

REPORT OF THE DEUTSCHE SCHULE HERMANNSBURG TO THE SYNOD OF ELCSA (NT) AT KROONDAL 15-18 OCTOBER 2015

Since the last session of Synod in 2013 there have been substantial changes in the leadership of the school and the congregation in Hermannsburg. Ute and Burgert Brand have left for Namibia and the posts of principal and pastor have been filled by Mr Martin Marx and Pastor René Risch respectively. Both commenced their duties in January 2015 and as such only 8 months have passed by the time of writing this report. Some time was spent on reflecting on the duties and responsibilities of the school pastor, especially in light of two facts: firstly, that this is a post of the ELCSA (NT) and secondly, the denominational and religious diversity that is currently found at the school. As such we have decided to re-iterate some points from the previous report to Synod, which are quoted as follows:

The fundamental agreement is, that the Deutsche Schule Hermannsburg is in essence a church school, that was started by the Hermannsburg Mission and became part of the ELCSA(NT)'s heritage. Whilst the legal owner of the Deutsche Schule Hermannsburg is a Trust, the Trust Deed makes it quite clear, that this school is and remains distinctly affiliated to the ELCSA (NT). It was felt that speaking about a "Christian" school, or a school with a "Christian ethos" was too little and unspecific, as "Christian" has become a label attached to a wide variety of schools in our country, without the content thereof becoming clearly visible. It is furthermore true, that a school as such cannot be "Christian", but only people who either run and/or attend a particular school. The Deutsche Schule Hermannsburg is the only school that belongs to the ELCSA (NT)! This is a statement of fact and is not intended to discriminate against other schools, that have been started by congregations of the ELCSA (NT) and that are supported by individual congregations. It is a matter of responsibility and accountability. Because of this fact the ELCSA (NT) employs a Lutheran pastor to minister to the school community (teachers and other employees, learners, parents). This post ... is formally visited by a team from Church Council, as it is not a post linked to the circuit or a congregation, but is a post of the church. Through these visitations the church wants to ensure that the Church's theology and ministry is upheld at the school. ...

Furthermore, the fact that the DSH is affiliated to the ELCSA (NT), is made obvious in a number of ways:

- *The DSH regularly reports to the synods of the ELCSA (NT).*
- *The ELCSA (NT) has - as per Trust Deed - a permanent member on the Trust. At the moment the church's trustee is Mr. K. Müller, member of the St. Peter's by the Lake congregation.*
- *A further permanent member on the trust - as per Trust Deed - is a representative of the Peter Paul Congregation in Hermannsburg. This representative does not merely promote good relations between school and congregation, but represents the congregations of our church per se, as the Peter Paul congregation is not the owner of the school.*
- *The DSH from time to time informs the congregations of the ELCSA(NT) about its work. Most congregations have made these reports available to their membership by printing these in their newsletters. Thank you to those, who have in this way made the DSH even more part of the ELCSA (NT).*
- *School's choirs and groups regularly visit and perform in congregations of the Church.*
- *The DSH - and in spite of much adversity - tries to reach out to Lutheran families, hoping that they would support the School of their church. We need to note, that the DSH does not merely reach out to families of the ELCSA (NT), but also has families of the ELCSA and FELSISA represented at the school as well.*
- *The DSH is still listed in Church Law 1 of the ELCSA(NT) as a project that could be supported by offerings of thanksgiving. For many years the DSH has been taken off the list of ministries to be supported by compulsory offerings. Whilst the wisdom of this decision could be questioned, it needs to be noted, that many congregations of our church regularly contribute sacrificially to the ministry of the DSH. This support is highly appreciated. Members of synod are requested to convey to their respective congregations the DSH's joy and gratitude. For the ELCSA (NT) the Deutsche Schule Hermannsburg is a most important diaconical ministry in the educational and theological history and tradition of the reformers.*

In addition to the above, we can also report that the Deutsche Schule Hermannsburg is consciously striving to become a *Begegnungsschule* for the ELCSA (NT) and the FELSISA. It is our conviction that this will be of benefit to our school and to the churches themselves and can contribute to the continued building of a positive relationship between the two churches.

The past two years have kept us on our knees, both in thanksgiving and humility before the Lord.

The school family can rightfully be proud of the many achievements of the Deutsche Schule Hermannsburg and it remains our intention to keep our almost 160 year heritage healthy for generations to come.

