



PHOLELA HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER | From the Central Committee





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CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT



Chairperson : Mr. Siyabonga Mdubeki

Dear Alumni,

It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you the 2nd Issue of our new Newsletter which we have put in place to ensure that Alumni is kept abreast of all developments within the Alumni Association and all pertinent details shared from the school. During the first year of activity of Alumni we have focused on getting all relevant stakeholders aligned and mobilised to solidify the plans to refurbish Pholela High School, which also provided additional infrastructure required for the capacity of the school. The much awaited construction work commenced in September 2019 and we shall forever be grateful to Mr. Willie Mchunu (Macingwane) for the very vital role he has played in mobilising all key role-players towards execution of this project, when he was Premier of the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Province.

While progress is being made about construction work, there is a lot of work taking place behind the scenes in trying to ensure that necessary processes for supply of equipment for the new structures are initiated and driven. The Academic Excellence Committee (AEC) led by Mr. Mthoko Hadebe is spearheading such engagements with relevant stakeholders.

We have been receiving project progress reports from the provincial Department of Education and such have been shared in our interactive social groups. We shall also ensure that progress reports are sent by email to all Alumni whose details are on the database. The state of national disaster ushered in a national lockdown which led to the halt of the construction work at the school. However, we have received updates from the department that construction work has resumed and there is good progress. The project is likely to be completed on time, if the rest of the remaining work goes according to plan.

This year there has been much focus on the academic side of things and the Central Committee has been seized, with looking at ways and means to take forward certain progressive ideas that emanated largely from our 2019 AGM which was held in Durban on the 26th October. The AEC is currently busy with its important work of engagement and consultations that would culminate in a plan, whose purpose would be to begin a turnaround process for Pholela High School performance. In this regard, there is a report from the AEC Chairperson which provides more details.

At the AGM we made observations and took note of very constructive ideas shared by the key speakers at the meeting. The following are few aspects that were noted:

- The need to engage and benchmark on Alumni Organisations of similar schools.

The Central Committee indeed considered its options with regard to the Alumni Organisations that may be approached for learning and sharing of experiences. A few schools within KZN have been identified and these include Nkamana, Saint Francis, Adams College and Inanda Seminary. So far, we have arranged and held a virtual session with Dr. Percy Mahlali, a representative of the Alumni of Coloshe High School in Idutywa, Eastern Cape, who attended school there 40 years ago. We had a very fruitful discussion in which there was a lot of learning on our part, most importantly with regard to how they as Alumni managed to turn the situation around and improve performance of the school. In this aspect we hope to share a detailed report on this work in the next issue of our Newsletter series.

- Establishment of a forum of Alumni Organisations of similar schools.

While this is a very noble and strategic idea, we felt that we needed to firm up our structure and operation of our new organisation, before we can embark on a drive to establish a similar structure. However, a platform for collaboration must be created and as Pholela Alumni we could spearhead this initiative. We believe that once we have created this network then the next step would be to establish a formal structure that could forge fruitful partnerships with the KZN Department of Education.

- Representation of Alumni Association in the School Governing Body (SGB).

It was one of the suggestions made at the AGM that Alumni should explore the idea of forming part of the SGB. The motivation was that such an involvement of Alumni in a structure such as the SGB would assist the process of restoration of Pholela to its former glory. Involvement and participation of the Alumni Association at the governance echelon of the school would be a great achievement to give effect to our constitutional objectives as an organisation, but most importantly for the benefit of the school. To this effect the SGB, through the school principal has engaged with them to consider extending an invitation to us as Alumni to form part of the body. I am happy to report to you that the SGB has indeed agreed to have us on board and we have received correspondence in which the SGB Chairperson is requesting us to nominate a representative. We think that this is a step in the right direction and a good foundation for a meaningful partnership.

Fellow Alumni, as we focus on devising a turnaround strategy for our school, we need to be mindful of the fact that it is going to take investment of your precious time, financial resources and expertise to devise and implement a concrete plan. It is my firm belief that each and every one of us has something to contribute and I humbly call upon all to find a way to make a contribution either through the use of your strategic networks of influence, skills and competencies, and funds.

I am happy to confirm to you that some progress has been made in raising funds, and in this regard, credit goes to those members of Alumni who made pledges during our deliberations at the 2019 AGM. I wish to express our gratitude to Mr. Clifford Zungu (Manzini), Mr. Nathi Kunene (Mtimande) and Mr. Trueman Goba (Jangaza) who, in honouring their commitments, have already made deposits into the Alumni bank account. We are grateful to all pledgers who are yet to make their deposits and are remaining committed to honouring their pledges. We would appreciate more of such financial contributions in order to support the academic excellence initiatives.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has come with so much disruption to society and has affected us as Pholela Alumni in many ways, both individually and as a collective. We have seen how the school programme has been affected and continue to be affected nationwide. Such disturbances would also have impact on our own outreach programmes as Alumni towards Pholela High School. As Alumni we can only do what is possible under the prevailing circumstances.

