



#TheShift Update – Ms Debbie Harris – College Principal

Good evening and welcome – Sisters, Brothers, Board of Governors and parents. Thank you for your presence here tonight – a night on which we, with great excitement, share our progress since the launch of #TheShift on the 19th January – just over 6 months ago. Of course, our journey as a college began many years before this and, throughout this journey, we have been guided and upheld by these principles (see picture) which informed and were the cornerstone of our proposed shifts that we shared with you that warm evening in January.



When we examined the principles of an inclusive community, we delved deeper into our curriculum, aiming to create one where we engaged with all in order to understand our students, address their individual needs, encourage their different strengths and abilities and equip them with the means to use their knowledge, skills and achievements. An inclusive learning environment where all are equally valued, critical thinking is nurtured and leadership is encouraged.

We are all called to lead in different areas of our lives and we need to value the contributions of all. We need to be aware of our privilege and be humble in facing our unconscious biases; recognising that all are created equal in the image of God and embracing all regardless of gender, culture, race, sexual orientation and religious differences.

Let us ask ourselves, are we able to recognise the different levels of privilege that our diversity affords us? Do we recognise that those entrusted to our care may approach situations differently, influenced by their diversity? Are we able to acknowledge the unique qualities of each person?

This principles of concern for the poor and social justice calls us to also use this lens when designing and implementing the curriculum and formulating policies to face complex social issues such as environmental justice and poverty. We need to engage with both the school and wider community to create a learning environment which includes everyone in a deeper way. To ask what is happening in our classrooms, in our school and in our homes regarding social justice issues and, more importantly, how might this exploration strengthen us as individuals and our school community?

Quality education empowers children to combat poverty and inequality in our world. Putting the child in the centre of their education encourages them to reach their full potential in a safe and supportive school. Quality education walks hand in hand with character education, to value and promote an ethos of respect and justice for all; we aim to foster a school that nurtures intrinsic motivation as opposed to the extrinsic motivation in the secular world. Leading by example, demonstrating that integrity, trustworthiness, generosity, humility and honesty are admirable; where self-respect, and respect for others support academic achievement. Where a rounded, complex personhood is celebrated and academic, sporting, cultural, social, spiritual and emotional progress is encouraged and acknowledged.

... and the principles that holds all this together is our faith in the presence of God in our school, believing, as did our founders, in the holy providence of God. We acknowledge all faiths and belief systems as being equal and deserving of genuine respect.

We hope that the presence of God imbues every corner of our school so that we are constantly aware of the love and power of God manifest in everything we do.

We are promised that where two or more gathered in his name, God is with us. We pray that all here tonight will feel the Holy Presence and that divine providence will guide all our deliberations, plans and the future of De La Salle Holy Cross College.



#TheShift Update – Junior School – Mr Neil Berndsen

I am sure you have all seen or heard the current advert, boldly stating that the first child to live to be 200 years old has already been born. I'm not sure if it's true or not, but for the purpose of what I'd like to share with you this evening, let's assume that it is.

So, how do you equip a child to live 200 meaningful and fulfilling years.

Education, and children growing up in a modern society are entering uncharted waters. What we do know is that old educational methodologies are not going to work and that it's not that schools SHOULD shift, but that schools HAVE to shift.

We have an obligation to our children to make learning exciting. Where they can engage, realise and work to their strengths, and feel confident when facing a challenge.

New approaches to education are not solely dependent on technology. We are, however, pleased with the new interactive boards and tablets in the school and the growing visible presence of technology. These devices are only resources, used to enhance a lesson - but they are definitely something that children can relate to.

St. John Baptiste De La Salle, one of the first teachers to use a blackboard in the classroom, was trying to modernise and shift education, exactly what we are trying to do 300 years later. One of his main objectives, was to cater for bored children.

I am proud of the amount of time the Junior School teachers have invested in upskilling themselves to be better equipped to provide creative methods of teaching our children. They are moving away from lecturing and expecting children to memorise, to creating new learning environments in and outside of their classrooms, encouraging the children to problem solve, think creatively and independently, be confident in sharing their ideas, and focus on skills, as opposed to just covering content.

