

Principal's Farewell

As a new year begins, I can confidently say that 2018 was a year of great success at Chester Hill High School. Our learning and teaching community continued to thrive, focus on the pursuit of excellence and improvement and nurture the wellbeing of students as they grow and progress.



Our HSC results have been most impressive again in 2018. We are excited for our high achieving students and the incredible results they have reaped for themselves. It was so exciting to see the incredible Band 6 performances in Extension 1 and 2 English, 2U, Extension 1 and 2 Mathematics, Biology, French Beginners, Society and Culture, Music, Visual Arts, Business Studies and PDHPE. There were also Band 5 achievements in 26

subjects. Chester Hill High School continues to offer a breadth of curriculum and opportunities for students. This breadth of choice and high-quality teaching is the perfect learning environment for students who are committed and consistent in their dedicated effort. We are thrilled for all our hardworking students. I extend the warmest congratulations to all our teachers, students and parents for this shared success.

More good news just in has seen **Hania Zahra, Mujtaba Hussaini, Hawraa Al-Husseini** and **Noorzia Alizada** have been awarded the prestigious Friends of Zeinab scholarships. Hania and Mujtaba have won the highly competitive 3-year tertiary scholarships. No less highly contested, Hawraa and Noorzia have secondary scholarships that recognise their capacity to succeed. They are all most worthy recipients and we cannot wait to see how they continue to achieve great things in the future. I thank **Ms A. Smith** and **Ms Cremin** on their efforts supporting the intensive application process.

And as I reflect on the year's achievements, I have also reflected on the path that led me to this point, where I find

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myself writing addressing you for the final time as the head of this wonderful, wonderful school.

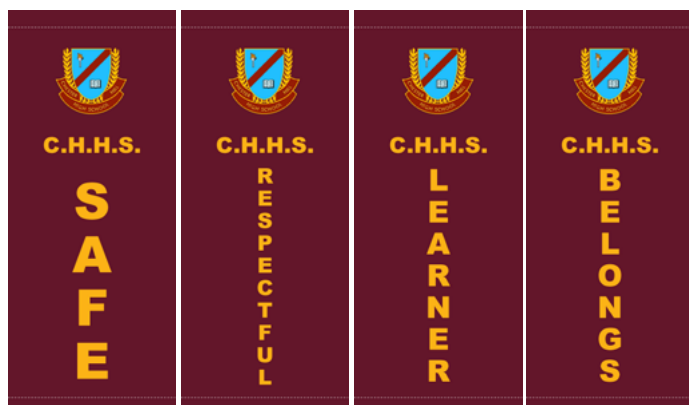
Since mid 2016, Chester Hill High School and Chester Hill Intensive English Centre have been recognised in a range of forums for the high-quality learning and teaching that is delivered here. In 2017, we were the recipients of the Secretary's Award for Excellence in Education and SBS featured our school in a comprehensive report explaining the powerful impact of the Welcome Program we run.

Teachers from our Intensive English Centre and mainstream high school have been recognised by the Department and outside agencies for their passion, skill and dedication to our community. In 2018, our IEC celebrated its 40th Anniversary. During these celebrations, we were privileged to experience deep consideration of the life altering impact that impactful learning environments can have on individuals and their families for generations.

We have continued to upgrade our resources and learning environments. The commercial kitchen is now operating and Hospitality as a VET course is being offered in 2019. The office building is now complete and fully operational, with the new front of house and school address on Miller Road. Students will also experience upgraded changerooms and other facilities when they return in Term.

Within our Year 12 cohort, we had an eclectic mix of personalities, talents and gifts. I also feel it is also important to note that we have students with a deep social conscience and sense of community and responsibility. These students and their demonstrated leadership and initiative have the power to make positive change happen.

With an increasing focus on preparing our students for the future, 2018 saw phase two (the second year) of our STEM implementation. Year 8 participated in the Pump 4 Life project, where students worked together in teams to look at how to sustain and African village, with a particular focus on the precious commodity of water in areas around the globe. Sustaining the work achieved in partnership with the University of Sydney's STEM Academy in 2017, CHHS was asked to present to the new batch of schools for the second time because of the successful nature of the processes and findings. We held our inaugural STEM fair this year and after significant challenge for many of our students, the quality of the projects and presentations were fantastic. The iSTEM elective was introduced in 2018. In 2019, the numbers are so strong, there will be two iSTEM classes running at full capacity.



Not to be outdone, the Lighthouse Futures team developed an exciting and innovative cross curricular project incorporating the implementation of soft skills and technology to establish an extension on culture and understanding. The coordination of Years 9 and 10 across the CAPA, English, History and Social Science faculties was driven by modelling the application of effective protocols that they could apply to their project and individual tasks in future. The results were spectacular, colourful, full of life and ingenuity.

We fielded two teams in an Education Changemakers Entrepreneurial Workshop/Think Tank/Competition where we won our round and our winning team progressed to the next level. The most exciting part of the concept was that the teachers had to form teams and participate in the workshops too. Because we really do mean it when we talk about learning for all of us. Even experts continue to learn. This is the only reason why the world keeps turning.

