

# FORGING A FUTURE

A publication of Pinelands High School

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## FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK



Dear Alumni of Pinelands High School, With my first six months as Principal of Pinelands High nearly completed, I can tell you that our old school is alive and well. The teachers are as capable, passionate and as full of character (and characters) as ever and the students are just as full of life, energy, mischief, talent, daring and endeavour.

In the twenty-seven years that have passed since I was a student at Pinelands High, its significance to me has taken on many different hues, shapes and shades, and coming back here has brought them all back to mind. From the strange, visceral combination of hope, yearning and trepidation in Grade 8 as we gathered in the Kent Hall for the start of orientation, to the guilty jubilation of misdeeds mixed with the earnest desire for more and better in the later Grades, to the complicated combination of joy and regret on Valedictory day, the school-time memories have come back.

While I admired many of my teachers and coaches back then, I only realised afterwards what an excellent education we had been given. At UCT it was very soon clear that there was no reason to take a backward step in the company of students from the richer schools we'd always measured Pinelands High against. They weren't smarter or better, or more talented, although often they came across as more confident.

However, it was only when my career eventually led me into leadership of a very wealthy private school that I came to realise just how proud we should all be to be associated with Pinelands High. So, what are my reasons for saying so?

Education in South Africa faces many challenges, but the greatest is socio-economic inequality. The 1966 Coleman Report revealed that a child's achievement is largely tied to their socio-economic background, a finding especially relevant in South Africa, with its high unemployment rate and extreme income inequality. These factors help explain the country's low literacy and numeracy rates and poor educational outcomes.

However, research, including Dr. Stephen Taylor's 2010 study, offers hope. It shows that a school's *combined* socio-economic status has a greater impact on student achievement than

individual backgrounds. Access to schools with higher combined socio-economic status can help students from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve more and improving the socio-economic profile of schools could transform South Africa's struggling education system, producing graduates capable of driving economic growth. Unfortunately, such schools are rare, which underscores the strategic importance of schools like Pinelands High.

Of course, educational research since the Coleman report has shown that there are factors other than Combined SES that can improve student achievement. Here are the top 6 from Dr Taylor's 2010 meta study, with a seventh added by me:

1. Management of school resources
2. Teacher work ethic
3. Time management and planning in schools
4. Curriculum coverage
5. Accuracy of assessment feedback to students
6. Parent commitment to education
7. Best practice classroom teaching and learning practices

My high level assessment, admittedly after less than six months in the job, is that at PHS all of these receive good, diligent attention throughout the year. Here is a sample of objective indicators in substantiation of that assessment:

- **Academics:** Offering 23 subjects, Pinelands High was ranked 19th in the province in 2023, placing us in the top 5% of approximately 400 public high schools. Our students excel in national and international competitions, with numerous medals and commendations in science and innovation fairs.
- **Sports:** Offering 19 sporting codes, we celebrated 64 provincial and national representatives and achieved our best year since 2015 with four league-winning teams.
- **Arts and Culture:** With robust programs in music, drama, and visual arts, our students have access to a wide range of creative opportunities every term, including concerts, exhibitions, and performances.

*Continued on page 2*

## STUDENT LEADERS FOR 2025



2025 Prefect Body



RCL Representatives for 2025

## Bursaries and Donations

Thank you so much to Alumni who have made donations to the Bursary Fund in 2024, enabling us to increase the number of bursaries available to students for 2025. Whether it is for a full bursary, a large once-off donation or a smaller contribution, each Rand makes a real difference. Thank you! For any information regarding Bursaries or making a donation, please contact Carol Franck [cfranck@phs.org.za](mailto:cfranck@phs.org.za).

Donations can be made to: Pinelands High School, Current Account 073023671, Standard Bank, Pinelands, 036309; with the reference: SURNAME + BursaryFund.

## MySchool

Don't forget to use your MySchool Card. You can support your Alma Mater with any purchase from Woolworths without it costing you extra!