We would like to highlight some of the positive achievements of our school since the last Synod.

ACADEMICS

Matric Results

We are once again very pleased with the matric results achieved in 2013 and 2014. The following results reflect very well on our school, its academic standards and the quality of our matriculating learners. In 2013 the matric class achieved a:

- A 100% pass rate and 100% achievement of entry into a bachelor's degree ("exemption");
- 6 'A' averages out of a class of 20;
- 55 subject distinctions at an average of 2.75 per learner (an average of 2 per learner is generally regarded as excellent); and
- 7 subject results in the top 1% of all IEB candidates who wrote that subject.

In 2014:

- A 100% pass rate and 100% achievement of entry into a bachelor's degree ("exemption");
- Reece Volker confirmed his position as Dux (7 subject distinctions and an 'A' average), followed by Thomas Mahnecke (4 subject distinctions and an 'A' average), Kyle Schröder (3 subject distinctions and a 'B' average) and Zanda Isaacs (2 subject distinctions and a 'B' aggregate).
- Almost the whole class took the Advanced Programme English course, set at UK 'A-levels' standard, which benefited them across all their subjects as they improved their ability to understand questions and to formulate answers.
- Those who wrote the Royal Schools' music examinations also achieved good results, which will stand them in good stead in their future studies.

These are truly excellent results and we congratulate the staff, the learners and their parents on their efforts and achievements.

International Bench-marking

The results from last year's Grade 6 and 9 Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) International Benchmarking Tests (IBT's) have been released and several of our scholars have been recognised for their high academic achievements. These tests are written annually to help us to ensure that we continue to meet international standards in English and Mathematics education. Zahra Cassim obtained a high distinction for English and a distinction for Mathematics in Grade 6. In the High School, Sven Klar, Christel Brüggemann, and Elisabeth Tönsing obtained distinctions for Mathematics and Hugh Bouwer a high distinction. In English, Christel Brüggemann obtained a distinction and Jordan Pope a high distinction. We are not only proud of these top achievers, but also of all our scholars who performed admirably.

The **Deutsch Sprachdiplom (DSD II)** results have also increased with some excellent pass rates for the scholars. Achieving this qualification gives scholars the opportunity to study in Germany, should they so wish.

Science Expo

Mrs van Dyk also took the Grade 11s to the Science Expo in Durban, where Terry-Lyn Costello and Tabea Röhrs each received a first-class award, Anelisiwe Kheswa a second-class award and Joel dos Santos a third-class award, all in the botany category. Well done!

Mathematics Achievement

One plus one may add up to two, but high school Mathematics is far more complex than that: we congratulate Tobias von Seydlitz, who is among the top 100 senior scholars who wrote the second round of the South African Mathematics Olympiad (a national Olympiad with more than 18 000 participants in the first round, and about 11 000 in the second round). This result qualifies him to participate in the third round. We look forward to the results of the third round!

Geography

Our learners regularly participate in international competitions and have won awards in such prestigious projects such as the International Climate Education project. Since the last Synod, two of our scholars represented South Africa at an international expedition of this project (in 2013 and 2015). It is a high compliment indeed that so many of our scholars have won this honour, that our school has been requested not to enter participants ever year in order to give other schools the chance of winning the limited awards of these overseas trips!

MUSIC

The Music department has achieved excellent results in the IEB Examinations, Eisteddfods' and various musical evenings which have been hosted at Hermannsburg. Joining the numerous scholars who have done so in the years before, 7 scholars – Stephan Küsel, Laura Zick, Danielle Schweiger, Rupert Meyer, Meike Meyer, Christel Brüggemann and Rhonda Christiansen made it into the KZN Youth Choir this year, with Laura Zick achieving the Chorister of the Year for 2015.

KZN Youth Choir in Poland

Several of our scholars spent time in Poland with the KZN Youth Choir during the July holidays, and they report as follows: "After months of hard work and dedication, learning songs & dances and building up our excitement at being able to exercise our passion for singing, Stephan Küsel, Laura Zick, Danielle Schweiger, Rupert Meyer, Meike Meyer and Rhonda Christiansen travelled to Poland to participate in the '38th Bydgoskie Impresje Muzyczne' international music festival which took place in a small city called Bydgoszcz. Not only did we sing, but we also had the opportunity to interact with other international choirs through choral workshops, small concerts and the opening and closing ceremonies of the competition. We take away many experiences and memories that we will cherish for the rest of our lives."

