



Dear Parents,

I have just returned from the Odyssey solo site where I have seen group 2 and 3 spending 36 hours contemplating their travels but more importantly contemplating their life's journey. Shortly before I arrived back in Knysna I bumped into Group 1 who were struggling up a hill after taking a 16km detour after misreading the map. They were in surprisingly good spirits and their team leader, Athe Kwitchana, was trying to encourage them as they meandered the final few kilometres to camp after a long day in the sun. After climbing back in the car, I reminded myself that this group had learnt a difficult but important lesson – they were focusing on the road ahead and I did not hear one complaint about the 16km detour which had delayed them and had the potential to derail the fun they were having.

AB de Villiers, our national cricket captain, made the same impression on me the minute I saw his interview after we lost our semi-final match to New Zealand. He was gutted but there was not a hint of blame and only praise and congratulations for the side which had won. Athe and AB are both great leaders and it reminded me of our story at Oakhill.

Oakhill is 22 years old and the fact that we have come so far in such a short journey is remarkable and a testament to the founders, teachers and many Board members and parents who have believed in the magic which happens on this campus. Schools are not schools because of their assets – they are schools because they nurture belief and hope in the minds and hearts of young men and women. Your children are the school and when I interact with the young men and women on the Odyssey, I am reminded that we have the choice to be positive, encourage and support or we have the choice to point fingers, blame and focus on the problems. Oakhill is in an exciting stage of its existence and I am excited to be part of this story and journey at this specific place in time and I would encourage all parents to rally around those who you have elected to represent you on the Board.

There are difficult decisions to be made in the near future but they need to be made with your children's hopes and dreams in mind. Ultimately this is what Oakhill exists for! To educate and make a difference for the future of this next generation and I sincerely hope you are as excited as I am to gather momentum to ensure we are responsible and steadfast as we endeavour to do what is best for this, and future generations at Oakhill.

Professor Jonathan Jansen recently spoke to our Matrics as well as the Matrics from Percy Mdala and Concordia high schools and he said the following:

Work hard but remember that life is about more than just 7 'A's in Matric! He elaborated by saying that we need to make a difference in the community we find ourselves in and there are many who have made an extraordinary difference right here at Oakhill in Knysna. Thank you to everyone who plays a role in running this beautiful school - it is appreciated!

As we break for our Easter holiday I also want to remind you to ensure that you spend time with your children. Take time to listen to them, take time to interact at their level and more importantly take the time to tell them that you love them. Each year during our scholarship process we ask the candidates: If you could tell your parents one thing without any fear of reprisal, what would it be? The answers always awaken me from my slumber and make me think introspectively about what my kids would say. Some kids say they would love to

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say thank you for the privilege of a good education and a happy home but the three most mentioned responses, are the ones that worry me:

I would ask them not to spend so much time on the phone.

I would ask them not to exercise as much but rather to spend some time with me.

I would ask them to stop comparing me to others in my class.

These are shocking comments and can leave us in the depths of despair if we do not chose to engage, be present, support at all times and ensure that our own competitive nature does not get in the way of what is best for our children.

So, as we take a break from the formality of every-day school I would encourage you to remember that your kids are a wonderful gift given to you for a period of time. Cherish the moments, engage the issues at hand and most of all make sure they know (whatever age) that you love them dearly. My wish is that you will have a restful time with your families and that we will return emboldened and motivated to continue to establish a world-class school right here in Knysna.

Yours sincerely,

Shane Kidwell
HEADMASTER