

School principals as “merchants of futures”

School principals are “merchants of futures” according to Dr Jerome Slammat, Senior Director: Community Interaction at Stellenbosch University. He was speaking to more than 200 principals at the annual principals’ conference of the Metropole North Education District that took place on 13 August 2011 in Worcester. Other speakers included Prof Zubeida Desai (UWC), Prof Anton van Niekerk (SU) and Prof Jonathan Jansen (UFS).



Slamat referred to Fataar’s (2010) geo-political analysis of schooling in the post-apartheid city of Cape Town to illustrate the enormous aspirational search for “futures” by learners and their parents. Yet, all this aspiration takes place in the presence of an extremely negative public discourse about schooling and education. Instead of reinforcing the current negative public discourse, Slammat chooses to locate himself on the side of *hope*. He emphasised the importance of *belief* on the side of principals to imagine schools that can provide bright, hopeful futures for its learners. Slammat advocates leadership that is visionary, ethical and inspirational. He challenged the principals present to renew their commitment to the vision they have for their schools to try hard to believe again. “I want to invert the old saying ‘Seeing is believing’: *Believing* is seeing; seeing in a different, hopeful way.”

Mr Henry Botha, Head of Institutional Management and Governance in the Metropole North Education District said, “Comments and feedback from principals express huge appreciation, not only for the content, but also the manner in which Dr Slammat presented. I trust that we will continue to extend our partnership with the University.”

Click here for the [full speech](#)