this is central to the heart of Rhodes High School.

Although I am retiring as Principal of an amazing school, life continues for me. I am hoping to remain part of education for many years. My initial step will be to take a short break but thereafter, I hope to do a Doctorate in Education and to pick up where I ended my M.Ed. I have a daughter who starts university and a younger daughter who is still at school, and I am sure that they would like more attention from their Dad without the many intrusions of the demands on him as a principal.

My prayer for our children is from Psalm 119: 9-16 (The Message) is ...

*How can a young person live a clean life?*

*By carefully reading the map of your Word.*

*I'm single-minded in pursuit of you;*

*don't let me miss the road signs you've posted.*

*I've banked your promises in the vault of my heart*

*so I won't sin myself bankrupt.*

*Be blessed, GOD;*

*train me in your ways of wise living.*

*I'll transfer to my lips*

*all the counsel that comes from your mouth;*

*I delight far more in what you tell me about living*

*than in gathering a pile of riches.*

*I ponder every morsel of wisdom from you,*

*I attentively watch how you've done it.*

*I relish everything you've told me of life,*

*I won't forget a word of it.*

I pray that our young people and their families will anchor their lives in God. The challenges of Covid-19 and life itself are formidable without God. I trust that Rhodes will go from strength to strength and that our learners will help build a strong moral and ethical nation free from corruption and true to what our founding fathers and mothers desired.

May God bless each member of our community and may each person know they are treasured. I have been privileged to serve the Rhodes High School Family. I will miss you.

Regards,

Keith Long