



HILTON COLLEGE



From the desk of the

Second Master

No. 21-01/ 16 February 2021

Dear Parents,

What makes great schools great?

Part 1: To teach or to educate, that is the question...

Recently I have been pondering the difference between good schools and great schools, and what it is that great schools do differently. I hope to write a few commentaries in this regard in the coming year as this is both a pertinent and gargantuan topic.

If we are honest there are many *good* schools out there and I'm sure that if I asked you to identify schools of this ilk, you would be able to name a few. These are schools with great academic, sporting and cultural results and I would imagine that this is invariably coupled with a dedicated teaching staff and world class facilities. But are any of them *great* schools...? To answer this question, we need to consider the definition of a great school.

For me, an outstanding characteristic of great schools is that they are those institutions that educate and don't just teach. Yes sure, you may well contest that the words educate and teach are one and the same... But, in common use, they are somewhat different. Teaching implies the active participation of an instructor in transferring extrinsic knowledge to a learner. This stands in stark contrast to educating; a term that implies the active participation of both the instructor and the learner in the process of gaining understanding.

To my point, words commonly associated with teaching include instructing, coaching and training, which broadly suggests that teaching is more facts based, formulaic and results driven. It requires pupils to absorb, repeat and regurgitate with little intention (if any at all) given to holistic learning in which EQ and character development are integral to the learning process. Educating, on the other hand, is often equated with words such as cultivating and refining. It looks firstly to the learner as a person, appreciating that each learner is unique, and that their learning is as much dependent on their emotional and character formation as it is their gaining knowledge. In order to affect this, true education includes a learning curriculum that goes both *deep and wide* in the life of a school - a framework of learning which celebrates all things experiential (all of the relational, imaginative, collaborative and exploratory devices that underpin learning in great schools) and which are facilitated by mentors, not teachers.

Many good schools know the value of a curriculum that extends beyond the formal syllabi of their academic, sport and culture departments - but few get it right. This curriculum, often referred to as the hidden curriculum, is so hidden it barely exists at all! Learning in this way is incidental and haphazard and any success is more credited to certain exceptional staff who are natural educators than it is to the intention of the school.

So, in summary, what makes a school great? As a first attempt to answer this question, I would suggest that great schools are intentional in their endeavour to educate. They imagine and operate far beyond the learning drills and formulas which abound in the curricula of results driven (and siloed) academic, cultural and sport departments. Great schools are always deliberate - by targeting learning opportunities in all areas of schooling they apply a holistic curriculum which develops their pupils in heart, body and mind. Hilton College has long explored the notion of being a great school. Leveraging our full-time boarding construct, we have created our own broad-based curriculum in our quest to educate boys to become the truest and best version of themselves. I hope to highlight some of these aspects in my next letter as we explore the depth and width of great schools' curricula. I am also interested in your thoughts about areas of our curriculum that we should consider as *great*, and areas that still require further work. I look forward to a lively discussion after my next letter!



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News

Our first term started exceptionally, and we have been very pleased with the general attitude of our boys and the great 'vibe' that has been so evident in our school. The boys are genuinely pleased to be at school and the staff, likewise, are thrilled that we are back to educating in-person.

One could never have imagined, however, how our school could be rocked to the core as we reel at the loss of a most loved staff member, Mr. Tony Richter, and his beautiful daughter, Alice. Our hearts are broken, and particularly for Caro Richter, their son Nathan, and the wider family. Last Friday was our chance to say goodbye to Tony and Alice at a memorial service held on our campus and virtually across the world. It was an occasion befitting of Tony and Alice who, in their own special way, have had a profound impact on countless others. They have left an indelible mark on our community and it is true to say that they will never be forgotten by us. As a school we stand resolute in our commitment to provide ongoing support to the family in whichever way we can, understanding that the process of healing will be a long one. It has been heartening to see how the wider Hilton College community has rallied in support and we thank everyone for the love they have shown. We ask that you continue to do so and to keep the family and the school in your prayers.

Announcements

Half-term

Half-term breaks are important moments in the rhythm of a full boarding school. Boys and staff need this break to refresh themselves and in order to operate at the intensity at which we do. Equally important is that these weekends are an opportunity for boys to spend quality time with their parents. Understandably, it is not possible for all boys to go home to their parents but getting off campus and having a change of scenery does boys the world of good. One of the most encouraging aspects of our school over the years has been how our parents have supported each other by hosting boys from afar over weekends and half terms. Thank you to all parents who do so! You are a wonderful support to these families and to our school.

Our half term break officially begins at 07:30 this coming Thursday; however, with the postponement of the Inter-House Gala (scheduled for Wednesday afternoon), parents may pick up their sons after classes from 15:00 onwards on Wednesday.

Second half of term

It is pleasing to see that the number of Covid-19 infections in South Africa has been steadily declining. We hope that this will continue to be the case so that we may do more of our 'normal' activities at school. We would be foolish to think, however, that we are in the clear and as far as possible we would like to limit the chances of any infections at the school. To this end, whilst we do not expect parents to have their sons tested for Covid before returning from half term break, we do ask that parents ensure that their sons avoid socialising during this weekend. In order to protect the community, our first two weekends after half term break will be closed weekends for all boys. We will, however, allow boys the opportunity to take one weekend leave on one of the weekends thereafter. Please will parents follow the usual procedures when applying for this leave. It goes without saying that a Covid outbreak following half term will be disruptive to the smooth running of the school and will certainly scupper our plans to open more activities for the boys. Your support and understanding in this matter is greatly appreciated.

We were pleased that most of our boys returned to school in January well-dressed and with decent haircuts and we thank the parent body for their support in this regard. By the half term break we will have had three weeks since the start of in-person schooling and we will have five weeks until break-up day. To this end, it is important that all boys return having had an appropriate school haircut and with their uniform in excellent condition. We thank parents in advance for their assistance in ensuring that this happens.



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Congratulations!

Sport for Lives is an extraordinary programme which enables boys, parents and staff to contribute towards worthy social development organisations such as orphanages and early childhood development centres. The principle behind the initiative is that teams and individuals commit to play their sport for an organisation of their choice and in doing so they generate support in the form of finance or time spent connecting or helping at these centres. We found that engaging with the Sport for Lives programme boosted our sports performances significantly as it increased the motivation to play for more than the scoreboard. This initiative, the brainchild and passion of one of our staff members, Mr Chris Kingsley, was birthed out of our school and has since grown to become an outreach tool used by schools across the country. Sadly, our sports teams have had no opportunity to engage with Sport for Lives since the suspension of sport in March last year. This did not, however, stop ten of our boys, from initiating an around-the-clock 24-hour *Swim for Lives* in December in support of Thandi House orphanage. The team members included Stefan Swart, Caine Letschert, Matthew Hayes, Dean Macleod-Henderson, Jack Hampson, Mitchel Wilson, Luke Rowe, Ryan Basson, Jarrod Siddal and Jordan Hein. The boys did superbly and with the help of support swimmers they completed 3631 lengths (90,775m in total), raising R50 000 for the orphanage. Well done boys!

In closing, I wish all our families safe travels and a restful half term.

Tony Shuttleworth
Second Master