THE WAY

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FROM THE HEAD OF SENIOR SCHOOL

Unlocking Student Potential: The Power of Persistence

At our recent College gathering, our community came together to discuss what drives true, long-term success for our students across every year level. Looking out across our classrooms, it is clear that each student carries a different story, different levels of motivation and varied experiences of academic success. Yet one core truth unites them all: **every single student possesses unique potential.**

That potential is not unlocked by luck or talent alone. It is unlocked through persistence and commitment. The most successful individuals, whether in College or personal life, are those who keep going when others stop. College is not about being the best right now; it is about striving to be better tomorrow than you are today. Improvement is never a question of "if," but of how much a student is willing to invest in themselves.

A Lesson in Determination: Deng Thiak Adut

To illustrate what true persistence looks like when the odds are stacked high, I shared the inspiring story of Deng Thiak Adut:

- **- The Challenge:** Arriving in Australia at age 18 as a refugee from Sudan, Deng had been conscripted as a child soldier and missed his entire primary and secondary schooling. He arrived without being able to communicate in English.
- **- The Process:** Refusing to let his starting point dictate his destination, Deng enrolled in

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TAFE to learn basic English literacy. He failed early assessments, worked demanding night shifts to support himself and spent up to 16 hours a day wrestling with legal textbooks he could barely decode at first.

- **- The Result:** He built his knowledge word by word, essay by essay, ultimately earning a Bachelor of Laws and Master of Laws from Western Sydney University. Deng went on to become a prominent criminal defence attorney and was named NSW Australian of the Year.

Deng's journey reminds our students that academic success is not simply an innate gift. It is developed through hard work and persistence.

Seeing Persistence Across Our Classrooms

We do not have to look far to see this exact same determination in action across all year levels. Every day, we see students taking ownership of their growth:

- **- Dissecting Feedback:** Students carefully reading through teachers' and markers' feedback to pinpoint exact areas for growth.
- **- Drafting and Redrafting:** Practising skills and revising work to refine their understanding and mastery of content.
- **- Proactive Help-Seeking:** Meeting with teachers during lunchtimes or asking questions to clarify complex concepts.
- **- Showing Up:** Continuing to show up and give their best effort, even when tired, and even when personal challenges threaten to pull them off course.

How Parents Can Support at Home

As students navigate the academic year, parental support remains critical at every stage. We ask parents and carers to join us in reinforcing a few key principles at home:

- **1. Encourage Persistence Over Perfection:** Help your child see that a tough piece of feedback or a lower mark than expected is not a failure. It is data that points to the next step forward.
- **2. Value Effort Over Ease:** Celebrate the discipline of sitting down to study, completing homework and working through difficult concepts rather than focusing solely on the final grade.
- **3. Believe in Small, Consistent Actions:** Remind students that long-term results are built through daily, quiet habits rather than last-minute rushing.

The path through school may be demanding at times, but it is also filled with moments for students to discover their own courage and determination. Together, we look forward to supporting every student as they rise to the challenge and unlock the potential that has been within them all along.

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Head of Senior School

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