



Woodlands International College

Junior College Newsletter

31 May 2019

Dear Woodlands Family,

On Tuesday this week Ms Gray (our Deputy Principal) and I attended a short seminar at Cedarwood College. The focus of the seminar was on Quality Teachers or Educators, and Prof Jonathan Jansen from Stellenbosch University (formerly of UP and UFS) was the main speaker. Prof Jansen is a world-renowned speaker, and he is an incredible motivator. His stories and anecdotes often relate to his own life which began in very poor schools on the Cape Flats. He talks about life in South Africa, which he freely admits is not easy, but he remains very positive and hopeful, as do I....

He spoke about the "Four Presences of Teachers or Educators", and I wanted to relate his ideas to our own teachers at Woodlands. The first presence he spoke about was the Physical Presence of teachers – just showing up at school. Of course he talks about all schools in our country, government and private. He provided us with horrific figures of absenteeism in the schools in our country. In this regard, I can honestly say that we have a 100% attendance rate of teachers at Woodlands. If a teacher is ill, or has a specific life circumstance which is unavoidable, then he/she will always make arrangements for the projected work to be provided to the substitute teacher for that day.

The second presence was that of an Emotional presence. Of course this presence resonates with me, as my whole world, my entire life, has been about an Emotional presence – with my family and children, and then as part of my work with children and schools. This Emotional Presence means – being connected to children as a teacher. Being involved with them, naturally expressing caring and affection for every little person in your class or team or whatever. Once again, I feel that our teachers at Woodlands do this every single day without having to think about it, or having to try. I always say that that you can't "bluff" children. They will see through a "fake" affection or approach. In fact when I'm hiring a new teacher, I try very hard to ascertain this aspect of their make-up, and if I feel they do not have a natural affection for children, then they are unlikely to be appointed at Woodlands.

The third Presence is that of an Intellectual Presence. Teachers are highly qualified, and specifically qualified. At Woodlands if a teacher is trained for the Foundation Phase or the Intermediate Phase, then we prefer them to be in the phase they qualified in. There are occasions where a specific teacher will re-train for another phase, or show an affinity for another phase, and I would then encourage such a change. But, a

teacher's Intellectual Presence shouldn't stop with their initial qualification. They are obliged to accumulate CPD (Continuing Professional Development) points every year, but at Woodlands we encourage our teachers to read widely on Education matters and we provide many in-service training workshops to qualify our teachers at a higher level.

The final Presence is that of Spiritual Presence. What this really means is that a teacher needs to be a person who is willing to give of herself/himself way beyond the "call of duty". We used to talk about the Profession of Teaching or Education being "a calling", and I still believe that's what it is.

So, all in all, according to Prof Jansen's four Presences, I believe our teachers at Woodlands definitely do measure up, and I undertake to ensure that it will remain that way on my watch.

So remember, never, ever, give up.

Dr G Pienaar