In view of the current situation, as the Central Committee, we are still considering all possible options regarding the 2020 AGM and we shall communicate to Alumni as soon as the final position and details thereof are available. In the meantime, I urge all Alumni to help us grow our membership in good standing by ensuring that we are all up to date with payment of annual subscription fees of R300. Furthermore, I call upon all Alumni to encourage one another to pay the subscription fee.



Let us keep safe by taking all precautions and observing all guidelines for safety during this difficult time. We shall continue to keep you informed and seek your inputs and advice as we move along. I take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for all the support and patience.





SECRETARY'S REPORT



Secretary's report: Mr. Gugu Khumalo

It is great pleasure to once again give a snippet on the administration of the Pholela High School Alumni Association. The following points are considered key admin issues.

MEMBERSHIP

There are currently 263 members who have registered through various platforms namely website, AGM attendance registers, Mahwaqa event and email. We also applaud the 21 members who have been able thus far to pay their minimum R300 annual subscription fee for the year 2019/2020 (from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020). We are also pleased to announce that, out of the pledges that were recorded at our 2019 AGM, three members have been able to fulfil their promise. This is appreciated especially considering the current economic challenges and the devastating effects of this unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.

PROGRAMMES

The main objective of the Alumni is to assist the school to do better or "restore to former glory". Our assignment now is to rally behind the initiatives which seek to improve the academic performance of the school, which the relevant subcommittees are handling well. The infrastructural upgrades are going well.

DATABASE

Alumni members are encouraged to register in the central membership database and to ensure that their information is up to date. The membership registration can be done through the Alumni website (www.pholelahighschool.co.za) which is dedicated towards improving our engagement. We would like every member to visit the site and make suggestions, as it is still a work in progress.

MEETINGS

The Central Committee meets on quarterly basis. In 2019, our meetings were face-to-face, two meetings were held in Gauteng and the other two in KZN. Virtual (Zoom) meetings were introduced in 2020 to cut the costs of meetings (travelling, meals and venue hire) and to ensure that the work continues even under lockdown conditions.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

The Alumni has had two formal AGM's (2018 & 2019) both hosted in Durban. The 2020 plan was for the AGM to be held in Gauteng (as requested by members). The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered uncertainties on the realization of that plan, the likelihood of having our usual AGM gathering seems to be diminishing by the day. Members will be kept updated on further developments.

COMMUNICATION

We have set up a communication subcommittee to ensure that proper dissemination of information is done, both internally to Alumni members and externally as the need arises. Among the Alumni community (internally), we make use of various platforms, namely, WhatsApp, SMS, Facebook, Website, word of mouth and email. Our latest modes of communication are through the Newsletter, the structure of which will be modified and improved upon continuously. Your views and suggestions will be welcomed.

Enkosi





THE PRINCIPAL'S REPORT



The Principal's report: Mr. M.N Sikhakhane

Greetings to our Editors, the chairperson of Pholela Alumni association, the executive and all PI Alumni. It has been two to three months since we last communicated through our Newsletter, this after the president Cyril Ramaphosa had declared a national state of disaster and lockdown. The lockdown period has been a totally new experience, not only in the history of our school but the whole country.

Pholela High School educators ensured continuous teacher, learner and parent communication as far as possible despite numerous challenges. We posted on TV and radio teaching programmes, hoping this would assist learners at home. This is an area that requires urgent attention, given history and status of the school, guaranteed regular school and parent communication.

On the 8th of June 2020 our grade 12 learners and educators reported back at school after the department had declared the school compliant to COVID-19 basic requirements. A COVID-19 committee chaired by Mr. Maphanga Science department head and PI Alumni was formed. A series of workshops for cleaners, screeners, kitchen staff, learners and educators were conducted on how to deal with the pandemic. We have thus had a very successful three weeks' period of teaching and learning to help us make up for the 48 days that were lost. This included Saturdays and Sundays classes, and therefore has been a very busy period.

On Wednesday and Thursday (1st and 2nd July 2020) respectively, there was a staff development session which was conducted by Pholela Alumni, Prof Paulus Zulu, Mrs. Ntombizami Makhathini, Mr. Mthoko Hadebe and Mr. Sibonelo Shazi. This was a very fruitful and resourceful exercise which unlocked many progressive management opportunities. We salute their effort and assure you that the information and knowledge obtained from this workshop will go a long way in improving the quality of teaching and ensuring that, failure is not an option at Pholela High School.



