

Good Evening and welcome to Mentone Girls' Secondary College's Presentation Night for 2017.

I love Presentation Night for many different reasons. Firstly, it is an opportunity to applaud the outstanding achievements of our students in all areas of the curriculum. Secondly, it's a time to reflect on the year, to think of the things we have done well and the things we might have done differently. There is an air of anticipation as all exams are finished and the promise of summer holidays await. For Years 7-11 Headstart begins and they have the opportunity to begin the preparation for next year.

For our Year 12 students tonight is the last time they will wear their school uniform and be together as a group. The entire school community will officially farewell them. One of my favourite parts of the evening is watching the girls leave the stage and run up the ramp, their excitement palpable. I, too, feel excited for them and even a little envious. Tonight is particularly special for my family as the youngest of our four children completes her secondary education. As she joins her classmates on their final run, our hearts, like many other parents, will be full and our pride in her immense. Our Year 12s will literally burst through those 'open doors', the thoughts of their futures bringing both joy and trepidation. As they leave the security of school behind I hope that they feel well equipped to face their next adventure. From MGSC they take a solid academic experience and a belief in themselves. They are young women who have a choice and they should feel empowered to be who they want to be. "Through courage and work" they can be successful, accepting and generous.

Just like our Year 12s, Mentone Girls' is also evolving and moving forward into a new era.

This year, we farewelled our Principal of 19 years, Ms Deborah Lehner. Deborah always encouraged students to be their best and inspired many innovative changes to our school to make it a College of enviable academic success. Deborah also introduced the Soweto Exchange Program and established the English Learning Centre turning Mentone Girls' into a truly global community.

We now welcome Ms Linda Brown as Principal. MGSC is in for some exciting times. Linda is a contemporary and enthusiastic leader of our school. I'm sure we will see many changes in the years to come. She is also passionate and knowledgeable about the education of young women. I look forward to watching Mentone Girls' Secondary College's journey towards becoming a school of excellence.

In a year of transition, Assistant Principal, Mr David Russell acted in the role of Principal. I sincerely thank David for his commitment. He has been steadfast and strong in his leadership but most importantly, David has been a familiar and welcome presence among the students. He is regularly seen in classrooms, corridors and at school events talking and listening to them. His interest and inclusiveness has won him the respect and trust of the students. Mr Russell is known to be a man of his word.

Supporting David this year was Assistant Principal, Ms Carol Duggan. With her gentle manner, Carol took on extra responsibilities whilst continuing her care for students and staff. Carol's commitment to the wellbeing and success of Mentone Girls' continues to make her a well-loved member of our school. Thank you, Carol, for all that you do.

I would also like to thank Ms Gayle Steinfort who has acted in the role of Assistant Principal. Gayle has moved seamlessly into this role and always demonstrates professionalism and a firm commitment to the education of our daughters. Gayle consistently looks for ways to help and improve our school. I have really enjoyed getting to know Gayle better this year.

Thank you to the teaching staff, support staff and administration staff for your ongoing commitment to our daughters and our school. You inspire them, listen to them and nurture them, encouraging them to reach their full potential. I hope you are excited to be entering a new era at Mentone Girls' and are prepared for the new challenges ahead that will turn our school into an outstanding school.

To the many parents who volunteer their time, thank you. We could not have the wonderful school that we do without you. Your work provides our girls with many extra opportunities and demonstrates how the gift of time and commitment can make a community strong and connected.

Finally, a word from one of my favourite authors, A. A. Milne. His famous characters, Winnie the Pooh and Christopher Robin live in the Hundred Acre Forest with a close knit group of friends. Things don't always run smoothly in that forest. The friends argue and difficulties arise but ultimately all the friends can find acceptance, strength and encouragement in each other. So, to our all wonderful daughters as you continue your life journey...

Always remember
You are braver than you believe
Stronger than you seem
Smarter than you think
And loved more than you know.

Enjoy your evening.