

## HEADMASTER'S ADDRESS

AGM – 2016

Chairperson of the Governing Body, Professor Tim Quinlan; members of the Governing Body; staff and parents, good evening.

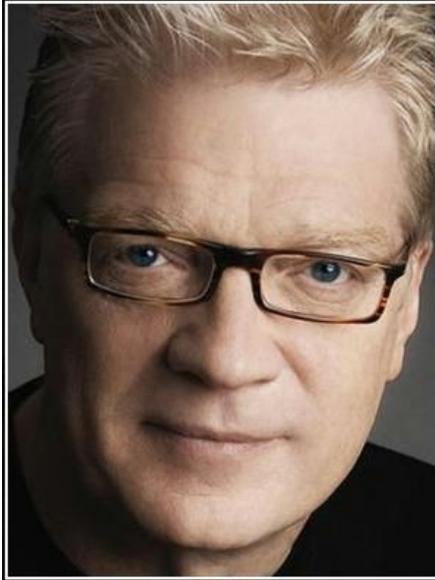
At prize-giving last year I spoke about heroes. I would like to open my address by quoting from another personal hero of mine, Sir Ken Robinson. For many years Ken Robinson has been a voice crying in the wilderness when it comes to worldwide educational reform. However, in the last five years people, important people, have started to sit up and take notice. Ken Robinson says:

"If you think of it, the whole system of public education around the world is a protracted process of university entrance. And the consequence is that many highly talented, brilliant, creative people think they're NOT, because the thing they were good at at school wasn't valued or was actually stigmatized."

- Ken Robinson



He goes on to say:



Our task is to educate their (our students) whole being so they can face the future. We may not see the future, but they will and our job is to help them make something of it.

— Ken Robinson —

AZ QUOTES

This is what I believe our task is at Greyton House, and it is why I have called 2016 “The Year of Innovation.”

Innovation isn't easy. Change isn't easy. It takes you out of your comfort zone and challenges much of what you have learned to hold as 'the truth' over the years. It's also easy to talk innovation, but when push comes to shove, many people slip inevitably back into their ruts and rediscover the comfortable, easy way of doing things.

The time between the last AGM and this one has been short, but much has happened. At the beginning of this year during staff development, I threw some pretty radical ideas at the teachers. My plan was not to force anything on them, but rather to show them how top schools around the world are approaching education. So much has changed over the past few years, and we, not only as a school but also as a nation, cannot afford to fall behind.

Many schools around the world are embracing the concept of 'Brain-Based Education'. In a nutshell, this involves designing a curriculum, lesson plan and classroom environment best suited to how the brain functions. We actually know a good deal about the brain and these studies are revolutionizing schools around the world. I presented the core of these ideas at the parent information evening at the beginning of the year, where I was so pleased to see so many of the parents genuinely interested and excited about these new trends.

I was so pleased when the staff embraced these concepts, and started to look at ways of altering their teaching style and approach to education in order to best accommodate the 21<sup>st</sup> Century child. Some innovations have worked, and some haven't, but it is important that we keep on trying and learning from each experience. A good example of this has been our Flip Week – this is an innovation that has huge educational value, but needs to be tweaked in order to make it more effective. Another innovation has been a change in our homework policy – this has arguably been the biggest challenge that many of the teachers have faced. In order to free up time for children to 'play', we have followed in the footsteps of other top schools and tried to structure individual extension time into the school day. Again – we are learning and growing and we truly appreciate the positive and constructive feedback that parents have been giving us.

It has been wonderful to welcome Mr Emil Bosch onto the staff as the Grade 6/7 Class teacher. Mr Bosch is a wonderful teacher who loves his class and embodies a gentle approach to education that fits in beautifully with our ethos at Greyton House. He has fitted in exceptionally well with staff, parents and students alike and I know that he will have a long and happy time at our wonderful school. We were very sad to say goodbye to Mrs Sandra Wiesner at the end of last year. She has been ably replaced by the effervescent Mrs Adrienne Rogers, whose tremendous energy and love for teaching have already made her a firm favourite with her class. She has discovered that the way to her class' hearts is through their stomachs! I have been doing a lot more classroom visits this year and it has been such a privilege to watch our wonderful teachers at work and to have enriching conversations with them about the choices they make in their classrooms. I can safely say that parents can rest assured that we have top quality teachers at Greyton House. The proof of the pudding is in the eating as they say, and I am pleased to report nothing but extremely positive feedback from last year's grade sevens who seem to have all settled in beautifully in their new schools and are coping well academically in most if not all subjects.