We are well on our way to becoming a genuine thinking school, developing children that are solutionaries. It was wonderful to be able to celebrate the success of our newly implemented parent teacher meeting format. The children in the junior grades were responsible for directing the meetings. They presented and discussed their work, progress and goals in a positive and constructive manner with their parents. The thinking and questioning that was evoked during this process epitomises the higher order reasoning that we want our children to experience. I heard the story of a child at one of those meetings, who was in the middle of sharing what she had been working on and learning about, when her mom's cell phone rang. The child abruptly ordered the mom to reject the call, switch off the cell phone, as it was her meeting time. (There is another lesson for all of us in that - how often are we disconnected with children when they are trying to engage with us).

I also loved the story of a boy who, armed with his exercise book, re-taught every RE lesson he had learnt so far this year to his dad. Over an hour later, it was clear that with this boy, learning had taken place, and he didn't need a written test to prove it.

That boy (as was the case with many others) was excited. Excited to share what he had learned- not how children generally feel when writing a test or exam, yet they are doing the same thing, sharing what they've learned, (but in a different way). It's the power of Intrinsic motivation over extrinsic motivation.

Text books, workbooks and worksheets don't have to dictate the nature of a lesson. We are looking at ways to reduce the reliance on textbooks and workbooks. There is a place for some of these resources, but too much prescribed text can confine and suffocate original thinking, stifle creative teaching, promote boredom and dilute the desire to learn. This approach has also allowed us to vary our methods of assessing children. Assessing what children can and can't do, doesn't only have to be achieved through a test or exam. It is important that children are assessed formally, but it is even more important that children are assessed informally, orally, through practicals, by developing portfolios, projects, presentations and a variety of other different methods that can hopefully benefit them later on in life.

Through changes in teaching practices in the classroom and to outdated assessment methods, we can hope to reduce the false sense of dependence on homework. As with most of what I am talking about, it is a work in progress.



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A revised homework policy where children may receive homework on a Monday, Tuesday and Thursday only, has been finalised. Foundation phase should only have about 15 minutes on these three days, Grade 4s and 5s 20, and 6s and 7s 30. You would have noticed I have left out Wednesdays. That is a no-homework day.

A mid-week evening spent together as a family is encouraged. There should be no homework on weekends. Time to be still and rest is vital. Again, not always possible, but something that is aligned with our Catholic ethos and our understanding of what children need growing up in this noisy world.

When I hear about Grade 1s conducting lessons across the world via Skype, Grade 5s inventing greenhouses, Grade 6s doing practical lessons on commodity trading, I know things are shifting, and life-long learning is taking place. That's the explorative thinking that we want our kids to be exposed to, and get into the habit of doing, without even knowing it.

School doesn't have to be a boring place, but it will be, if we allow it to. We all know that children don't learn effectively when they are unhealthy, bored or anxious.

These approaches tie in to the academic vision of the Junior High School, and we are in constant communication regarding this.

School can't all be about fun. We are also responsible for developing the resilience of our children, for teaching the importance of discipline, self-control, our ethos and valuable traditions, none of which will ever be compromised.

With some of our shifts, we are asking staff and families to break from habits and form new ones. We understand that is not easy, but change brings excitement. We are particularly excited about our new Grade RRs. The teachers have been appointed, the renovations on the two classrooms begin next week, and I am pleased to say that those two classes are already full-and so our community grows.

Playball and music will be included in the Grade RR curriculum, and will experience the fully inclusive day that our Grade Rs to Grade 2s currently enjoy. Sport, music and academics all take place during the school day, allowing children more time to be children.

Schools need to be more than just academic institutions. And I have used the word "institution" intentionally. Many schools are exactly that...institutions. That is not necessarily a good thing, considering that correctional services facilities are also regarded as "institutions".

An invigorating and effective Arts and Culture programme breaks the mould from traditional academic institutions. Arts and culture exercises the brain in a way that not many other subjects can. It is an opportunity for children to move away from the fixed mind-set that music or the arts is only for a certain type of person. It promotes hard work and practice. The music evenings, our new addition to our termly calendar, is providing that opportunity for children who are keen to learn a musical instrument, and then work towards performing in front of an audience. My competitive nature is not allowing me to exclude mentioning our Grade 1 to 3 choir, the 100 strong Chickadees, who were the overall winners at the recent choir competition held at the Linder Auditorium. Our Senior Choir achieved an Honours award at this very same event. At this point I would also like to congratulate the high school on their excellent production - Legally Blonde. We have experienced similar joy this week with our junior school concert. What an incredible way to see children in a different light. Music and the arts is growing at our school.

So I hope that your vision and reason for sending your child to this school is more than just in the hope, that one day, they can be employable - school needs to be so much more than that.

