

Transformation & Social Cohesion

What is Transformation and what does it look like?



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I'm sure each one of you will have a very valid and interesting response to this question. As you well know we as South Africans face many challenges. We live daily with the legacy of Apartheid. The damage caused by this evil system affects every race group. We go about our business with various degrees of damage and baggage. Some blissfully unaware, others very conscious of it. This is what makes the process of Transformation so challenging.

The word, *Transformation*, conjures up different emotions. For some it is viewed as a necessary process for change, for others a process of lowering "standards". Often this word is interpreted differently. For me it's quite simple. It means a process of deep reflection, identifying injury, discovering the beauty within ourselves and seeing it in others. In this way we embark on a journey of healing, creating an environment where individuals can thrive.

A socially cohesive community works towards the wellbeing of *all* its members. It fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust and offers its members the opportunity to develop a progressive mindset. My view is that this work must be approached with love, compassion and empathy. This should be the foundation upon which every process develops from.

So how do we as a community do this? At school every individual wants to feel a genuine sense of belonging. Young people set upon a journey of discovery to find their place and establish themselves as unique human beings. This journey is different for every child. There are a number of stake holders that makes this journey possible. In order to fulfil the potential of every student, an environment needs to exist where the stake holders have a voice and where they are heard. In an attempt to achieve this environment, we have implemented the following:

- **The Ground, Building and Hostel Staff** have regular meetings/forums with management to address concerns and grievances. Individual grievances can be clearly articulated in employees' mother tongue if they so choose. Mr Nongqotho has made himself available to facilitate these meetings with me.
- We have invested in a program with a proven international track record called **Facing History and Ourselves**. The program examines common human behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes that we can readily observe in our own lives. It explores issues of identity and membership and how identity impacts our choices and experiences. The Facing History and Ourselves learning journey has already begun and is being delivered weekly during **Life Orientation**
- **Student Leadership**: a more effective, diverse and integrated system of student leadership has been put in place. The new system allows for time, access to students and accountability. Mr Domingo and the Executive Council are transforming student leadership at our school.

The seven portfolios have brought a new energy and dynamic to life at school. It epitomises the phrase, *servant leadership* in action.

The following is an overview of each portfolio (adapted from the Grade 8 brochure):

1. The **Social Cohesion portfolio** aims to create an inclusive environment and culture within the Rondebosch community. The portfolio is currently working on addressing four social issues that exist in today's society. These issues are Black & White Consciousness and Anti-racism, Gender-based Violence & Equality, Mental Health and Masculinity & Sexuality.
2. The **Pastoral Portfolio** aims to make sure that each and every student at RBHS feels welcome, comfortable and safe. They are the bridge between the boys and the pastoral staff. Our goal is to actively check in with all students to make sure that our school remains a healthy and positive learning environment that all boys can be proud of. After all, how can you be proud of your school, if you don't feel welcome?
3. The **Academic Portfolio** is responsible for the academics and academic-related activities at the school. RBHS is known for its strong academic performance, and we strive to continue in that tradition by supporting and improving the quality of learning at the school. As such, we are committed to working with both the students and the teachers to ensure the success of every single boy at Bosch, irrespective of their academic strength, from Grade 8 to 12.

4. The **Cultural Portfolio** takes care of the arts and societies of the school.

We strive to make music, visual art and drama accessible and fun for all Bosch students, and to help integrate vibrant and inclusive societies into the daily life of every pupil. We are passionate about expression and giving students opportunities to shine in their own way, and encourage all students to get involved and become familiar with Bosch's rich cultural portfolio.

5. The **Outreach Portfolio** is focused on giving back to the community and we do this through various events, charity support, fundraisers and collections. Many Rondebosch boys have so much privilege and access to opportunities. With this comes responsibility.

6. The **Environmental Portfolio** is a new portfolio that makes up a proactive team of boys who work all year round with the Interact outreach society, other schools and organisations to help leave Rondebosch Boys High better than we found it. We aim to make a steep change in the way our school thinks and acts towards the environment while appreciating what it has to offer.

7. The **Sport Portfolio** highly recommends the greatest amount of involvement in sport as it lays a foundation for friendships that will last.

Staff: In the third term a company called Alkimia will conduct a three-day workshop on Race and Identity. The workshop is a process offered to school management and school staff to explore their own racial identities within the context of South Africa, how this has shaped them and how it may be impacting them within the school system and in the outside world. The

workshop is a deeply personal process conducted with support, empathy and validation for all experiences while equipping participants with the language to have and to guide constructive conversations around race. This workshop is the start of a process that will be ongoing.

- **Old Boys and Parent Forums** will continue as these stakeholders provide rich insight, resources and wisdom. Individuals don't have to wait for an official event to share their thoughts; I am willing to engage with them on a one to one basis.
- **Sport:** Rondebosch Boys High School will develop and implement a social and cultural awareness program for coaches of all sporting codes as part of our ongoing efforts to ensure a transformation and diversity agenda where parity and fairness prevail.

Conclusion: A significant number of processes have been put in place. This platform will be used to keep you informed and to share various topics and themes. Going forward students will share issues that are close to their hearts. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank students for driving this process, and for doing so with love, compassion and empathy.

Transformation is a never-ending process – we can never claim to be transformed. It is also a process where civil discourse is required – civil in the sense of consulting broadly, but civil also in the sense of being restrained and balanced in our interactions. Solutions may not always be evident but can be found by listening and dealing with the challenges head-on with transparency.

We acknowledge that, on this journey with you, we won't always get it right, but will endeavor to continue to listen and engage with all stakeholders. This journey is not an easy one. There are no maps or blueprints to take us to a set

destination. Let's continue to consult and guide one another. Let the spirit and example of Nelson Mandela prevail upon us.