



Academic Reflection and Leavers' Gift 2023

2023 Head Prefect, Lachie Odlin

Academic Awards Assembly, Friday 16 February 2024



Good morning, it is a privilege to be here to speak today, and I do think it is fitting that the last assembly many St Andrew's College students will attend before going off into the world is the Academic Assembly. As is the case with any school, academics are at the core of the St Andrew's community.

As I am a pretty fresh Old Collegian myself, I don't feel particularly qualified to give advice to students on how best to pursue their academics here. However, I have tried my best and reflecting on my time within this community, I have come up with three important lessons for academic goals and achievement.

They are:

1. What is achievement without a goal?
2. Study isn't fun, so get the most out of it.
3. Results matter and they don't.

What is achievement without a goal?

I think one of the most given – and most ignored – pieces of advice on academic achievement is goal setting. In fact, without setting goals there isn't really true success or achievement.

I am not embarrassed to admit that everything Mrs Leighton mentioned in the speal she kindly gave before my address, started off as being typed out on a Word document this time last year. The process of setting goals has given me a clarifying motivation and has ensured that not only is success for me is well defined, but achievable.

So, write down your goals and write out a plan to make them happen. It doesn't have to be long or complex; once you have decided on them, it shouldn't take more than 15 minutes to type out. Make them measurable, and more importantly meaningful to you – a goal does not have to be an arbitrary number of M's and E's, it can be getting the results to get into the hall or course you want, to beat you sibling, or simply to be able to leave school. No matter what you want setting a goal is always the first step to achieving it.

However, writing something down doesn't get it done, which brings me to my second lesson.



Study isn't fun, so get the most out of it.

Sadly, academic achievement is not one night of last-minute cramming away, it is the result of consistent and conscious study.

If you want to achieve your goals, you must do the mahi. It's pretty simple, it just takes time and effort. And despite my reputation of being a bit of a nerd, even I haven't been able to find much fun in the study grind yet.

While that part is obvious, I think that everyone in one way or another has probably already decided how much time they're willing to commit to their academics this year, despite whatever speech they heard in Academic Assembly. However, regardless of how much time you spend studying, you should always want to get the most out of it. I cannot overstate the importance of disciplined, conscious and efficient study.

Target the areas you need to improve on most, not just your easiest subject. Spend that extra bit of time finding the study technique that works best for you, not just aimlessly re-reading over your notes. Make a revision plan well in advance of exams so you don't have to spend the night before stressing over what you haven't done. While this approach to study takes more discipline and a bit more brainpower, it will earn you better results and in the long term will mean you can spend less time studying. It is also worth mentioning that by being at this school you have access to some of the best teachers, support and resources to make studying efficiently as simple as possible, so make sure to take full advantage.

And when the work is all over and the results are in, the third lesson becomes relevant.

Results matters and they don't.

Today I am sure there will be mixed feelings about NCEA results, whether they be good or bad. Although I think safe to say the bulk of you will just be happy you have another year before you have to look at an exam paper. Despite their importance and how you may feel now, it is not worth being fixated on your past results.

Academic achievement can take you places, and in the end, it does matter for halls, scholarships, applying for jobs and getting University Entrance. For the next few years of your life, these results are one of the first things any person looking at your application will see. NCEA results matter, whether you like it or not.

However, a bad internal, exam result or even a bad year of results is not the end of the world and will never define you as a person. Likewise, one good year of results is not going to carry you through the rest of high school or university. My advice is to ask yourself will this result matter in one month, one year, in five? In my experience the answer is pretty much always no.

So, try not to get hung up on results, they're done now and regardless of how they went the next step is always the same, try again and try harder.



Conclusion

So, as you go ahead and tackle the academic challenges ahead of you in 2024, remember there is no achievement without a goal, work hard, but more importantly work efficiently and at the end of the day life will go on regardless of the end result (though it might be without a nice university scholarship). I would like to end this speech on a Whakataukī that underscores the importance of academic achievement: *The bird that consumes the miro berry, owns the forest. However, the bird that consumes the learning, owns the world.*

However, not only is the Whakataukī a good way for me to end my address, it is the perfect way to introduce the Leavers' gift of 2023. Carver Alex McLeod has done a magnificent job of creating a wooden carving inspired by this Whakataukī, and has transformed this yearly tradition into a truly special mark last year's Year 13s will leave on the College. You are warmly invited to join us for the unveiling of the gift after the end of this assembly, where a full explanation of the design and the proper thank yous will be given. It has been my privilege to announce the unveiling of the 2023 Leavers' gift and to be able to speak before you today, thank you.