



Seven Years of developing Innovators & Leaders

HAPPY 7TH BIRTHDAY NOVANEERS!

BY CHINEZI CHIJIJOKE - CEO

Seven years ago, on July 7th 2014, 30 students gathered for the Pioneer Winter Programme. It was the first time students and teachers would come together to do what we do: grow innovators and leaders! With that coming together, Nova Pioneer was born.

Our founding families and faculty came together with a shared recognition that our children face a future of rapid and accelerating change across all dimensions of life: technology, culture, climate, entertainment, politics, space travel and more. We recognised that those changes demand new and excellent education that prepares them to thrive, lead and innovate in the 21st century.

That recognition gave rise to a shared vision and mission. A vision of excellent and rigorous 21st century learning with a focus on leadership and innovation development, at an accessible cost.

Our mission would be to develop generations of leaders and innovators across Africa.

Together we have walked a truly remarkable journey over the seven years since. We have grown Nova Pioneer into a leading African school group, educating nearly five thousand young Novaneers -- from three-month olds to 19-year olds -- across 13 schools in South Africa and Kenya. We have seen tremendous growth and achievement from our students. We have seen students publish books; invent; find their voices and grow their confidence; debate and deliberate; compete and win in a wide range of regional, continental and global competitions; write and perform poetry and song; get selected as Yale Young Global Scholars; launch businesses and community service programmes; and more. We have graduated two classes of alumni, and have seen our alumni pursue myriad post school paths. Our alumni attend leading universities



across the continent and the world; have won prestigious scholarships; launched businesses and gained early professional training through programmes such as Andela; taken a gap year, volunteered, pursued alternative training, or entered the world of work -- all venturing onto paths with promise and possibility.

We have also seen our team grow from 20 in 2014 to over 700 today. Novaneer faculty and staff have ourselves learned and led in tremendous ways: apprentice teachers have developed into masterful educators and peer coaches; teammates who have made a difference beyond school, earning recognition as SA Heroes, running marathons and climbing mountains to raise funds for scholarships and to role model the spirit of Novaneers, and more.

We have also seen the depth and contribution of our parent community. From the everyday commitment to our children and to partnership with their schools; to volunteering on parent committees; and to rising in times of need to support remote learning during Covid-times or ferry faculty to vaccination centres.

While we no doubt have much further to go as a Novaneer community, we can be tremendously proud of this community and all that we have accomplished over the past seven years. Perhaps our biggest collective accomplishment, however, is the culture we have built. Our shared commitment to those six culture principles -- to living them out in how we learn, work and relate -- underpins all that is possible in our schools and community. As a parent of a young Novaneer student, it has been incredibly encouraging to observe the development of our daughter's character and relationship with her own learning over the four years that she has been a Novaneer. It gives us such reassurance about who she is growing up to be, and about her preparedness to 'captain her own ship' through all the years ahead.

Looking ahead, I am excited about what the next seven years may bring for Nova Pioneer. We will continue to strive towards our commitment of providing excellent education that develops the tremendous potential of our children to shape the century ahead. In the immediate future, We will strive to:

- Deepen excellence and value. A few years ago, South Africa's former President Kgalema Motlanthe visited a Nova Pioneer school and challenged us to become beacons of excellence in education. Earlier this year we adopted that mantra: to strive to be "Beacons of Excellence and Value".
- Grow responsibly. Our vision calls us to grow our service across Africa. That growth also serves each of our students, by expanding the network of like-minded peers and fellow future alumni to whom they will have access as they journey through life. In doing so, we will be disciplined about how we grow.
- Innovate to lead. Like everything else in the world, there is significant innovation and change underway in education. The past year has compelled us all to build new capabilities and discover new modalities of learning. We have an opportunity to seize some of that learning, to evolve how we learn, teach and work; and to expand the opportunities for students.

Most of all, I would like to say thank you. We acknowledge and appreciate the faithfulness of our families, the optimism and dynamism of our students, and the passionate professionalism of our faculty and staff. Together we have built the foundations of a cathedral that can stand the test of time -- an institution and community that can deliver on the bold and shared vision that first brought us together on a winter morning in 2014.