



HILTON COLLEGE

A letter from
the Head

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Dear Parents,

I trust you had an exceptional and restful half-term.

The next Einstein...

I was recently asked by a fellow Head whether I had found the next Einstein. This got me thinking...

I wonder whether, or how, Einstein was encouraged to imagine, to develop creativity of thought, to pause, to reflect upon his learnings, and especially his failings? If this was the case, I wonder how this environment was encouraged...

The act of educating is a delicately balanced art. Like parenting, we are required to support and encourage whilst also needing to point out weaknesses in a loving manner. This support is often easier when children follow instructions and produce the results that fit the expectation.

In the widely accepted 'modern' definition of success - that of always winning, of always being correct - Einstein would have been a dismal failure, I suspect. I wonder whether his curiosity would have been killed in a narrow construct of what success is deemed to be?

It is this prevalent dictum that success (at which we all aim) is measured by getting it right, or by winning, all of the time, that is counter-intuitive at an institution of learning. I fear that our boys easily become wary of creative thinking in their learning, in their playing and in their exploration of self, when we continue to reinforce this dictum.

Secondary school should be a place that encourages failure.

Everyone of Einstein's 'failures' inched him closer to real success. They all taught him a lesson along his path to extraordinary accomplishment in his latter years.

Our classrooms need to reflect a creative, welcoming place to attempt things; to fail, to try again, to succeed. I am concerned when boys are wary of attempting something for fear of getting it wrong, for fear of failing. It is only through attempting something, oneself, that one learns, discovers and develops.

Dare I say that the same applies on the sports field? Winning at all costs is counter-educational, at secondary school level. Sport - the British schools refer to this pursuit as Games - should provide the platform for boys to pit themselves against peers in a fun way; they should be encouraged to try new things, to fail, to try again. This is not possible if we measure success merely on our win / loss ratio; indeed character development requires both struggle and disappointment in order to grow.

I make this point as I notice boys who have become fearful of attempting something whether in the classroom or on the sports field, for fear of 'failure'.

Importantly, by encouraging boys to risk failure it is in no way a licence to be mediocre or a contradiction in our determination to hold high expectations of our boys. Quite the opposite. We must remember that true excellence is not the same as perfection; excellence often requires experimentation (and therefore possible failure) in the short term.

I am determined to find the next Einstein.

If we are, collectively, as determined as I am to be the most sought-after school in Africa, we need to cultivate a culture of learning through failing. Hilton should be a safe space to experiment, to fail, to succeed later. It is my hope that we unleash into our world, and especially into our continent, thinkers who will usher in change in academia, in civil society, in the arts, in the business community, in politics, in sport and in social justice endeavours. To this end our measure of success must be broader and more inclusive to encourage creativity of thought and a determination to try the untried.

With this in mind, I would ask that you engage your sons in conversations that require of them to relate their process of learning. They need to begin to be able to speak about their learning more and more easily (and constructively) as they move on up through the College. We need to move them through the monosyllabic 'grunts' that seem to be the language of teenage boys, and onto conversations that require of them to formulate an opinion and relate their reasons for their thinking. Their thinking can be flawed - that's okay - therein lies the learning opportunity.

As the significant adults in your sons' lives, let's insist on conversations that 'demand' their articulation of the process of learning they are engaged in. We should be asking what they have attempted at school, what topics they are discussing in class, what their opinions are about the world in which we live. I believe it takes a deliberate effort on our part to get boys talking about their learning in order to assist in their articulation of concepts and opinions.

An example of a deliberate extra on our part was the privilege we enjoyed of listening to 'My Father's Coat', a presentation by Michael Charton, that tells the broad story of South Africa through the ages, from five different perspectives - it is an outstanding 90 minutes of sobering historical fact masterfully told. I felt privileged to have been a part of the audience with Hilton boys from Grade 8 - 12 who were attentive and engaged throughout. We will continue to be deliberate in our selection of Guest speakers, such that our young men are exposed to the rich chorus of voices, offering varied perspectives, all with the aim of developing our shared and lived experience of being South African at this time in our history.

