



## Three Schools, One Campus

26 March 2021

### Principal's Corner

Dear Theodorians  
**Farewell**



When I first arrived for my interview prior to taking up my position, I remember being driven around the school over a weekend, and the school was closed.

On first impression, I was not enthralled – the grounds and buildings at the time were humble and, without anybody at school, there was no atmosphere. I was hesitant.

However, there was something. At the time, the buildings and grounds did not speak to me, but something else did. Here, I must give credit to the interview team. During my interview, they conveyed a picture of Theodor Herzl School that cannot be reflected by the buildings and grounds.

I am going to talk a little bit about a sense of place. So, does Theodor Herzl School have a sense of place? Is it the hall, the classrooms, the pool and fields that provide a sense of place? In my opinion, no, these do not provide a sense of place.

On reflection, I returned to my 1<sup>st</sup> Prize Giving speech. I had only been at the school for 7 months and already knew why Theodor Herzl School had an abundance of a sense of place. My concluding comments at that prize-giving, provided insight on my early experiences. I said the following:

**“I have learnt that I am a lucky man. A man who has the opportunity and privilege to serve a school that through fortitude and adaptation has become a beacon, where universal values are treasured. Where the child matters above all else. I have embraced this school; how could I not.”**

After serving the school, these words and sentiments, conveyed at an occasion after only being at the school for

7 months, captured exactly what Theodor Herzl School is all about.

Theodor Herzl is all about the heart ... not your physical heart, but having heart. A heart condition, if you will. It is about growing and treasuring relationships. Yes, we are very proud of our achievements, especially our renowned academics. However, to me, what perhaps is even more to celebrate and is not so measurable, are not the achievements on the sports field or in the classroom, but rather the space we occupy in the heart of those we care for.

Often this heart condition, in which we all play a significant role, goes unnoticed. It is very difficult to put the Theodor Herzl care into a narrative. Believe me, I have tried. The only way to understand it, is to experience it.

To see the change in a teacher or child as they grow in Theodor Herzl School is to find the ultimate job satisfaction. It does not take much, sometimes it is just a quiet word here and there, acknowledging something that has been noticed. To that lonely, lost and unsure child or teacher who is struggling, that acknowledgement is everything.

It is the spark that starts the process and relationships that produces that confident, critical thinking, value rich, balanced Theodor Herzl student who walks out our gates and is a worthy ambassador of who and what we stand for.

You just know that when you meet a Theodor Herzl student in later life, they will reflect their school heritage; their sense of place.

Now, to some words of appreciation:

To the students, past and present, thank you for welcoming me and allowing me to be a part of your important school chapter. I have thoroughly enjoyed being there for you and teaching you from time to time.

To the teachers, a School Principal could not ask for more of a “dream team“. Your professionalism,

dedication and sheer commitment to the ideals and vision of Theodor Herzl School are to be applauded. Thank you for giving me the space to explore new ideas that we all collaborated on and implemented so successfully. You are all a credit to the teaching profession and the school is incredibly fortunate to have you on board.

To my high school management team, Mrs Adina Pieters, Mrs Tanya Goodall and Mrs Alicia D'Arcy, just know that I could not have done this without you. One word describes you ... magnificent.

To my other heads, Mrs Megan Oosthuizen and Mrs Hilary Goldberg, you are both outstanding in your schools and I hope, as Executive Principal, I have hit that sweet note of having a balance of oversight and allowing you an independence of command to sail your own ships. Thank you for your collegial support and shoulder to lean on at times.

To my office staff, Mrs Angela Kennedy, Mrs Ingrid Carter-Raine, Mrs Mariska Schewitz and Mrs Haydee Breedt, I owe you all huge debt for all the times you supported me. Thank you for being so professional and dedicated.

A big thank you to the Board Chairman, Mr Ian Meyer and the Board. To Mr Ian Meyer, thank you for being there for me. You achieved a wonderful balance of guidance and facilitation for a principal, so as to enable him to make a significant impact in his leadership capacity. I could not have asked for a better Chairman. Your willing ear, care, wisdom and intuition is greatly appreciated as is your sheer devotion to the school.

Thank you to the Judaica Department – particularly Rabbi Furman and Mr Bevan Franklin for support. Your guidance in the Jewish aspects of the school have been greatly valued.

It has simply been a privilege, and I thank you one and all. I wish you everything of the best.

Kind regards

John Alexander

Executive Principal

The last week of Term 1 has been filled with emotional good-byes to our very special Executive Principal, Mr John Alexander.