Another new innovation is our Greyton House Cares program. In this program I have asked each class to embrace a charity or charitable endeavour to help uplift and enrich the community. Through this program we have seen our students cleaning up the river, reading to and playing with children from crèches in poverty stricken areas, visiting and donating to Greyton Animal Welfare, EARS The Red Cross and other charitable or needy institutions. It is so important that we, as a school, are seen to be very much part of the community and not a privileged little island.

I have also encouraged our staff to tap into the exciting pool of knowledge in Greyton. We have had classroom visits from archaeologists, astronomers and authors this term. Our enrichment period continues to be a success with cooking, crafts, public speaking and photography as part of what we currently offer.

At the end of this term we will be bidding a sad farewell to Mr Grant Griffith. Grant is an exceptional drama teacher, but he has decided that it is time to move on from the Helen O'Grady Drama Academy to pursue other interests. We wish him all the very best for the future and hope that he will be willing to be part of the Greyton House family again sometime. I thank him for all that he has done to enrich the lives of our children.

Our music has reached a new level this year with the introduction of class music to Grades 4 to 7. We are expecting delivery of a marimba set early next term and can then set about starting a marimba group to add to the excellent school choirs. The Owlets have, once again, been invited to perform at the Greyton/Genadendal Classics this year and they continue to develop a very exciting sound. Mrs Dina Kuijers continues to get the most exquisite art work out of the students.

Our sport has started to flourish. When I arrived last year I introduced a second hour of sport and appointed Mrs Jeanne Theron as HOD Sport, freeing up some of her time to grow sport at Greyton House. Highlights since the last AGM include our hockey team going unbeaten last year, our rugby team winning a full contact game against Curro Hermanus and our athletes competing and winning against school many times our size. This year the excellence in athletics has continued and our cricket team recorded a win over Curro Hermanus. The addition of compulsory sport twice a week for the Foundation Phase with Mrs Wendy Dry running a ball skills sports session on Tuesdays and Mrs Theron doing athletics on Thursdays, cannot help but strengthen our sports as well as enrich and improve the lives of our children.

The journey towards owning our own land and building a high school continues. The "Buy A Brick" Campaign has met with significant success and I am sure we will be able to get the environmental impact assessment moving again in the very near future. I believe this is a priority for the survival of our school and I encourage parents to continue to donate to this campaign. I would like to sincerely thank all parents who have already donated for your generosity. I also ask all parents to support our major fundraiser, the Golf Day, coming up on May 6<sup>th</sup>. Even if you don't play golf yourself, please pass the information on to someone you know who does.

Even with all these positives the school still faces significant challenges. Economically things remain very tight. Life becomes very hard for the school when parents don't pay or are late with school fees. We have had to take a very hard line with non-fee payers this year and I implore parents to please ensure that payments are made timeously. Whilst our enrolment numbers are not bad, they can always be better, and I face a daily challenge of attracting students to our school. I have upcoming meetings with the community at Helderstroom Prison as well as community leaders in Genadendal, in order to broaden the scope of where our students come from. That said, we have welcomed 8 new students to Greyton House this year, and they have all fitted in beautifully.

Transport is also an issue. As Greyton House grows we will get busier. Busier on the sports field, culturally and in the classroom. Relying on parents for transport every time we have a function or sports fixture is not ideal for the school, legally, or for the parent with the pressures on their time and pocket. I am in the process of doing a viability study for purchasing a school bus. Unfortunately we can only do this if we are sure that the school can completely cover the costs. I am loath to place the school under any more financial pressure, but I do see a school bus as a priority.

Lack of facilities remains a challenge. I wish to thank Uitkyk primary for allowing us to use their field free of charge. I also wish to thank Mr Chris Hughes for allowing us to use his beautiful field opposite 1854 restaurant for our sports practices. The field behind the library has, unfortunately, reached a state where I feel it is no longer safe for our children to play on.

In conclusion, I love Greyton House with a fierce passion. I love coming to work every day. There is never a dull moment and I am truly blessed to work in a school with such wonderful children, staff and parents. I wish to thank all of you for the trust you have placed in me, and I look forward to walking hand in hand with you as we push on to an uncertain, but exciting future.

I thank you.