



THE RIDGE SCHOOL



From the Headmaster's Desk

February 2018 #2

Dear Parents

It is wonderful to be able to report that the first three weeks of term have provided the anticipated positive kick-start to the academic year and so we move into the month of February with the wind firmly at our backs.

Theme for 2018 ... *Being the Difference*

Following on from last year's *Making a Difference* theme, we are working with our boys to help each of them to embrace all that our 99th year will hold in store in ways that will encourage deeper levels of involvement. We are looking to raise and enhance individual profiles and encourage the boys' willingness to add their own personal touch to experiences. By so doing, to expand their understanding of how being aware of another person's situation, simple acts of kindness or reaching out to each other in a relational, respectful way can make a difference in people's lives.

As we consider our roles as the adults in their lives in leading into and exemplifying such behaviour there are of course many lessons that can be learnt from those who have gone before. Reference has been made of Nelson Mandela who epitomized a *Being the Difference* persona. It will be appropriate, of course, that we work towards celebrating and honouring our Father of the Nation when, on the 18th July, we remember what will be a 100 year celebration of his birth.

As we continue to empower the boys in an 'agents of change' capacity and as we help them into places where they can enjoy *Being the Difference*, we will also be raising our *Right Stuff* expectations. In our pursuit of excellence, we are determined to help the boys to play a meaningful and age-appropriate part in the life of our school. To this end the following slide has been shared with the boys in order to help them to better understand what the concept of **Right Stuff** means and, in a behavioural context, what it ought to look like. I will be unpacking this more fully in a series of Friday assemblies in the weeks ahead.



Our Transformation Journey

We are grateful for so much that has and is taking place in order to more fully embrace meaningful transformation and to shift culture within our Ridge educational delivery and in the school's broader community at large. A brief update was given to parents at the Parent Information evening on Monday 22 January and I thought it appropriate to share some of this again with mums and dads. In addition, it is important to bring to your attention further developments that are taking place to continue to add momentum to the process, to upskill and empower members of staff, and to identify boy-centred ways of enlightening our Ridge lads.

Holistic transformation

The journey continues ...

- a 'shifting culture' adventure
- building on progress made in years gone by
- embracing of a deeper, more meaningful commitment to transform
- seeking clarity and understanding
- leading into learning for our boys

Planned activities for the weeks ahead:

- Sean Moodley from the Institute for Anti-Racism and Social Cohesion will be running another two full day staff Anti-Racism workshops during the months of February and March. He has already run two such workshops,
- We are arranging for Nene Molefi to speak to our parent body. Her topic will be on the subject of her book, *A Journey of Diversity and Inclusion*. This will take place on the evening of 8th March. Further details to follow.
- The Trading Places initiative will be reactivated in the weeks ahead. These parent / school management meetings take place twice or three times a term. They are primarily designed to offer interested parents a mechanism through which to share ideas, offer constructive opinion and play a part in the transformation process. The meetings take place in the Nicolson Hall on chosen Wednesday mornings between 07.00 and 07.45.

Many ideas and observations that are shared at these TP meetings are taken through to our Exco meetings and then reported on at termly Board meetings. Parents are invited to join members of the Exco at this term's Trading Places meetings. These have been calendarised as follows:

- JP Trading Places on Wednesday 21st Feb
- SP Trading Places on Wednesday 28th Feb

Further Staff Development and Training initiatives:

1. All JP and SP teachers will be involved in three educator training workshops on the subject of Sex Education in our schools. These workshops will be run by the highly experienced Teddy Bear Clinic team and will take place on Wednesday afternoons through the month of February.
2. Daniel McLachlan who heads up our IT programme here at The Ridge has reactivated the Digital Staff Development training for teachers. These take place for 45 minutes before school each Monday morning. In addition to ongoing iPad enrichment training, the teachers will be taken through all they need to know on the finer workings of the new ADAM admin management system.
3. Educational Psychologist, Jo Hamilton, will also be joining the JP teachers and boys for a series of classroom presentations and discussions on the subject of *Safe touch, unsafe touch*. These are 30 minute sessions that will run for the month of February and will include all Grade 0, 1 and 2 boys and teachers. Jo Hamilton will be talking to parents of boys in those grades on the evening of 7th February. This will take place here at The Ridge between 07.30 and 08.30. Venue to be confirmed. (Parents of older boys may attend the talk should they wish to.)