A team key staff worked tirelessly to work with students and secure scholarship opportunities for them. FACS, Smith Family, Public Education Foundation, Harding Miller and ABCN are just some of the amazing partnerships we have sustained or developed in order to secure opportunities.

We may not have won the White Ribbon Tug of War, but we made state in Volleyball and last week, Raphael in Year 12 won the prestigious Blue Award in the South Western Sydney region for playing Volleyball. Raphael Fraes has plans to support **Ms Poon's** coaching one day a week next term.

Our inaugural International Women's Day assembly was uplifting and inspirational.



Hania Zahra with Malala Yousafzai

On the evening following our Presentation Day, a team of our staff and student leaders attended 'A night in conversation with Malala' where Malala Yousafzai spoke about the past experiences that have propelled her onto the global stage and her lifelong purpose, which is to access education for the 130 million girls across the globe who are currently denied it. They heard a young woman, who only a few years ago as a girl, stood up to the Taliban attempting to stop her and other girls going to school and was shot in the face. The purpose of this trip was to provide an opportunity to students

that they otherwise would not have had. It broadened their horizons, deepened their understanding and exposed them to possibilities.

And this is what we are all about here at Cheso.

The most exciting thing about that evening was that our 2018 School Ambassador, **Hania Zahra**, was selected to ask Malala a question. In fact, one of our former students and ABCN scholarship recipient, Hajar, was also selected to ask her a question. The only two publicly educated students given a platform, were in fact, from Chester Hill High School. Four of our students, including Hania met Malala before the event. We were thrilled for our students and know that this will remain as a significant memory in their lives.

With all that Australia has to offer its citizens, it is difficult to fathom what it would be like living in such life-threatening conditions as Malala and so many young people are in the world. Would any of us be able to draw from the same level of courage and at such potential cost? And then, faced with this, would we be able to stand up in face of this?

But then we have so many students in the IEC from refugee and refugee-like background who have seen and faced terrible things and who when offered education here truly understand its value and do everything they can to seize the opportunities provided to them. When you are feeling lazy or down or lacking purpose, I encourage you to remember that many of our best performing students come from situations of disadvantage- either here or overseas.

What is the secret to their success?

There is no absence of opportunity to learn. Cheso has proven this time and again throughout its history. Our teachers are amazing in their quality and commitment. They come to school every day and their heart and soul is invested into everything they do.

Last year, former Olympian swimmer, Sara Ryan told a student audience what we already know- there are no shortcuts. The secret to student success will always involve a combination of harnessing personal attributes and sustaining productive practices.

Learning is training. It is an investment into the future of your mind, body and soul that starts paying off almost immediately. If you feel stressed, like, really stressed, then it is your body calling you up on your lack of preparation. No one goes into an exam chanting 'I'm going to ace this', but at the same time, when you truly know what you have to do, your nerves don't hang around- they make way for you to get down to business.

Last year, a team of staff members went to see Dr Stephanie Burns speak about success and how to go about achieving it. This woman experienced a number of obstacles in her career but nothing has stopped her. She pointed out some very simple things. Goal setting is just the start. The difference between goal setting and dreaming is the planning and implementation directly afterwards and always. It is recognising that achieving the goal- the 'doing' part, is where it can get ugly. It is repetitive, hard and probably quite boring work. Athletes train for years. All they do is the same actions repeated over and over again. They run up and down. They swim up and down. Musicians and dancers repeat the same actions over and over again, in order to realise their dream.

Why is it any different when it comes to scientific researchers? They run the same test over again. It is repetitive work. It can be boring. And this is where many people give up. No one pats you on the back when you are trying to become a successful business person, or if you are wearing a lab coat and conducting tests all day long. But it is having the strength of character not to give up and to keep reaching ahead of yourself to see how much more you can do, that will make all the difference.

I want every student to think about what we try to achieve at Chester Hill High School:

Strength in unity

Excellence in education

The answers are there. Work in unison with your teachers and parents who share one common goal- the desire for you to excel and succeed.

Pursue excellence at all costs. Demand it of yourself and of your peers.

Never give up. Dig deep and find the strength and courage to keep trying. I promise it will pay off.

My final words must be words of gratitude and love for all the wonderful staff, headed by my senior executive (the Deputy Principals) for their incredible commitment to our students and their families. Our school administration staff are included in this gratitude- they are so caring, hardworking and nurturing towards all our community and we are nothing without them. I will miss the students and their families. The school has continued to grow and improve since I first commenced and I urge you all to remember that the staff are the only other people on the planet who invest time and effort into your children- they want what is best for them and ultimately, that is equivalent to what you want. They are experts in education and so, their advice and their expectations are worth listening to. I wish each of you every blessing and success for the future. I am certain that you will support the next Principal, once they are appointed in order to achieve the strategic directions of the school. The position will be readvertised in Term 1, 2019.

Z Dabaja



Chester Hill High School students and teachers at "A night in conversation with Malala".