



Academic Awards Assembly – Rector's Address

Mark Wilson

Friday 14 February 2025



Nau mai, haere mai

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou.

I'll begin by quoting a Māori whakataukī or proverb:

Ka tūtahi tatou

I te mātauranga he oranga wairua

Kia tū tangata ai tatou

Tēnā koutou katoa.

This proverb encourages people to stand together, valuing education and wisdom as foundations for personal and communal well-being and growth. This proverb echoes our purpose here today.

This morning's special assembly is a time in which we collectively gather together in unity, to celebrate learning and achievement, recognising that learning will enable us as individuals and as a community to grow and flourish in life.

A warm welcome to our parents and guests this morning who have joined us to celebrate the learning and achievements of our young people. Thank you to Board Deputy Chair, Mr Nick Letham, for joining us this morning to assist with presentation. Also, a warm welcome to our Year 13 leavers from last year. It is great to have you here today, to celebrate your achievements. In addition, we welcome a special Old Collegian – Frankie Morrow, our Deputy Head Girl in 2019 – she has returned as our special guest speaker for later in this assembly.

Now, I would like to share an important message with you all.

We are often told not to “sweat the small stuff” but I'd like to argue that actually sweating the small stuff is a key to achieving not just in your academic qualifications, but success in life generally.

Yes, in life high level strategic planning is critical, in establishing our sense of purpose and direction, and clarifying our core values and the fundamental things that are most important.

The implied wisdom is that such big picture thinking always prevails over narrow determination and single-mindedness.



However, when we look at the greatest inventors, greatest companies, and greatest teams of our time, their big success always comes down to tireless concern over every last detail.

I'll share some great examples to illustrate my message to you all today.

Firstly, the amazing success of our world champion All Blacks is based on a stoic determination to do the ordinary things better than anyone else.

Another is the popular principle of "Keep It Simple Stupid" (or the acronym "KISS") invented by the US Navy as an approach that states that most systems work best if they are kept simple rather than made complicated.

This simplicity focus was a feature of Steve Jobs approach, and his absolute focus on details that made Apple computers the leaders of creativity, design and function.

The "broken windows theory" of policing, applied in New York City in the 1990s, which focused on eliminating low level neighbourhood crimes to show people do care, and thus dramatically decreased more serious crimes.

Legendary Gridiron coach Chuck Noll's approach to his team's sporting success was based on a sport philosophy captured by his quote: "Champions are champions not because they do anything extraordinary, but because they do the ordinary things better than anyone else".

Doing the ordinary things better than anyone else means getting the small stuff right.

In terms of operating a highly successful school, the real difference is getting the small details rights to ensure the bigger plans are achieved:

- picking up litter means the bigger issues of vandalism diminish;
- ensuring homework is done helps establish the right work habits;
- insisting boys tuck in their shirts shows we care about appearances, standards and self-discipline;
- smiling and greeting people can make a significant difference to someone's day and helps creates a friendly culture;
- having students rework drafts of their school work shifts achievement to excellence.

Here at St Andrew's College, we want to "sweat the small stuff."

Please understand, this doesn't mean overthinking the small stuff. Our small consistent actions lead to big results; our daily habits will all shape the person we will become.

By paying attention to the details, as a College we try to ensure no student is left behind and we keep focused on our core educational purpose: raising achievement and crafting good character.

You focusing on getting the details right will not only be a big help for you in your academic learning here at school, but a skill that will help shape and set up your future success.



I appreciate that what academic success looks like will vary for each and every one of us – and each of us have different talents and strengths in which we can shine and be the best version of ourselves.

This special Academic Assembly seeks to recognise and celebrate those who have worked hard and got their details right, to achieve the top academic results.

Just as we celebrate in other assemblies and occasions, the successes of our champion sports people and teams, top performing artists and other high achievers in their specialist fields, today we gather to celebrate our top academic students.

As a community, we gather to celebrate the hard work, dedication and talent of our top academic students who have diligently got the small stuff right and as a result have shined in their academic studies.

So, let us celebrate and acknowledge our academic scholars.

No reira,

Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou Katoa.