



From the Business Manager's Desk

Term 1, 2021

Change and the opportunities it brings

Epworth started this year with the new leadership changes announced by the Board of Governors in 2020. As a leadership team, we know the importance of continual communication and co-operation with each other. Keeping this as a guide, it was agreed that I attempt a new newsletter. The purpose of the newsletter is to inform our pupil and parent body of our operational developments that focus on activities that affect whole school departments.

As I have been writing, a common theme seems to be emerging. We are often challenged beyond what we feel is reasonable but, at the same time, we seem to be able to adapt and change to situations. Often these changes place us in a much better position than before. Please try and find the positives in your lives, which have arisen from the trying times as these, together with your faith, will sustain you in the days to come.

Finance matters

I don't think I need to explain why 2020 was a challenging year for Epworth. Covid-19 has had a significant impact on our lives and livelihoods. As society was forced to change, so too were we, as a school, required to change and adapt. By making the necessary changes to our budget, Epworth provided some relief and assistance to our parent body. These changes also meant that some of our capital development plans came to a standstill for the year, and we focused instead on creating an environment where our pupils could safely return to school.

The hardships caused by the pandemic forced a lot of parents to re-evaluate their financial positions and their ability to afford independent education. As a result, we lost a number of our pupils for financial reasons. However, this provided an opportunity for new pupils to join the school, resulting in Epworth starting the year with pupil numbers much aligned to our budgetary needs.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our parent body for their continued support of the school, never faltering to honour their financial commitments. This has truly made the difference between changing our operational needs to serve our community rather than sacrificing quality to keep our heads above water. Looking forward, Epworth will continue to focus on building a school that serves our community while making it as financially viable and sustainable as possible.

Capital development

The capital development levy determines a big part of what the school can achieve through capital development. As already stated, in 2020 our projects for the year were curtailed to some degree due to one of the relief programmes that impacted the capital development levy. While we were still able to service our bond obligations, we could facilitate minor upgrades to our campus during Terms 1 and 2.

During these terms, we were able to complete our upgrades to the High School Art Studio, boarding and preparatory school classrooms that were started in 2019. The preparatory development is part of a multi-year approach to update this area of our school.

Over the December holiday and at the start of 2021, we were also able to focus on other areas in need of rejuvenation. Two preparatory classrooms were updated with new floors, and with the assistance of reserve funds from the High School, we were able to update the Jubilee boarding wing.

In 2021, we will be embarking on a couple of minor projects for the year, ranging from road repairs to maintenance and upgrading of campus housing. I look forward to reporting on these activities in the following newsletters.

Primarily our funds for the year will be allocated to the bond and equipping the school with a backup electrical plant. In recent years we have seen a steep increase in power interruptions at the school. The effect of these power interruptions on our operations, together with a change in our dependency on technology to continue our educational objectives, necessitated our actions.

This was by no means an easy decision as we want to be prepared for power interruptions and, at the same time, we want to implement them in a manner that is financially and environmentally sustainable. Therefore, we devised a plan to facilitate our immediate need and reduce our future demand on electricity.

This will be achieved by acquiring a generator and updating our main distribution board, followed by initiatives to monitor and reduce the school's energy demands. We will also be investigating other possibilities to assist in reducing our dependence on the grid.

Talking about environmental matters

Under the leadership of our Estates Manager, Mr Craig Manuel, the Estates team has been making considerable strides in our recycling initiatives. In 2020, we saw our partnership with Wildlands come to an end and, never afraid of a challenge, Mr Manuel implemented some critical changes.

We saw an upgrade to our on-campus recycling village and the introduction of a new recycling depot situated on the boundary wall in Golf Road. We would like to encourage the local Epworth community to make use of these facilities.



An army marches on its stomach.

There is much truth in this saying, which has resonance for us, as a school, that relies on good, nutritional meals for our pupils and staff. In 2020, the catering contract for the school came up for renewal. After going through a tender process to compare pricing and value proposition from other caterers, we established that Capitol Caterers were best placed to serve our needs. At the same time, we gathered feedback from parents, pupils, staff and Board members, all of whom indicated concern about continuing in the same manner without improvement. A decision was made not to sign a new agreement if we did not see the necessary changes from Capitol. This resulted in them updating their menu, changing key staff and introducing an app that allows staff and High School pupils to choose from a selection of meals. In order to monitor meal satisfaction, a new system was introduced whereby every meal is surveyed, by asking pupils to drop a card in a box indicating their satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Together with inspiration from new staff, these changes have resulted in a drastic change in our service offering from Capitol Caterers. Pupil satisfaction averages at 97% for the term since the start of monitoring. As a result, Epworth is happy to continue our relationship with Capitol Caterers, providing we continue to receive the excellent service we have come to expect over these last few months.

For those who have not yet seen the new Capitol Catering staff members at functions, we would like to introduce them to you.



Nkosinathi Cebekhulu (Nathi)
Junior Primary Supervisor



Teri Morgan-Smith (Mrs Morgs)
Project Manager / Catering
Manager



Sean Wallis
Head Chef

Staff matters

This year we celebrated the long service of the following staff members:

- Mrs Ingrid Roberts – 5 years
- Ms Debbie Davison – 5 years
- Mrs Nicola Curry – 10 years
- Mr Radesh Sing – 10 years
- Mrs Rajayshree Maistry – 10 years
- Mrs Joanne Anderson – 15 years

At the end of this term, we say farewell to Mrs Bev Roux who is retiring after 23 years of service. Ms Kate de Goede will replace Mrs Roux as School Receptionist.



Bawinile Cele



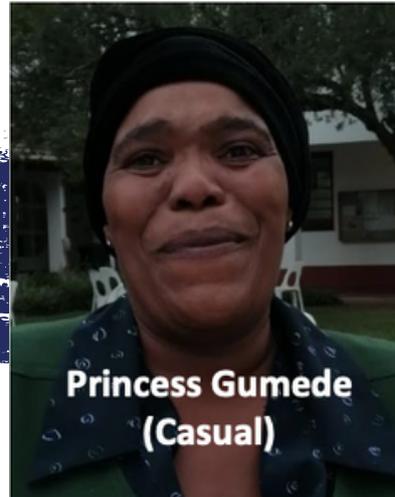
Phumzile Majozi



Ntombi Mkhize



Ntombifuthi Mabaso



**Princess Gumede
(Casual)**

Even though our cleaning is outsourced to Select Services, we have come to know the staff who are responsible for maintaining our facilities. Pictured above are some of the new faces who replaced those who recently left the company.

As we break for the holidays and prepare to spend quality time with family and friends, may the joyful season of Easter fill your hearts with renewed hope, love and peace.

Mr Emwee Zeelie



EPWORTH

Preparatory School for Boys and Girls
High School for Girls



For further information, go to our website:

www.epworth.co.za