The Music Department's annual musical evening once again showcased the talents of our musicians, with solo performances by singers and flutists, choral pieces by the school choir and a finale by our Vivat Choir before everyone joined in the final song of the evening.

EXTRAMURAL ACTIVITIES

Faust

It is not often that an actor with the international stature of German actor Haydar Zorlu, star of 7 films, 21 TV shows & 7 theatre productions, and a well-known figure in the world of German entertainment, comes across one's path. Mr Zorlu spent time on Friday and Saturday workshopping the German classic, *Faust*, with our Grade 11 and 12 scholars and on Saturday he performed his 80-minute adaptation of the tale with the help of our budding actors.

National Finals for the Enviroquiz (MONDI-WESSA Enviroquiz): They did it again! Our A-team walked off with the National Enviroquiz Trophy on Friday evening, competing against 11 other teams to win the prestigious trophy by a comfortable 11 percent, while our B-team achieved sixth place.

ICE Project

Back from her trip to the Austrian Alps, after winning a spot on the prestigious Arved Fuchs Foundation International Climate Exchange contest for her project on creating awareness about over-fishing in South Africa using social media, our very own Ayanda Nzama writes: "The International Climate Expedition in Austria was such a great experience! The privilege of being able to represent South Africa at an environmental expedition was a huge honour and an adventure I will never forget."

Germany Exchange Programme

For the past eleven years, our Grade 10s have participated in the Germany Exchange Programme - parents and teachers all agree that each one of them experiences astounding positive personal growth through this experience, which cannot be measured by means of a mark-book. Our Grade 10s write: "One of the main things that one looks forward to when one goes to Deutsche Schule Hermannsburg is the Germany Exchange Programme, which takes place when one reaches Grade 10. It is a privilege for us to be able to go overseas and experience a different continent and culture, as well as improving our German and making life-long friends."

SPORT

We have invested a lot of effort in 2015 to improve our Sport department.

Seventeen of our athletes went to the KZN trials, for the first time in many years. This proved to be a good indication of what was to come, as we lost out by only 5 points to Wartburg during the Quadrangular Athletics Meeting.

Christél Brooks, riding Prince Caspian, will represent KZN in the SANESA National Championships in Pretoria in the following classes: Dressage, Equitation, Showjumping, Working Hunter, Working Riding and Eventing.

In High School hockey news, we congratulate Imke Marx, who was selected for the KZN U18B hockey team.

In the KZN Mountain biking trials, held at Maritzburg College, Anna Kremnitzer came 3rd in the U14 age group (12,5km) and Joshua Zick came 7th, also in U14 age group (15km).

Deutsche Schule Hermannsburg has rugby back on its green grounds, with 7's rugby in the high school and tag-rugby in the primary school being the attractions.

In swimming the girls team won the Co-Ed Gala and the boys came a close second.

All the above achievements indicate that the Deutsche Schule Hermannsburg is a value proposition that offers quality to its clients and stakeholders. For more information about our school and its achievements please visit our website at www.hmbschool.co.za – especially the “Current News” page and archive is filled with information in this regard!

After several years of increasing scholar numbers, 2013 and 2014 were difficult years for the school as scholar numbers began to decline again. In 2015 this trend has been halted and the numbers are slightly up since the beginning of the year. The current scholar numbers in the 3 phases are as follows:

Pre-primary School	50
Primary School	91
High School	<u>79</u>
Total	220

Of this number, 47 scholars belong to Lutheran Churches.

We do, though, also have to report some of the very real difficulties and challenges that the school is facing. These matters have had to be tackled by the school under the leadership of the Board of Trustees and the School Management.

Regarding the Board, there has been a change in leadership. After the resignations of the vice-chairman, Rolf Königkrämer and the chairman, Wolfgang Rommelspacher, in short succession in 2013, Pastor Udo Lütge was elected as chairman for the remainder of Mr Rommelspacher's term. Upon the completion of this term Pastor Lütge was unable to accept a nomination to be re-elected as chairman at the beginning of this year, mainly due to his work load in our church. However, he continues to serve as a member of the Board and it's Executive. At a Board meeting on 19 April 2015, Dr Manfred Kuhn was elected as chairman of the Board. Dr Kuhn has extensive financial and business training and experience. He has been instrumental in improving the policies and procedures of the school and is well suited to leading the Board. Due to the fact that Dr Kuhn travels extensively for business reasons, the Executive committee has been extended and restructured so that various members of the Executive share the duties which were traditionally assigned to the chairperson only. This has certainly improved the efficiency of the Board and we have a very competent team to lead the school into the future.

