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## Report by the Deutsche Schule Hermannsburg to the Synod of the ELCSA (NT) in Harburg - October 2011

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**Firm - and eager to learn.** This sounds like a leaf taken out of the Hermannsburg hand-book, because this theme encapsulates what our Mission Statement is all about:

*“To provide educational excellence in a Christian context. To ensure the holistic enrichment of each individual in order to confidently meet the challenges of a changing world.”*

All of this is explored in our set of values:

*“The pursuit of **excellence** in all endeavours. The conduct of all interactions with **integrity, respect, trust and compassion**. The fostering of an attitude of **commitment, responsibility and pride**.”*

### **We are grateful to stand firm:**

- Our school has grown in numbers, in spite of an averse financial environment.
- We continue to be a “Begegnungsschule” - a place where different cultures, languages, even religions meet and learn to respect and appreciate each other.
- We have maintained a programme of sport that provides a rich variety from individual sports (tennis, athletics, horse-riding, swimming) to team sports (cricket, hockey, with soccer growing in popularity, especially amongst the young ladies).
- To put our sport-programme into a healthy perspective, we offer a solid cultural programme. Learners are encouraged to take music tuition - and so many do, that we have to expand our staff contingent. Music can be taken as a subject up to matric. Class-music has been brought back and is compulsory for all classes. Our students are encouraged to participate in a variety of concerts, competitions, and Olympiads. The emphasis on languages is exceptional with a newly installed Language-laboratory, which will be functional as soon as the teachers have grasped the technology. This emphasis comes with visits to theatre productions - and producing theatre, participation in Eisteddfods, etc. We are grateful that a large number of our learners sing in the choirs of the school - the Vivat-choir participated in the Vivaldi Youth Choir Competition in Greece; our Christopherus Choir sings at school-events, weddings and has already toured a number of our congregations. The performing arts have since one year been augmented with creative arts. Art can be taken as a subject up to the level of matric. The first successful exhibition has been staged - and more are to follow still this year.
- We are still committed to serve and uplift the poorer members of our school-community. We are thankful for donations and the work of the HMB Trust (the farming enterprise the “farms for our school”); this helps us financially to advance those, who deserve to be promoted.
- We teach German to all our pupils; the benefits they have on the job-market - especially with German firms - are immense. We believe that we provide for them a niche, within which they can excel. Every year the Grade 10-class travels to Germany, where we have a partner-school in Rommelsbach. The social and personal skills developed during this tour are worth every Cent spent.
- We remain to be a school dedicated to environmental issues. Our learners were very proud, that this Synod gave them the opportunity to present their activities and programmes during the previous session in the Northrand. They are excited that their church is joining hands with them on this issue, and that many congregations have become progressive in their waste-removal and recycling programmes. For us educators it is important, that they see and experience this networking; that our school is no island but part of the bigger picture of our church.
- We also stand firm in our promotion of the Christian faith. All our learners receive religious education, irrespective of their religious or denominational background. School starts with a morning devotion every day - prayer, song and Biblical exposition. Those,

who are able to play an instrument, are roped in to play in the “Chapel Band.” Pupils are taught to conduct devotions themselves, and these are well received with their peers. We are thankful for the hospitality that is extended to our young people by the local Peter-Paul-Congregation: Our youngsters worship there on a Sunday morning, join the Brass Band, and are always welcome to participate with the lessons, as Sunday School teachers, helping with the prayers and preaching.

**We are eager to learn:**

- At the moment our school is involved in a major process of Pedagogical Quality Management - this includes canvassing parents, teachers, learners, trustees, a peer-review by another German school, including learners on all levels of discussion and development, and ultimately hosting a team of inspectors from Germany. Whereas this kind of process is not all that uncommon, we struggle to understand what the Germans really want. After all, we are a South African school serving South African citizens - we are well-rounded and struggle to think square! But we are “eager to learn.”
- Learning needs to be critical. We are committed to challenge our staff to teach our young people to be critical. Facts are not necessarily facts only because they can be found in a hand-book. We believe that this emphasis is an essential contribution to the education of the next generation of South Africans. We have to move from a mode of uncritical acceptance to one of critical appreciation and engagement.
- This critical approach is also employed in our Christian education. Our young people need tools to safeguard themselves against fundamentalism and sectarianism. Our Lutheran faith is a faith grounded in the study of Scripture, the sharpening of the conscience and the rigorous application of the mind. We believe that faith can and will grow in this way!
- Learning needs to be passionate. Research should not only produce good marks, but open minds. It is for that reason that we have included the outdoors in our teaching and learning experience. A bush-camp every second year, nature club outings, working at the dam - all of these try to impart the relevance of learning to the individual, society and the environment.
- Learning needs to grow independence. In the way we teach - regularly acquiring the latest, tested methodology, networking with other schools and educational facilities - we strive to equip our learners to “do it themselves.” They should be able to take leadership, work in a team, make decisions, take responsibility for their decisions and learn from their mistakes. To foster these life-skills our school has a programme of leadership that starts in the Primary School and is then specialised and deepened in the High School.
- Learning needs to acknowledge the love, authority and supremacy of God. This might be a contentious statement to some, but every meaningful kind of learning needs to stand on a good foundation: We believe that a good foundation means to be rooted in Christ: *“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”* (1 Cor 3:11). We are eager for our learners to learn, believe and live just that!

The Deutsche Schule Hermannsburg has been a critical servant of the ELCSA (N-T) and its predecessors for more than 150-years. For us it is important that the relationship between church and school is upheld, strengthened and that it may grow into a truly symbiotic one. We know that the Deutsche Schule Hermannsburg in Church Law 1 remains on the list of suggested collections - it is truly heartening to see how many congregations still support our school generously. Thank you for that - it is truly appreciated! Continue to think of us, pray for us, and support us!

Ute Brand, Principal

Burgert Brand, School Chaplain