Staff News

We are thrilled to be able to share the news that Ridge School Psychologist, Candice Fletcher, will be having a baby later in the year. Due to complications with her pregnancy, her doctor has put her on extended bed rest until the little one is born.

Her position has been filled by Catherine Cresswell. Catherine has a Masters degree in clinical psychology and has a practise in our area.

Junior Primary Upgrade

Following a frustrating and rather untimely delay that involved us having to comply with certain JHB Heritage Counsel rulings, I am able to report that the demolition crews moved on site on Tuesday of this past week. We are planning for this demolition phase to be complete within three weeks, which will mean that the actual building part of the project would have commenced in earnest by the end of February. A reminder that there will be large vehicles entering and leaving Woolston Road during the course of each day. The builders have agreed to work hard to coordinate, as much as possible, and that these vehicles come and go outside of high volume drop off and pick up times at the school. This will not always be possible but we will make sure to alert parents to any expected traffic flow interferences as the weeks go by.

SP Grade Camps

It is important to confirm with parents that the Grade 5, 6 and 7 camps scheduled for the month of March will be going ahead as planned. Dates and venues will be arranged as last year and appears on the Live Calendar. Respective Heads of Grade will send through further details to parents in the upcoming weeks. I am able to confirm too that the Grade 4 camp having been postponed and will now be taking place from the 15th - 17th of October.

In the interests of making sure that the boys' safety and their general well-being is secured whilst on camp, we have redrafted the *Code of Conduct for Management, Care and Discipline of Ridge Boys on School Camps* policy document. This document is sent through to the camp administrators well before our arrival in order to confirm that all necessary precautions have been taken to guarantee our Ridge boys' comfort, safety, support and well-being.

In addition, we have held another meeting with the StaBus company that will again be responsible for transporting our boys to and from the campsites. The company management will be supplying us with an updated, comprehensive report on all that we have insisted must be covered before our boys and staff board their buses. These demands come as additional measures to those that are already in place as a service agreement between the company and the school.

It is appropriate to mention at this stage that whilst we are keen to offer our Grade 3 boys some form of outdoor camp experience during the 3rd Term, a final decision on the format, venue and duration is yet to be finalised.

Parent Personal Information

A request coming through from our admin department is for parents please to send through any change of email address, cell phone numbers or personal details. It is obviously critical that such information is kept up to date and current here at school.

A Final Word

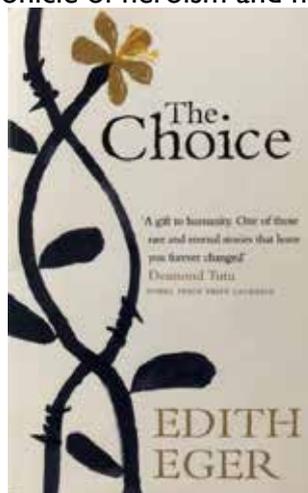
Some of my inspiration for choosing the theme ***Being the Difference*** has come from reading done during the December holidays. As with most of you mums and dads, I made a point of finding some quiet, 'away-from-it-all' time to indulge in a few good books. One in particular is a beautifully written memoir by Dr Edith Eder. A perfectly pitched personal story that captures everything from being a survivor of the holocaust and related horrors, and the excruciating suffering of war, to her journey into forgiveness, freedom, happiness and hope. I recommend most highly this remarkable story of healing.

A quote from the Forward written by Philip Zimbardo's will further whet your appetites:

"Dr Eger is one of the dwindling number of survivors who bear first-hand testimony to the horrors of the concentration camps. Her book recounts the hell and trauma that she and other survivors endured during and after the war. And it is a universal message of hope and possibility to all who are trying to free themselves from pain and suffering. Whether imprisoned by bad marriages, destructive families, or jobs they hate, or imprisoned within the barbed wire of self-limiting beliefs that trap them in their own minds, readers will learn from this book that they can choose to embrace joy and freedom regardless of their

circumstances.

The Choice is an extraordinary chronicle of heroism and healing, resiliency and compassion, survival with



dignity, mental toughness, and moral courage. All of us can learn from Dr Eger's inspiring cases and riveting personal story to heal our own lives."

I wish you all a memorable and happy year of parenting here at The Ridge. I look forward to spending time with as many of you as I can and to enjoy watching your boys embrace the new learning adventures, stretch their many and diverse talents and making their own unique mark here at The Ridge in the months ahead.

Richard Stanley
Headmaster