

Dear Parents, Guardians and Caregivers

Tena koutou katoa

I have included most of my speech to those at Senior Prize-giving in which I report on some of the initiatives that we have worked on in 2014.

I have mentioned before that the challenge of engaging the reluctant learner, the student who may lack sufficient belief in their own ability to really try, is a focus area for us at Glenfield College. While this is by no means all of our students, we want every student to maximise their academic potential in their time here and to develop into fine citizens. So what do we already do? What have we worked on in 2014 and what will we develop further in 2015? I spoke of the following: "In the classroom we look to recognise the smallest successes for these students and to break tasks down into manageable bytes to aid further success. We want to gradually build resilience by facilitating successes, but also by creating an environment where it is acceptable to get things wrong, but to try again. In this way we raise self-efficacy and help the student prove to themselves that they can succeed. Positive reinforcement counts and is just as valuable for a Year 10 or 12 student as it is for a Year 1 student. It is just as important at home as it is at school. Teenagers will simply respond differently to it than five year olds with a grunt replacing open-eyed exuberance.

In 2014, we have had several mentoring programmes operating in the College, all aimed at raising self-efficacy, keeping students engaged and goal focussed. We have had a programme for a group of Year 11 Pasifika students. We have had a programme for a group of senior Maori students involving a mentor from Te Whanau o Waipereira. I have mentored a small group of senior Maori and Pasifika students along with checking in on our top students at Years 11 to 13 and a significant number of other senior students were mentored by their Tutor Teachers. We are developing a process that ensures that each student's academic achievement and general well-being is being checked fortnightly. If they are tracking as expected to meet their goals, we won't intervene. If they are not, we will, to help get them back on track. We have consulted the students over their evaluation of these programmes to date and will review and modify our approach for 2015 once we have consulted staff. The point of difference in a school our size is our ability to respond quickly to the changing needs of students because we know them and care.

This year, for the third time, we took a day off timetable for all students in Years 10 to 12, so that each student could come in with parents or caregivers to discuss achievement to date and course selection for the year ahead. We do this because we see real value in the time spent on these conversations. They are valuable because parents are directly involved in the decision-making and can provide that essential support and follow-up at home. They are valuable because students have far greater clarity about what they need to do to reach particular goals and how to get there and they are valuable because they build better relationships between home and school. They are valuable because they help focus students on the task ahead and thereby engage them. We will continue to build on this practice in 2015.

Our Services Academy also plays a role in reconnecting students with formal learning. Where students have got into the habit of not trying because they don't believe that they can succeed, the Academy offers opportunities for its students to be challenged in different ways and to surprise themselves with their successes. They are given opportunities through their PT programme at school and through their camps run by the Defence Force, to undertake physical challenges that they initially doubt their ability to complete, but with support, when they do, you have a young person who slowly realises that the small self-imposed boundaries that they put on their own ability need to be pushed out much further.

The more often they realise, “hey, I can do this”, the further their self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy are raised. This growing self-belief also serves them well in the classroom when they return to full-time study here and beyond school. The Academy has served our students very well for eight years and we look forward to its continuance.” And then I spoke of a couple of other national issues of concern to us.

“I cannot sign off without having a go at some aspects of education policy or practice, not because I love to criticise, because on a per dollar spent basis we have one of the very best systems in the world, but because we can always improve and shouldn’t blindly follow others into failure. In recent years we have taken giant strides down the pathway of standards-based assessment and at a national level, of describing standards and setting targets. We have national standards at various levels in primary education, and in secondary education we have NCEA league tables and the target of 85% of school leavers leaving with Level 2 by 2017. There is, however, a significant body of international educational research which clearly shows that these things do not work. They do not lead to better-qualified, better-educated citizens. Two main things are likely to happen. Teachers will work tirelessly to drag those below the standard or target up to the standard at the exclusion of any time spent on extending those already above the standard. The outcome is that more students meet the standard, but outcomes on average are lower than previously. There is a loss of top-achievers and thinkers and a lot of bored students. The other thing that happens in assisting those below a standard to reach it, is that students are allowed multiple reassessments to the point where they are almost given the answers just before the test. This doesn’t deliver the creative and critical thinkers and problem solvers that we need, but it does meet targets. I can report that both practices are alive and well and widespread in our schools and that here, we grapple with the moral dilemma of doing what is educationally sound and just or simply jumping on the target driven waka to shoot us up the league tables. It is well worth noting that as NZ gradually slips down the OECD ranking list for educational achievement with no change to our tail of under-achievement, we face more and more pressure to meet targets. At the same time, Finland, a country with no national standards or targets, remains comfortably ahead of all countries similar to us. Food for thought.

Thanks to all parents, caregivers and whanau here tonight to support an awardee. Thank you for putting your faith in us to educate your child. We take that responsibility very seriously. We live in times when many in our area think that it must be better if it’s out of Glenfield. They are wrong. What we offer here is vindicated by our graduates, by ERO, by the Ministry of Education and by visitors to our school. Aotearoa NZ would be an even better place if the choice in education was between state and private and those choosing state went to their local school. In doing so we would build healthier communities, we would have fewer walking around with a sense of superiority and entitlement while others feel excluded, and we would solve the tail of underachievement by having a good mix of local talent in each school.”

Congratulations to:-

2014 Dux (Top student)

Nikhila Sayani

2014 Proxime Accessit (Runner up)

Jimmy Fung

Also congratulations to our Head Girl, Hinekura Foley and Head Boy, Sean Berg, for being fine leaders in 2014.

Early closure of school:- Classes will finish at 12.30pm on Wednesday 12 November as most of the staff have a Union Meeting commencing at 1.00pm. This is an entitlement under their contract. Should you wish your child to remain at school under supervision until the usual time, please contact us.

Ted Benton
Principal

Know how to contact your child's Dean. They are your first point of contact with matters relating to your child. You can phone the school on 444-9066 or send an email:

Year 9 Dean: Mr Sinclair on ext 744, j.sinclair@gc.ac.nz

Year 10 Dean: Ms Gray on ext 724, s.gray@gc.ac.nz

Year 11 Dean: Mr Filby on ext 718, g.filby@gc.ac.nz

Year 12 Dean: Mrs Card on ext 735, t.card@gc.ac.nz

Year 13 Dean: Mr Tod on ext 750, a.tod@gc.ac.nz

Important Dates

MON 10 Nov	NCEA Exams Commence	WED 3 Dec	Checkout Day for Seniors (all must attend)
WED 12 Nov	Early finish – 12.30pm	THUR 4 Dec	Senior Leadership Programme
FRI 21 Nov	Junior Exams Commence Students attend for exams only	WED 10 Dec	Last Day of Term 4 Junior Prize Giving 10am in the Theatre Year finishes at about 11am
THUR 27 Nov	Normal Junior Classes Resume		

Absences

Please phone the Attendance Office on 441-9773 or 444-9066 ext 909 or email the attendance administrator on absences@gc.ac.nz to report your child's absence. This email address is now available on the school website for your convenience.

Parent Portal

Register by email to reply@gc.ac.nz from your preferred email address stating your child's name.

Glenfield College is on Facebook



'Like' our page – Glenfield College Official – to keep up-to-date with happenings in and around the school.



www.kidslink.co.nz