With God's guidance, hopefully, on your child's 190th birthday, they can look back on their schooling years with fondness...and be able to say to themselves "I attended a school that was current, relevant, with an embedded faith and a well-protected ethos". Hopefully, they will be able to say, "I attended a school where I grew closer to God, where I wasn't shackled by anxiety, moulded into something that I am not, bored as a result of a stagnant curriculum or stifled because of outdated teaching practices".....I hope, that they are also able to say, "because I attended De La Salle Holy Cross College, I have not just mimicked society but have contributed to society, and have lived a life where my identity has been allowed to prosper, be celebrated... and I have realised my potential".



#THESHIFT High School News: By Mr Atholl Murray

Good evening ladies and gentlemen

January 2018 saw the launch of #THESHIFT. For the High School particularly, this meant a new structure, new challenges, and the need for a bold vision to ensure a holistic, relevant and progressive College.

In a rapidly changing world, we need to be relevant. We need to know who we are, and we need to be intentional about it.

So who are we?

This shift is about much more than new subjects, collapsible timetables and meeting the needs of the 21st century pupil. It describes that space where we as pupils, parents, teachers and stakeholders of our broader school community reflect on our collective responsibility as a Catholic educational institution, and ensure that all our actions are aimed at achieving the mandate given to us by you and by the owners of the College.

I have become convinced of the importance of faith-based schools in the South African educational landscape. We boldly tackle social justice and transformation issues through our curricula; service and mission camps and our discussion series “At the table with the Saints” (to name a few). This informs our ethos, and it is our ethos that sets us apart from many of the so-called leading schools in South Africa. I am extremely proud of the initiatives we have launched and look forward to continuing our work in striving for a school community where all feel that they belong.

How have we been intentional?

#THESHIFT has focussed our attention on areas that perhaps required additional effort. This year’s major production, Legally Blonde, has shown us what we can achieve in the performing arts. Management remains committed to not only improving the cultural offering in the high school but also working closely with the junior school to promote the Arts throughout the College. The results are visible. To ensure the progress continues, we are going, next year, to appoint Directors to oversee the Dramatic Arts and Music programmes from Grade RR – 12.

Our pupils continue to be intentional in their sporting achievements. I am particularly pleased with our Swimming and Netball sections, who have gained promotion into higher leagues. A number of our pupils have achieved national acclaim in various sporting disciplines, including in Martial Arts (we have someone representing South Africa at the World Championships), and Cheerleading (where we have a couple of pupils who have been chosen to compete at the ICU World Cheerleading Championships).

Our preparations for the Junior High School are well on track. In that regard, I would like to thank Mr Liebenberg for his commitment and hard work. The space is ready, the teachers are ready, and the pupils are ready. We are confident that this initiative will greatly enhance the offering we bring to our College community, and we will continue to liaise with all the parties affected by this significant change.

Problem Based Learning (what we call PBL) is the way of the future. It brings a new and innovative teaching process to the classroom that is far better suited to today’s pupils. Instead of rote learning, students learn their subjects through being presented with carefully constructed problem scenarios for which they must find solutions. It is active, rather than passive, education. Our staff have begun training in PBL, and we have initiated collaborative partnerships with Elevate Education and Onsite Education, who are the leading experts in this field. As parents, you will get to meet the Elevate team in the first week of the 2019 academic year. This new and exciting innovation will, we are sure, greatly benefit our pupils. In addition, our teachers, in conjunction with Onsite Education, will have access to The Learning Buzz. The Learning Buzz is a highly professional online platform which will provide relevant PBL content that is applicable to the South African context. We’re really excited by this, and we are confident that you will be too!



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Speaking of PBL, our grade 10s recently presented their environmental projects to Sibanye Stillwater. They dealt with the problem of decommissioned mines. Their 4 projects were very highly praised, and we got unbelievably positive feedback from the Sibanye representatives. In particular, our students were congratulated for their ingenuity and skill in presenting. In fact, Sibanye were so impressed that there is a likelihood that our pupils will be afforded the opportunity to re-present their ideas to the senior management of Sibanye. Should any of the projects be implemented, the pupils will be asked to assist in a consultancy role. This is a real feather in the College's cap.

Another intentional development is our move to a new educational management system called Ed-Admin. This will massively improve communication between the College and our parent and pupil population. It will introduce a single, comprehensive source of information. New innovations include going "live" with our parent and pupil portals next term.