Since Ute and Burgert Brand left the school at the end of 2014, a new principal and school pastor have arrived at the school. We have welcomed Martin Marx and René Risch to the school family as principal and school pastor. In these positions they form part of the leadership of the school as members of Management. We wish them both every success and happiness at our school. The principal is also a member of the Executive and Finance committees of the Board. These committees now meet regularly (generally once a month) to manage the processes that will be described in the rest of this report.

Our school, as is the case with most private schools, has had to deal with varied challenges over the last two decades. One ever-present challenge is the need to meet the financial requirements of running a school. Raising enough funds to enable our school to offer a high value proposition to its clients and stakeholders has been a high priority for the Board of the school trust since its establishment. Commendable work has been done in this regard, particularly by the HMB School Trust and its farming enterprise, by the HMB Foundation and its fundraising efforts and by those who established and maintained close links to our church, the ELCSA (N-T), and the German state. In addition to the school fees paid by parents, these organisations have been the main funders of the school and we would like to thank them, as well as the many donors that the school has, for their contribution and support.

In the recent past, this support base – and therefore the financial health of the school – has come under increasing pressure. The main reasons for this have been:

- **Non-payment of fees:** the level of non-payment of school fees has risen dramatically in the last two years. The Board has had to write off large amounts in bad debt during this time. The number of families requiring financial assistance has also increased.
- **Reduced scholar numbers:** After several years of growth, the last 2 years have seen reduced scholar numbers for a variety of reasons. This obviously means a reduction in school fees paid.
- **Relationship to Germany:** Our relationship with the German state will change. A law for “German Schools Abroad” (Auslandsschulwesengesetz) has been passed in Germany. According to this law, our school no longer qualifies as a “Deutsche Auslandsschule.” While we will continue to have a relationship with the German State, this fact will lead to a reduction in financial support from Germany. The precise nature of the reduction is still being negotiated, but it will affect the funding the school receives markedly as of 2016.

The school has had to make use of its reserves to meet its obligations. The pressure caused by these developments led the Board to perform a frank appraisal of the policies of the school, particularly as far as finances are concerned. During this process numerous short-comings were identified and addressed. So far the following steps have been taken:

- **Financial Policy:** a clear financial policy has been developed and implemented. This has certainly improved the financial activities of the school. The policy addresses, amongst other areas of the finances:
 - i) **Fee Collection:** The school has implemented a debit order system and follows the policy that fees must be paid in advance or by debit order. This has drastically improved fee collection.
 - ii) **Debt Collection:** The school now has a clear debt collection policy. This policy has been aggressively implemented since the end of last year and has resulted in the successful collection of a meaningful amount of debt.
 - iii) **Financial Assistance:** The school now follows a clearly defined process in awarding financial assistance in order to reduce the amount that the school spends in this regard, while still offering parents assistance that is sorely needed.
 - iv) **Other:** The finance policy very clearly outlines how the school deals with financial reporting, ring-fencing of donor funds, control of operating expenses and more. Improved management of the Grounds and Buildings portfolio of the school has led to large cost savings, particular in terms of the fuel bill of the school.
- **School Audit:** The board has made the decision to expand the scope of the external audit of the school. Up to now the school has only been subjected to a very basic audit. In future all aspects of school policies, systems and structures will be tested by auditors to establish whether the school follows best practices. This will cost the school more, but will help us to ensure that we follow policies that enable us to manage the school effectively and to develop it further.
- **Enrolment Documentation:** Problems with the enrolment documentation of the school led to difficulties in debt collection. This has been addressed with the help of legal advice from the school’s lawyer, who has experience with a range of private schools and the various legal requirements that apply. The resulting new and more comprehensive enrolment document was implemented in January 2015.
- **New Partners:** A great deal of effort has been invested in establishing new partnerships to mitigate the effect of the changed relationship with Germany. Discussions have been held with local and international church bodies and other organisations to pursue all options in this regard. We have established a partnership with a company in the US – Mission Enablers International – which allows us to receive donations from the US and to offer our US donors all available US tax benefits. We are currently in discussions with Old Scholars and business contacts to build up a donor base in the US and pursuing partnerships with a US school and US churches.
- **Fundraising Drives:** The school has launched the “Make a Difference” Campaign in conjunction with the Old Scholars Association. This campaign enables members of the school family and other interested parties to make donations to the school for specific projects that help to develop the school and the quality of its product. So far this campaign has raised over R40 000 for this purpose. We encourage the wider school family to get involved and support the school by contributing to the MAD campaign! For more information, please visit the “Old Scholars” page on our webpage at www.hmbschool.co.za/pastpupilsf.htm