I look forward to developing the learning narrative at Hilton. I hope that more boys will engage more vociferously on matters of the mind, whilst being comfortable with being wrong from time to time and being prepared to fail in their pursuit of understanding and mastery.



DATES:

One of the advantages of my being new to Hilton has been my reflections in understanding the rhythm of the place and 2017 was particularly useful in this regard. At the beginning of 2018, we studied our calendar of events for the year and gave thorough thought to a few important dates, one of these is Speech Day 2018. Given a reorganising of Matric prelims, we have decided to hold our Speech Day on the 11th of October, instead of the 21st September. The rationale behind this change is to create a better rhythm to the Matric year, in particular, as our boys prepare for their final exam sitting. Further details of the event will be circulated in the near future.

I am well aware that many parents make travel arrangements early in the year and, as such, I do apologise for this change to our 2018 year plan.

We are in the midst of an exhilarating new year filled with possibility and promise.

STAFFING CHANGES:

Many of you are aware that we will see a changing of the guard in three Boarding Houses at the end of this year: McKenzie, Pearce and Newnham. The changes we have introduced to the duties in the houses, involving more resident staff, has elicited much interest in no fewer than twelve members of staff applying to the role of Housemaster and Deputy Housemaster as these posts become available later this year. This is especially encouraging given our full boarding construct. Everyone of the applicants presented strong options, however, the successful candidates are:

Housemasters:

- McKenzie House - Mr Lionel Julius
- Pearce House - Mr James Bullough
- Newnham House - Mr Chris Carey

The promotion of Mr Chris Carey and Mr Lionel Julius, together with the resignation of Mr Lionel Randall, has necessitated three new Deputy Housemaster posts to be filled. The successful incumbents in these posts are:

Deputy Housemasters:

- Churchill House Deputy - Mr Tienie van Wyk
- Pearce House Deputy - Mr Matthew Fairweather
- Newnham House Deputy - Mr James Robey

I am very excited for these gentlemen as they embrace new challenges. I know that our boarding will continue to go from strength to strength.



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UNIFORM:

We have agreed to add black 'slops / strops' to the Grade 10 - 12 summer uniform, in place of the infamous JCs. These slops will be available from our Stock Exchange soon after half-term. We are, however, insisting that only the Stock Exchange issue be allowed. Variations on a theme will not be tolerated.

SECURITY:

We are in the process of upgrading access control at our main entrance. Details of these improvements will be communicated soon. Please be patient should you be asked to wait at the gate and produce identification in the near future as the changes take effect.



ACCESS TO THE NATURE RESERVE AND ESTATE:

Please take note that the process for accessing the Hilton College Estate and Nature Reserve (all areas excluding the main school campus) has been revised.

As many of you know, the greater Hilton area, including areas surrounding the school are experiencing a significant increase in residential property development - all translating into more and more people using, or wanting to use our property. In order for the sense of place of our beautiful Estate and Nature Reserve to be preserved and the outdoor experience offered to our boys to be maximised, access control is being revised.

As a current parent, if you are a regular user of the Estate and Nature Reserve, or if you enjoy running or cycling in the plantations, please contact the Estate Office to arrange an access card or bike board that will be valid until your son matriculates. If you will be using the Estate and Nature Reserve infrequently a temporary access permit for each visit can also be arranged through the Estate Offices.

On Sundays during the school term, you are encouraged to use the Estate with no pre-authorisation. If visiting the Nature Reserve, you will be required to fill in an access form at the Nature Reserve Gate.

Please understand, we do not have a hospitality department dedicated to making reservations after hours. For this reason it is asked that all enquiries are directed to the Estate Offices during normal working hours (Mon-Fri) via email.

Estate Office email address - dwc@hiltoncollege.com

Thank you for your understanding in this regard.

Regards,
George