**Year 12 Graduation 2016**

**Kim Chapman**

Welcome parents/carers, family friends, students, teachers and finally – and most importantly – the graduating class of 2016, year 12.

Yesterday you had the opportunity to say goodbye, in your costumes, to the rest of the students. I also acknowledged the captains [Names of captains] and the terrific leadership they have shown. Today is our opportunity to formally recognise your achievements and to formally farewell you from Rouse Hill High School. For most of you this has been your safe haven for the last six years, but for some of you that time has been shorter, but you have all made your mark in some way.

Each year, for the last three years, I have written a speech for the outgoing year 12 group and each year, I try to find a theme that suits each group. The first year it was about finding their individual pathways, second year it was about making a mark in the world, last year it was about the qualities of grit, perseverance and resilience. This year it is about being an achiever, and in a lot of cases this year, the quiet achiever. Quietly confident, quietly achieving, quietly making their mark – the hallmarks of this year 12 group. Obviously not all fit into this group, certainly [Name of student] or maybe even [Names of two students] may be exceptions but there has been a lot of deep thinking happening by this group.

Today I want to recognise the qualities of those students in this year 12 cohort. So I did some research on what it is to be a quiet achiever, and the research says things like this:

* It is okay to be yourself.
* Find your own way, even if this might go against what ‘everyone’ says you should do.
* There is no need to feel envious of those people who feel comfortable in promoting themselves.
* You just need to do what you do best in a way that works for you. That may not mean blatant self-promotion or having a thousand online friends.
* Quiet achievers might often think 'if only I knew how to do that’, or ‘I wish I was more out there’. Envying those who achieve in a louder way may push you to try something new, but it isn’t about trying to become them. Feeling that you can’t be successful by being a quiet achiever is wrong. Many quiet achievers have come before you, with great success.
* It does mean putting your head down and getting the work done, or teaming up with someone who is really good at loud achieving (a loud achiever being the opposite of a quiet achiever?), or maybe it means coming together with other quiet achievers – or even finding your own little tribe who just completely get it, get you, how you work and who you are.

And I think that is how year 12 have operated, particularly over the last two years. They have found their own little tribes, and found a way to live together harmoniously. They have even included a number of the current year 11 students in their tribes.

The truth is, we all have our own way of thriving and succeeding in the world. Being a quiet achiever isn’t a problem – you don't need to be fixed or come out of your shell. You have something important to say and contribute to the world. And it should be heard.

Quiet achievers are often lovers of deep thought and learning, but not in a way that says ‘look at me, over here, learning new things and being totally awesome.’ The learning comes from within and the achievement is about personal development, instead of what others think.

Frank Ocean’s quote, “*Work hard in silence, let success be your reward”* is commonly referred to by quiet achievers. Quiet achievers have trust that they will get there. It will happen for them if they keep doing the work.

In this school we have some great quiet achievers, so I asked the staff to reflect on their time since they left school, what advice would they give their 17-18 year old self. Here are some of their reflections. You can think about whether they are showing deep thought and knowledge, the signs of a quiet achiever. Year 12, you can think about which one has meaning for you:

* [Name of teacher] - *Be brave, courage itself is worth the effort.*
* [Name of teacher] - *Those who matter don't mind, those who mind don't matter.*
* [Name of teacher] - *Treat others like you would like to be treated.*
* [Name of teacher] - *It's ok not to have a plan, so explore the world, travel, meet new people, enjoy life. Live a life you will be proud to look back on.*
* [Name of teacher] - *Be fearless in your pursuit of what you want, and work your butt off to get there.*
* [Name of teacher] - *Say thanks to your teachers and listen to your parents and start saving!!!*
* [Name of teacher] - *Who you are today is not who you will be in five years’ time, let alone ten, so don't feel like you have to do it all today.*
* [Name of teacher] - *Be true to yourself, reach for those things that make you happy and do not concern yourself with those that seek to take away your dreams.*

I thought, not too bad, some deep thoughts there but then I came across this one: *Grow your hair now, you might not get a chance later.* Who provided this piece of advice? Yes, one of our smartest deep thinkers, [Name of teacher].

