

Chemical Engineering beckons for Engen's top Maths & Science learner

Despite the daily challenge of self-doubt, Hillary Siphamandla Nxumalo persisted and managed to attain an impressive 90% matric aggregate – a result that has made him and his family extremely proud.

Hailing from Orange Farm in Gauteng, and an attendee of the Engen Maths and Science School (EMSS) hosted weekly at Zakariyya Park Combined School, Hillary achieved five distinctions, with over 90% in maths and science.

This set of impressive results secured him top spot amongst the 413 Engen Maths and Science School learners who wrote matric in 2019. Most importantly, however, it also secured him a place to study chemical engineering at Wits University this year.

“Qualifying as a chemical engineer will be the fulfilment of a life-long dream,” says Nxumalo.

Living by the philosophy of Vince Lombardi, Nxumalo agrees that, “perfection is not attainable but if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence.”

Nxumalo, says he is lucky to come from a loving, middle-class family of five and enjoys a comfortable life. He hopes to continue working hard and to become the best version of himself.

His advice for the matric students of 2020 is to study hard from the beginning of the year. “They also need to draw up study plans and follow them, and listen to their teachers.”

Nxumalo, says attending EMSS classes from grade 10-12 helped him understand the topics better, build confidence and draw up a concise study plan.

The EMSS programme offers supplementary Maths, Science and English tuition to underprivileged grade 10-12 learners. The Saturday classes are held at nine locations spread across the Western Cape (Cape Town), Eastern Cape (Port Elizabeth, East London, Cala), Gauteng (Johannesburg), and KwaZulu-Natal (Fairvale High School, Ganges High School, Howard College, Mangosuthu University of Technology).

The 2019 EMSS matric class attained an impressive 96% overall pass rate of which 70% attained bachelor passes.

Engen's head of transformation and stakeholder engagement, Unathi Magida, says the EMSS programme focuses specifically on providing extra tuition in “gateway” subjects such as mathematics and science, which are considered critical in addressing the country's technical and engineering skills shortage as well as economic growth and development.

“EMSS seeks to better the future of talented young people in difficult circumstances and to contribute to the pool of scarce skills in the country,” comments Magida.

“Starting off as Engen Saturday Schools over 30 years ago, EMSS is central to our efforts to contribute to the growth and transformation of the country,” continues Magida. “The programme has

worked tirelessly to transform young lives and has, we believe, made a meaningful contribution to a more transformed and vibrant South African workforce.”

Engen’s Corporate Social Investment Manager, Adhila Hamdulay is delighted that Engen is giving many talented learners a springboard to pursue their dream careers.

Adds Hamdulay: “In many cases, learners who go on to achieve excellent ‘bachelor passes’, with the necessary required university criteria, may also be eligible for the Engen bursary programme.”

Magida says the company is incredibly proud of the EMSS learners who completed matric in 2019.

“Our ultimate reward is to help set them up to pursue stimulating careers that won’t only benefit them personally, but also the broader macro economy of South Africa.

“We identify, support, reward, recruit, train and develop high-potential candidates for fulfilling careers in skills-challenged fields, in support of SA’s transformational agenda and Engen’s own business.”

And in an exciting development, the Engen Maths and Science Schools are being converted to include STEM/STEAM subjects in 2020, to prepare the learners and educators for the fourth industrial revolution (4IR).

“Engen is committed to building tomorrow’s leaders and if we want to ensure that the youth of tomorrow are prepared for a rapidly changing world, we need to ensure that they have the right mix of skills, for them to reach their full potential,” concludes Magida.

Engen congratulates Hillary and the EMSS class of 2019 and offers a well-deserved round of applause to all the learners and teachers.