



Academic Captain's Address

Academic Assembly – Friday 13 February 2026

Katie Chan, Katie Foot, and Ken Minh-Ky Pham



Hi, I'm Katie and alongside Katie and Minh-Ky, and we're your 2026 Academic Captains.

When I say the word academics, most of you probably think about grades, NCEA, and endless past papers. And sure, while this is definitely a part of it, academics isn't just what shows up on a certificate, or what gets read out on this stage, it's also the clubs you join, the competitions you try, and the risks you take.

Sometimes those risks look big, like signing up for a new Scholarship class, or putting yourself forward for a competition. And sometimes they're smaller, like showing up to Maths Club, or asking that one question in class you're hoping someone else will ask first. Because if we're honest, a lot of the time the thing that holds us back academically, isn't ability... it's fear. Fear of getting it wrong, of looking stupid, or ultimately embarrassing yourself in front of your peers.

But real academic growth doesn't always come from knowing the answer, it comes from being willing to look a little unsure while you figure it out. Every person who's ever stood on this stage, every scholarship recipient, every academic award winner, all started in the same place: Confused, unsure, and asking questions. And the truth is, that never fully goes away.

There will always be a harder topic, another "end of topic test" you're not ready for, a calculus paper that makes no sense, or a chemistry formula that just won't click. But struggling is a sign of success – it proves that you're trying and haven't given up. So, instead of seeing those moments of proof that you're not capable, start seeing them as proof that you're pushing yourself.

As someone who has always been pretty good at academics, I've personally really struggled with Maths. When everyone seems to understand the formulas on the board all I'm seeing is a bunch of letters, wondering what the alphabet has to do with Maths. But I've pushed



through and attended my fair share of lunchtime Maths tutorials. So why not also attend Mr Howard's Maths tutorials, or Mrs Hamburg's Chemistry lessons, and take advantage of the bountiful opportunities you're given?

Speaking of opportunities, I don't know if you remember the start of Year 9, sitting in your Maths class, waiting to be sorted like marbles based off size, but I distinctly remember my start of Year 9, where I was comparable to a small fish in a vast, new sea, sitting in my then-Maths classroom – an eerily-lit room hidden down some back alley of the Science block. I remember Mr Howard reading out the names of students who would go into the 9NO Maths class, thinking that when he read out the name Katie, I thought he meant the other Katie, I thought it could never be me, a student from a school the size of one St Andrew's College year group. Back then, I constantly thought that my E-Asttle 6B's instead of 6P's and A's meant I didn't deserve to be in that class. This doubt constantly haunted me then, and honestly? Still does to this day.

But now, essentially five years on, and somehow an Academic Captain, I have realised over this time, that although this academic self-doubt may still nag you and make you want to give up, you don't need to listen to it – nor E-Asttle anymore. You only need to keep trying and to seek help if you need it – whether it be through tutorials or peer tutoring – which will be coming soon – until you do understand the seemingly impossible information your teachers are trying to explain to you. The same is true with NCEA, whether you're new to it or have done it for way too many years, persevere, and you'll get there!

Perseverance is amazing, sure, but only once you've started. I bet every time you hear an academic speech you're bound to hear about procrastination. And this time is no different. For my Silver Duke of Edinburgh's Hillary Award tramp, I waited until the absolute last minute to start packing; scrambling to get all my stuff together whilst also trying to sleep early for the actual tramp the next day. And guess what? I cut corners, had the wrong equipment, and was left shivering in my tent, wearing the same pair of clothes the whole way through. And that was just the tramp, so what happens if you procrastinate on something that actually does matter – like academics? Maybe you won't fail. Maybe you'll scrape through – but is that gamble really worth taking? Most likely, you do lose marks, and if not that, you'd be stressed, or sleep deprived.

Everyone procrastinates, puts off work, or goes “ooo~ cool thing over there that's totally not distracting”. So don't beat yourself up when it happens. But don't let it snowball. Other than just starting early of course. Something I found really useful was just chucking your phone out of the room, since obviously out of sight, out of mind. And if not, chuck yourself outside into a place where you can't get distracted so often, somewhere public, like the library, dining table, or even just sit yourself down right next to your parents. Procrastination is the smallest problem that you can face, as long as you battle it early.

Over our years at St Andrew's College, it's easy to get blinded by the achievements, awards, and frankly the people who seem to be effortlessly ahead of you. And when that happens, fear creeps in, self-doubt takes over, and procrastination feels easier than ever. But it's important to remind ourselves that some of the challenges we face are universal to everyone; so, keep your heads high and look forward to an amazing 2026.