So then I thought, if this is what I believe about this year group, the quiet achievers, what would some of the current year 12 students say if they were to think about when they were beginning high school? What advice would you give yourself now? Again, I leave it up to you to identify the quiet achievers among the year group.

* [Name of student] - *Be positive and don't change yourself to suit others.*
* [Name of student] - *Don't stress over who you are going to sit with or what mark you will get with your maths exam. Before you know it you will be standing before your teachers, friends, family and other students finishing this first chapter of your life.*
* [Name of student] - *Participate in sport and chess and practise your handwriting.*
* [Names of two students] - *Don't doubt yourself, even for a minute.*
* [Name of student] *- Don't stress, this doesn't determine your life.*
* [Name of student] - *Understand how important it is, but do not allow yourself to stress over it.*
* [Name of student] - *Leave your hair out more often, those pigtails are restricting.*
* [Name of student] - *Stop trying to be like everyone else.*
* [Name of student] - *Watch that black eyeliner.*
* [Name of student] - *Trust that God will get you through everything.*
* [Name of student] - *Cherish your friends and make the most of your life.*
* [Name of student] - *Don't be uptight, have fun through it all. Like a roller coaster, make the best of the ups and downs.*
* [Name of student] - *Get more involved and have no regrets.*
* [Name of student] - *Smile more, don't procrastinate, be organised.*
* [Name of student] - *Stand up for yourself, don't get involved in dramas.*
* [Name of student] - *Always ask for help, you are not alone.*
* [Name of student] - *Get involved as much as you can, have breakfast, it actually does help.*
* [Name of student] - *Take every opportunity you are given, no matter what everyone says. Even if it seems difficult now, it all gets better before you know it. You are capable of doing so much more than you could imagine.*

Then I came across a response from [Name of student]. You can make your mind up: *Outdo your other siblings so you can look like the best child out of them. Be first to get the mail at home – the school labels the envelope on the back with a* stamp … but he finished off by saying ... *Be yourself, everyone else is taken.*

So finally, year 12, I hope we have served you well and have provided a strong foundation for your future success. On behalf of the school community congratulations on your success so far and we wish you every possible opportunity for future success.

Your parents/carers and family know you best. They have seen you grow and develop over the years. Some of you will be sitting here feeling a little sad that this part of your journey is over, while others will be saying “Thank you, it’s finally it's over!!” Make sure you give everyone a big hug at the end of this ceremony.

However, I'm sure you can all look back and reflect on the growth and maturity you have developed over the years, and what fine young people you have developed into with so much talent and so much potential to make a difference in this sometimes crazy world. The community needs good people like you to show leadership and make a difference to help maintain a safe, cohesive society.

I am going to finish with a quote from a person called Ralph Waldo Emerson, born in 1803. He was an American essayist, lecturer and poet who I think in his day, supported this concept of the quiet achiever in his development of certain ideas such as individuality, freedom, the ability for humankind to realise almost anything, the importance of the soul and the surrounding world. The quote I have from him sums up my wishes for you year 12:

*To laugh often and much;*

*to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children;*

*to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends;*

*to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others;*

*to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition;*

*to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived.*

*This is to have succeeded.*

Good luck year 12, travel safely, quietly and with integrity as you find success, and make a difference. We look forward to hearing about your achievements in the years to come. Congratulations.

**Contributor details**

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Kim was Principal of Windsor High School from 2003-2008 and in 2009 she became the founding Principal of Rouse Hill High School. Currently Kim is a Member of the SPC Executive with responsibility for School Learning and Improvement, Student Learning and Assessment and Reporting. Her two current interests include investigating ways for teachers to measure their impact in the classroom leading to improved practice and exploring how Self-Determination Theory can be used in school to increase student motivation.​