Know yourself and be intentional I could go on for hours. My high school English teacher always stressed the 3Bs when making a speech **be sincere, be short and be seated** I think now would be a good time to do just that.

Thank you and God Bless

#TheShift Update – Mr Paul McNally

In our presentation of #THE SHIFT in January, we made some big promises. I was worried that we may be biting off more than we could chew. I was also very conscious, after the event, that many people were saying, somewhat cynically, that they've heard it all before, and that it was another case of "*all talk, no action*".

But I honestly believe, and I think it is clear from the presentations tonight, and will become even more clear, that the College has gone a very long way towards delivering on the promises that were made.

One of the big drivers of #THE SHIFT was the establishment of the Junior High School. As we've heard, that is completely on track, and will be up and running from the start of next year.

In my speech in January, where I tried to sum up what we intended to introduce with THE SHIFT, I talked about things like a wellness centre, new innovations in teaching methods, sporting and cultural centres of excellence, and upskilling of staff and management. Again, as we've heard, these are all in train, and the effects are being felt on a daily basis – I hope you are all feeling them!

I also spoke about a change in attitude – the ushering in of a new vigour, a new way of looking at things, and a can-do approach. These things might be more difficult to see and to touch, but as a member of the Board, and as someone who deals on a frequent basis with the College management, I can assure you that the new vigour, the new vision, the new approach is very much in evidence. Again, I hope that the College reflects that, and that you can sense a difference.

One of the things that I said we would do, is that we would reduce the rate of increase in the school fees. We have worked very hard at that. It's not easy in these times of rising prices, rising expectations and rising competition.

In these circumstances, the fee increases have been close to 10% per year over the last few years. We have been worried that the community we serve just cannot bear that kind of increase.

So we have worked to become more efficient; we have tightened our expenditure, and we've tried to reduce costs, without impacting on the service that the College offers. As a result, I'm very pleased to announce, as you will be officially advised tomorrow, that we have reduced the increase to 7.5%. We hope that this will have a real and positive impact. We will continue to work to tighten things up.

Despite these efforts at frugality, we have also managed to convert another of our aspirations to reality. We have established the De La Salle Holy Cross College Foundation. It is still in its infancy, and we are committed to building it ultimately into a fully-fledged bursary fund.



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But even now, it has access to some funding, and its fruits will already be felt next year. We will, through a stringent and confidential screening process, offer partial support for fees to parents of children already enrolled at the College. The current financial environment has meant that we are losing loyal families to cheaper schools, because they just cannot afford to continue to be here. We need to address that, and will be providing those most in need with some temporary relief where they require it.

Going forward, we hope that the Foundation will be funded primarily by donations from past pupils and parents, and perhaps Catholic and other institutions here and abroad.

So that's another innovation, prompted by #THE SHIFT.

And there is yet another that I want to tell you about tonight. We made it clear that #THE SHIFT would not come at the expense of the sense of Ethos and the Catholic spirit that is what sets this College apart. In that spirit, and specifically to uphold our Ethos, we have received a very generous donation from one of our *alumni*, about whom you will hear more later.

This man, a matriculant from 1963 (when I was born!), has donated an amount of R250 000.00 per year for a very specific purpose. He has asked us to establish an award that will serve to strengthen and reinforce the Catholic identity of the College. We have worked hard with him to create what he was looking for. After much discussion and consideration, we have established the St Jean Baptiste de la Salle Awards for Commitment to the Catholic Identity of the College.

The Awards will be made to one student in each of Grades 8 to 11. The criteria will be the commitment shown by those students to the religious life of the College. We want to identify students who live out the College motto, who display generosity of spirit, and who are generally a good influence in the College.

The winners will be chosen on the basis of staff reports, the completion of a project, and an interview with a selection committee. The award will consist of a trophy and a badge, but much more. It will also entail an 8 to 10 day tour to a destination with a religious theme, such as Rome or the Holy Land, often linked to another La Sallian school overseas. It's an unbelievable prize!

We are tremendously grateful for this incredibly generous donation. We believe that this award will become highly sought after, and will truly enhance the Catholic Identity of the College. We hope that the recipients will bring the experiences they have on their tours back to the College, to introduce new ideas and inject new spirit.

This is the true spirit of #THE SHIFT.

So on that exciting note, let me repeat what I said in January - #THE SHIFT is a good thing for this College and for you all. We ask you to embrace it, to support it, and to make it your own. We are moving forward!