Choose Pinelands High School as your beneficiary:

- Join at <https://www.myschool.co.za/portal/register>
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- Email [cs@myschool.co.za](mailto:cs@myschool.co.za) (or call 0860 100 445) to link Woolworths cards to MySchool (and our school)

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## SOCIAL MEDIA



- **Alumni Success:** Our alumni include leaders in education, media, business, and the arts, highlighting the lasting influence of a Pinelands High education.

Demand for admission remains high, with over 2,400 applications for just 200 Grade 8 places. This underscores the school's reputation for excellence and its role as a beacon of hope and opportunity in the community.

### Building for the Future

To ensure that Pinelands High continues to be a national educational asset, we are embarking on a series of campus rejuvenation projects next year along with the construction of a new Maths, Design, and Art Block which we hope to complete in 2026. This facility will feature modern classrooms, sustainable designs, and versatile spaces for teaching and community engagement.

### How You Can Support

We invite you to play an active role in sustaining and advancing the mission of Pinelands High School. Here are ways you can contribute:

1. **Financial Contributions:** Your donations to our Capital Development Fund will directly support critical initiatives like the new academic block. As a registered Public Benefit Organisation, contributions are tax-deductible.
2. **Strategic Partnerships:** Help us connect with organisations that share our vision for quality education and community upliftment.
3. **Alumni Engagement:** Join our Alumni Association events, such as Celebration Day, to reconnect and contribute.
4. **Bursaries and Scholarships:** Sponsor a deserving student to provide access to quality education regardless of financial circumstances.

### A Call to Action

Pinelands High School's value extends far beyond academic rankings. It is a space where students from diverse backgrounds come together, breaking barriers and building a foundation for future success. Your support ensures that we can continue to offer this transformative education and remain a vital national asset.

Thank you for your continued involvement and generosity. I look forward to building the future of Pinelands High School together.

Warm regards, Graham Sayer

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

"Many people taking small actions can create a big impact".

PHS takes the above quote to heart and continues to actively involve students and the wider school community in environmental education and action. We participate in *Eco-Schools* and the *Sustainable Schools* Programmes, which provide frameworks for environmental action and education in schools.

The Biodiversity Garden continues to play an important role in our commitment to environmental education; a space where students connect with nature, an outdoor classroom for Life Sciences and Natural Sciences, and a habitat for local indigenous species (e.g. wildflowers, insects, birds, reptiles and fungi). Doors leading from Life Sciences classrooms provide easy access to the garden for lessons and dozens of students spend their

break times in the green space. Five years ago, we began documenting the biodiversity at Pinelands High School on *iNaturalist.org*. As of this writing, 273 species have been recorded, reflecting our commitment to curbing biodiversity loss on campus. The garden forms part of the Fynbos Corridor Collaboration.

During 2024 PHS staff members were able to focus on the school's environmental policy during professional development sessions and all academic departments are regularly encouraged to include elements of environmental education in their teaching. An active Eco Club, an established recycling programme and various student-driven initiatives (such as promoting the use of re-usable birthday sashes in the place of wasteful balloons) help to keep the issue of environmental sustainability at the forefront of our thinking as well as to translate our understanding into action.



## POST-COVID SPORTS RECOVERY

It has been very encouraging to see the numbers of students participating in sports at the school increase in 2024 and to see some



*PHS basketball boys try to keep pace with the experienced Alumni team at the recent Alumni Sports event*

strong signs that PHS is returning to Pre-Covid levels of competitiveness. Several of our teams have won tournaments and leagues this year and, across all sports (including e-sports), 64 Pinelands High students have been selected at a provincial or national level. Though this is cause for celebration, we are most delighted by the increase in general sports participation and look forward to further progress in 2025.



*A member of the PHS soccer team, which won the Cape Peninsula Soccer League, tussles for the ball*

## BEQUESTS

Bequests can form part of a will, specifying individual items or amounts of money and how they are to be distributed. For those who would like to leave a legacy, Pinelands High School invites you to consider including a bequest to your Alma Mater in your will. Any amount invested in this way will be carefully managed by the school and will have an impact on several generations of PHS students, bearing dividends long after you are gone. Please contact Carol Franck [cfranck@phs.org.za](mailto:cfranck@phs.org.za) If you would like to discuss a bequest.



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