The construction of your school is speedily approaching completion of phase one. It is expected that by mid-August 2020, learners will get into new classes and the refurbishment of the old classrooms and chapel will commence.



We pray that God protect you through this pandemic, remember to obey the basic rules; wash your hands, observe physical distancing and keep safe



land of good living





TREASURY'S REPORT



Treasury's report: Mr. Xolani Mhlaluka

Bank balance as at 15 July 2020 was R28 983 – As a result of the membership subscriptions paid as well as the pledges made thus far, we have been able to keep our website and bank account operational. We were also able to assist the academic excellence committee with its intervention in the school which took place at the beginning of July. Details of the intervention are covered in the academic excellence committee report.

Pledges – We are pleased to announce that some progress has been made to honour the commitments made by the members who pledged to make donations to assist the Alumni to pursue its work. We would like to send our sincere gratitude to the following members who have honoured their commitments:

- Mr. Clifford Zungu – R10 000
- Mr. Nathi Kunene – R10 000
- Mr. Trueman Goba – R5 000

These payments make up 18% of the pledges made at the AGM. We continue to engage with the rest of the members who made pledges and a number of them have indicated that they will still honour their commitments.

PBO application – The national lockdown saw the closure of a number of business offices, including those of regulatory authorities. Our auditors shut down their operations from March until beginning of June, so did the SARS offices. This has put a delay in our application for a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) Status. The auditors have indicated that there may be a delay in the application, due to the backlog of work on their side as well from SARS. We will keep the Alumni body up to date with progress in this regard.

Thank you.





ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE COMMITTEE (AEC) REPORT



Mr. Mthoko Hadebe

THE JOURNEY TO RECLAIMING THE GLORY DAYS OF PHOLELA HIGH SCHOOL BEGINS.

Pholela High School is well known to have been historically amongst the high performance schools in the country. The Alumni, as the people whom this glorious institution moulded, together with the management of the school and other stakeholders, have begun the journey towards restoration of Pholela to its former glory. One aspect of restoration is capacitation of the school to improve its academic performance levels, and to strengthen its capabilities to be one of the most competitive institutions.

Among many initiatives undertaken by the Alumni was the consultation process which took place on the 26th of July 2019 at Durban Country club where the important key stakeholders (i.e. the School Governing Body (SGB) and the School Management Team (SMT)) were brought together with Alumni representatives, in a workshop and discussion session facilitated by Dr. Bheki Mthethwa, who is an education specialist. It was in this interaction that Pholela was looked at in contrasting view of where it was and where it currently is, in order to determine collectively where it needs to be.

Dr. Bheki Mthethwa compiled a diagnostic report in which he made some recommendations for actions to be taken in restoration of Pholela. Such recommendations gave us as the Academic Excellence Committee of Alumni some key points to work on as we begin this journey. The following are extracts of the said recommendations under which we report on actions we have taken thus far:

1. Improving the dilapidated infrastructure

1.1 Recommendation:

It is also recommended that the SMT, the SGB and all interested parties, including the Alumni form an Innovation and Transformational Team (ITT) that will guide the ushering in of the new infrastructure as per the new plans. The ITT will further ensure that the renewed and revived Pholela High School is compatible with the latest technology.

1.2 Action taken so far:

1.2.1 On the 24th June 2020, Mr. Mthoko Hadebe had a meeting at the school with the principal of the school, Mr. Skhakhane, the Chairperson of the Governing body, Mr. Dlamini, and the official from infrastructure at Harry Gwala District, Mr. Lubabalo Mhlauli, where the inventory of all the equipment to be acquired for the school was discussed. The principal was given a task to compile and submit the inventory to the district as soon as possible. Mr. Lubabalo Mhlauli would then facilitate the process further and ensure that the submission reaches the Provincial office as soon as possible. Mr. Sandile Phakathi who is the Head of Ministry (HoM) in the Department of Education would then facilitate on behalf of the Alumni, that the equipment is prioritized for delivery within the 2020/2021 financial year.

