

MEDIA RELEASE

RELEASED ON 2 SEPTEMBER 2025

EMBARGO: NONE

HOW TO PREPARE A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD

During the 29th SAOU Principals' Symposium in Port Elizabeth, Cassie Carstens raised the issue of community involvement in education.

Mr Carstens stated that one of the main problems in Africa is fatherlessness. The situation where children grow up without a father or a father figure, adds to the growing discipline crisis which South Africa is currently experiencing. This could be one of the reason, according to him why the children of Africa are experiencing failing peer relationships and low self-esteem, because there is no longer a father figure for children to look up to within the community.

The question which he posed was: how can a community be transformed to support in promoting the future of the country? He presented research to indicate that school principals have the most influence in a community and are therefore one of the main role-players in ensuring stability and building a sustainable community.

Mr Carstens emphasised that to achieve change in a community it is necessary that the focus be placed on the formation of character, cultural creation and moral values. To ensure these outcomes it is necessary that schools play a key role in forming learners, especially in establishing resilience and skills to cope as well as values.

Schools are best equipped to support the change in community, because teachers and leadership teams are prepared to navigate complex human dynamics and in establishing the skill to be a good community. To support this point he referred to the Standards of School Principalship where working with the community is listed as one of the outcomes for principals.

At school level children are already part of the school community. It is therefor necessary to establish partnerships with families, and for schools to establish local relevance to ensure a focus on the whole-child, for the values of the school community to be extended to families. Schools should be a beacon of hope, where values are taught which will feed back to the home and it is necessary that schools invite parents to be empowered as partners in community and education.

In South Africa, at this time, it is necessary to have a mindset of shared responsibility. School and family have to work together to shape future generations and foster inclusivity in our country. To achieve this goal, it is crucial to show strong leadership and renewed intentionality.

One of the key aspects is for schools to model who we want children to be in order to craft the best

possible culture. Schools should strive to be communities of joy, belonging value and purpose to build a united community. There is need for mentorship programmes to teach the values which are needed in our communities.

According to Mr Carstens discipline can only happen if learners feel a connection - schools must be centres of hope which focus on cultivating character and nurturing a positive culture essential for shaping communities in hope

He says that the world needs a father figure which can establish a culture of hope in South Africa.