

Good afternoon Mrs. Fry, distinguished guests, staff, parents and students. It is both my privilege and honour to have been invited here today to accept this award, and speak to the assembly.

This school has been a huge part of my life, as I'm sure it has been of yours, and I hope that each and every one of you will leave one day with the overwhelming sense of appreciation that I have, for what John XXIII has done for me. During my years in high school I listened to many of these talks, never really considering their true value. But I have come to realize that to some extent they did impact me, and I now find myself with the task of presenting one of my own, with the hope that I can pass on to you some small amount of 'wisdom' – if you could ever call it that - that I have acquired in my youth.

I would like to begin by drawing your attention to the reason for the constant struggle that is 'school'. We all devote 6 hours a day, 5 days a week, 40 weeks a year to keeping ourselves on track – and that's excluding the countless hours we put in, or sometimes should have put in, in the morning, afternoon and on the weekends. But why do we do it? What could warrant such tremendous effort and commitment over the majority of our childhood life? My answer to that is the reward. And the greatest reward, I believe, is to be able to look back on your education, and say 'I did everything I could.' To be able to move on to the next stage of your life without significant regret, having achieved what you were capable of.

Naturally there will be setbacks and disappointments on the way, but even so, every Friday comes with the satisfaction of a well-earned rest, every good mark comes with the fulfilment of a job well done, and the conclusion of every year comes with a renewed sense of relief.

So how can we readily obtain these rewards? Well, that's what I would like to further address. The path to reaching your potential as a student will be different for all of you, but there are a number of common elements, that when placed together, will go a long way toward setting you in the right direction.

Firstly, in every situation, think of your future self. A lack of work in the present can only lead to more trouble for the 'you' of tomorrow, and so it is essential to maintain a determined and organized mindset. Perhaps the most important thing I have learnt in hindsight, is to never shy away from a hard day's work. To start 'somewhere', and do 'something', is always better than leaving it for another time.

Secondly, turn yourself into a dynamic learner early. This term can apply to a number of things that make an exceptional student. Don't fall into the trap of being complacent. Be

accountable for every piece of work you have been assigned, and every piece of paper with your name on it. Be reasonable, because, of course, things won't always go to plan, but at the same time be prepared to critique yourself, or take on the constructive criticism of others, so that you can work on different ways of improving your output and results. Whether this is by identifying your strengths and playing to them, or by sticking to a rigid routine through timetabling, it is about learning how you cope best. Constantly re-evaluate where you are at, or where you could have been.

It is also of paramount importance to study efficiently. Your main enemy over secondary school, besides an unhappy teacher, is going to be time. Remove distractions and have a set amount of work to complete, or a time limit in which to do so. Although it may seem an obvious point, the benefits will be immeasurable – being able to enjoy your breaks or sleep easy, because that cloud of unfinished work is no longer looming over your head.

And of course, embrace your teachers, give them a chance, and you will come to understand the benefit of a sense of mutual respect in the classroom. They aren't all as bad as you might think, and most importantly, they all want to see you succeed.

Next, I encourage you all to keep things in perspective. At this moment, school is the primary time consumer in your lives, and it may be hard to imagine life beyond it. Until the point when it is over, it is essential to maintain a balanced lifestyle. School is only 6 hours of your 24 hour day – and of course a couple of those hours must be set aside for sleep – but find something you enjoy to fill in your spare time on a regular basis. Have something to look forward to a couple of times a week, with the obvious options being sport, or socializing. Maintaining good friendships and distributing your time into other activities will be just as beneficial to you when you are done. Results are not the be all and end all – your education is more than what you acquire at school, and your life is far more than your education.

Finally, a point that can relate to all that I have said so far, is to be courageous. After all, it is not the things that you do, but those that you don't, that you will later regret. Don't be afraid to take on a challenge, as it is essential that you learn to trust in your own ability and preparation. Broaden your horizons with new things, even if they are not the considered the norm.

It has been said that 'In order to succeed, your desire for success should be greater than your fear of failure.' I always tried to operate with the motivation for success, and not the fear of what would happen if I didn't succeed, and I believe it is this attitude, that will reap the greatest reward. Never be prepared to settle, and never be entirely content with where you are, because you all have the capacity to be more.