1.2.2. The ITT team has been formed and comprises the following individuals:

- Mr. Sibonelo Shazi (Alumnus)
- Mr. Sandile Maphanga (Alumnus and HoD for Science: Pholela High School)
- Mr. Lubabalo Mhlauli (Department of Education)
- Ms. Sdudla Mchunu (Educator)

2. Acquiring Needed Equipment and Support

2.1 Recommendation

It is highly recommended that support be sought for equipment that can begin to shift Pholela High School from its current state. This entails involving all conceivable stakeholders including the Alumni who may come up with ways of turning around the current state of Pholela High School. It is also highly recommended, that priority be given to acquiring of teaching and learning support material; to ensure that will improve the quality of teaching and learning

2.2 Action taken so far:

As mentioned on point 1, above

3. Creation of renewed institutional environment

3.1 Recommendation

It is envisaged that the creation of environment for maximum participation will detoxify whatever low morale that might have been fermented. It is equally perceived that heightened participation yields a sense of purpose, which translates into positive outlook about the school. The positive outlook then creates a fertile ground for increased commitment, innovation and positive institutional identity.

3.2 Action Taken so far:

On the 24th of June 2020 Mr. Mthoko Hadebe visited the school with a motivational speaker Mr. Bobo Mokubung who had a motivational talk with some of the teachers and grade 12 learners.

4. Improving Institutional Performance

4.1 Recommendation

The institutional performance is paramount to reclaiming the good old days of Pholela High School. Academic excellence is not possible without good behaviour patterns, good staff attitude, motivation, staff unity and hard work. It is strongly recommended that a determined and systematic approach be adopted to ensure that it is biased towards the improvement of the above. It is further strongly recommended that the ongoing support be given to staff in assisting them to achieve these attributes and that progress be monitored constantly to that effect.

4.2 Action taken so far:

In this regard the AEC team comprising Mr. Mthoko Hadebe, Prof Paulus Zulu, Mrs. Ntombizami Makhathini and Mr. Sibonelo Shazi held a Staff Development and Planning Meeting at Pholela High School on the 1st and 2nd July 2020, with the entire teaching staff.

The objectives of the Staff Development and Planning Meeting were as follows:

- To facilitate teachers in unpacking the challenges they identified facing the school that prevents the school to be amongst the high-performing school
- To provide opportunity to the teachers developing an improvement plan or improvement strategy to enhance learner achievement that can be implemented, monitored and its impact evaluated
- To involve teachers in the process of prioritizing development activities according to available resources and those needed to implement the improvement strategy.
- To orient teachers to a general understanding and use of best practices principles from the School that Work II study and incorporate them into the school's improvement plan or improvement strategy. The **School that Work II study** provides an important guide as a toolkit for refinement of school performance.

DAY 1

ACTIVITIES:

Session I:

The first session began with an icebreaker, to enable the participants to know and understand themselves and know each other better, and also to understand the importance of knowing your strengths and weaknesses. Each participant had to introduce herself/himself and tell the whole group what gths and weaknesses were.

Session II:

Participants individually identified challenges, anxieties and fears they have after lockdown and anticipate beyond that, would prevent learners from improving learning outcomes and closing the achievement gap. Identified challenges were shared with partners and were summarized into shorter phrases or words and listed on the board. Similar challenges were grouped under one title and prioritized as an area to be addressed.

Session III:

Participants were paired and given one challenge as an issue to work on a solution comprising of several activities to be conducted by the school to address the challenge. Participants were provided with the best practices from the **School that Work II study** to incorporate into a detailed improvement plan which sets out how the academic performance at the school will be improved. Participants were provided with the improvement plan template where they were expected to specify; the issue, the solution activities, how all relevant stakeholders whose buy-in and participation is crucial will be enlisted if the improvement plan is to be Implemented successfully. Participants had to specify the impact indicators that will be used to measure whether the school is making progress on the implementation of the improvement plan. Furthermore, participants were to indicate in the improvement plan the resources needed and their cost and how the school will incorporate the best practices from the **School that Work II study**. And finally, participants had to allocate the people responsible to implement activities planned as Solutions in the improvement plan.

DAY 2

ACTIVITIES:

Session I:

The second day began with a reflection exercise, for participants to highlight what they learnt (caught their eye) as they were engaging with the best practices from the **School that Work II study**, they had to use the previous day to come up with solutions to issues/challenges they were given to solve.

Learnings

1. The teachers learnt that they must change their attitude towards their teaching and learners for them to help learners perform better and they enjoy the process of teaching and learning.
2. Some of them have committed to plan their lessons differently in order to cater for learners' diverse learning challenges and always strive to meet learners' needs even those that have difficulty in learning.
3. There was also mention of teachers having to inculcate that all learners can learn.
4. There was light that was shared after having engaged with what other teachers do to help their learners perform better.
5. Some saw the need to re-visit some of the school policies like the admission policy to include issues of learner absenteeism and map out ways of broadening parent or family involvement in their learner learning.
6. The use of technological gadgets as a teaching tool (use WhatsApp as a teaching tool) should be considered instead of having rules that stipulate that cell phones are not allowed.
7. Design effective homework to help learners to extend learning beyond classroom borders and make sure that teachers provide feedback to learners the following day.