These steps, together with other improved policies and procedures that the Board has established, are aimed at strengthening the organisational structure of the school and securing its financial future. However, one further step has been necessary. In the process of pursuing means of reducing the operating costs of the school, the staffing structure was also reviewed. It became clear to the Board that our current staff compliment is not in line with the scholar numbers at the school. This is particularly true for the high school. To put it in clear terms: the school staff

costs comfortably more than the income generated by fees. The Board therefore took the difficult decision to pursue a staff restructure in order to bring the staff compliment in line with the current realities of our school. Three main priorities were identified for this process:

- i) The process should be fair and follow all legal requirements for such processes.
- ii) The process should better position the school to meet the financial challenges in 2016.
- iii) The restructure endeavours to maintain the school's ability to offer its current high standard of academic excellence and an overall quality product.

With this in mind, the Board instituted the normal process outlined in Section 189 of the Labour Relations Act. This process is already quite advanced, but not yet complete. However, the Board is now in a position to inform you of the results of the process so far:

- In the **Pre-Primary School** 1 teacher, Sonette Alexander, has voluntarily resigned. This post will have to be filled again.
- In the **Junior School** 2 teachers, Lauren Foster and Renate Haase, have voluntarily resigned and 1 teacher, Pam Royden-Turner, has voluntarily elected to go into retirement (she is already past retirement age). One of these posts will have to be filled again. In addition to this, the Primary School H.O.D. Nils Röttcher, has applied to the Board to consider him for voluntary retrenchment. The Board has given the proposal due consideration and has in principle accepted this request.

All of the posts that have to be filled again as described above will be filled internally if possible.

- Discussions regarding the restructure in the **High School** are currently underway and will be finalised soon.
- The **Marketing Department** is also being reviewed and a newly structured post will be implemented from 1 January 2016.

Once the outstanding matters have been finalised we will inform the school family.

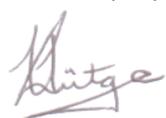
We recognise that such a process is never easy and that it creates uncertainty. This has its effect on the school and the school family. We urge all who are affected by this to act responsibly in the interests of the school. If you have concerns or even grievances, please address these with us at the school using the established procedures and channels available to you.

The road ahead, particularly in terms of the financial situation, will be challenging. In the immediate future – the next 3-4 years – we will require every support available to us as the impact of certain changes, especially that of the changed relationship with Germany, confront us.

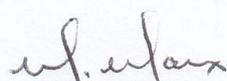
We are aware of rumours that are spreading about our school:

- That the **school is closing**. This is **not true!**
- That **teachers are leaving the school**. This is true, but is almost exclusively the result of the process described above.
- That **scholars are leaving the school**. This is true, but predominantly involves the matrics who are leaving at the end of their school career and the children of teachers who are leaving the school. **It must also be clearly stated that the Grade 8 intake for 2016 is much higher than in recent years.** This is very promising for the school. This indicates that scholar numbers will remain stable in 2016, despite this difficult time, and can improve as we move forward from here.

The Board reiterates that all of the steps outlined in this report are aimed at strengthening the school and securing its future. Our school has a valuable heritage and has much to offer our community, our church and our country going into the future. It is an affordable value proposition for clients and stake-holders. It is a resource that is worth the effort that is being invested in it. The Board commits itself to this effort and to the improvement of the running of the school wherever such improvement is necessary. We will require the continued and in some instances even improved support of the school family. We urge you to engage with the school if you have any questions and suggestions or if you have identified other areas in which we might improve. It is vital that such engagement takes place and that it is undertaken in a constructive manner. We also ask you to carry all of these matters and our school in prayer.



Pastor Udo Lütge
(On behalf of the Board)



Martin Marx
(Principal)



René Risch
(School Pastor)