Session III:

At the end of the training session all the participants were provided with words of encouragement and motivation by Prof. Paulus Zulu based on his experiences.

The staff development and planning meeting was a great success with full participation of all involved. We believe that the actions presented above are a reasonable start in paving a way to our ultimate goal of academic excellence in Pholela High School.

In addition to this work, a COVID-19 intervention plan has also been developed in order to assist the school in recovering from the lost teaching and learning time. The school management team has proposed a catch-up plan consisting of teaching and co-teaching over certain weekends as indicated in the table below. The proposed plan is based on a model of pairing an incumbent teacher with an external teacher or expert for each of the different key subjects. They have thus requested Alumni to assist in this regard.

Catch up plan:

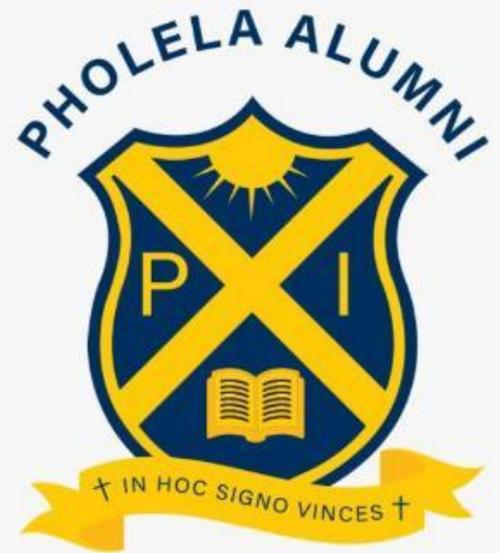
| Dates | Subject | Current teacher | Co-Teacher/ Expert | Costing • Stipend • Transport |
|--|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---|
| Weekend 1 • 08/08/2020 • 09/08/2020 | Mathematics | Mr S.S Zondo | Mr Muzi Ngema | @R875 per person per lesson including transport =R7000 |
| Weekend 2 • 15/08/2020 • 16/08/2020 | Physical Science | Mr S.M Memela | Mr Nhlanhla Nyembe | @ R875 per person per lesson including transport =R7000 |
| Weekend3 • 22/08/2020 • 23/08/2020 | Life Science | Miss Ndlela | Mr S Cele | @ R875 per person per lesson including transport =R7000 |
| Weekend 4 • 29/08/2020 • 30/08/2020 | Accounting | Mrs W.N Khumalo | M Ngonyama | @ R875 per person per lesson including transport =R7000 |
| | History | Mr C.C Ndlovu | Mr Skhakhane | @ R875 per person per lesson including transport =R7000 |
| Accommodation Meals | | @ R500/P/N | | R10 000 R10 000 |
| T O T A L A M O U N T | | | | R55 000 |

As indicated above, the catch-up plan will come at a cost to Alumni and therefore this initiative would require funding. We would like to appeal to Alumni to please make financial contributions to support this initiative. Contributions can be made by bank deposit in the following manner:

Bank Name: First National Bank
 Account Holder: Pholela Alumni Association NPO
 Account Type: Business (current/cheque)
 Account number: 62782887619
 Branch Name: Sandton City
 Branch Code: 250655
 Reference: Covid + Name



REMINDER



PHOLELA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION DATABASE REGISTRATION

The PI Central Committee is in a process of updating the Pholela Alumni database for accuracy and completeness, to ensure that all Pholela alumni are known and recorded for the ease of communication and coordination going forward.

We therefore request that, if you are not yet registered on the database or if you are registered but need to update your information, please use the following channels to do so:

HOW DO I REGISTER?

www.pholelahighschool.co.za

OR

Send an email to
database@pholelahighschool.co.za for a
registration form



PHOLELA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION FEES

WHY DO I HAVE TO PAY?

Your subscription help to cover the operational costs of the association e.g. website maintenance and enhancement, bank charges to run our bank account. It also goes towards value adding activities for the school.

BANKING DETAILS

FNB
Pholela Alumni
Association NPO
FNB Business
62782887619
Sandton City
250655

Reference:
Sub + Name

**EMAIL PROOF OF PAYMENT TO:
subscriptions@pholelahighschool.co.za**

THE MEDIA AND COMMS SUBCOMMITTEE

IMMACULATE LESETLA (CHAIRPERSON)
SIYABONGA MDUBEKI
GUGU KHUMALO
BRENDA KUBHEKA
MTHOKO HADEBE
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