

Board of Trustee Chairperson's End of Year Speech 2018

Good afternoon to you all. Welcome parents, caregivers, whanau, grandparents and friends.

A big greeting to our year 8 students – this is your special day. And to all of you Greytown School students, a warm welcome.

It doesn't seem that long since we were here a year ago! What an incredibly full year it has been. We have reached this last day of term, and I can seriously say it's been one of the busiest years our school board has experienced in the 5 years I have Chaired the board. And undoubtedly one of the biggest for our staff as well.

I have three "E" words to describe it – undoubtedly it's been "EXCITING", definitely been "ENERGETIC", and a word we might or might not think of – there's been the beginnings of an "EVOLUTION".

Normally I end with my speech with thank yous. But today, I'm going to begin with some, because those E words didn't just happen on their own.

This has been Patrice O'Connor's first year at Greytown School, and her first year as a principal. You would never know this unless you knew!

Patrice has performed with incredible competence, flair and dedication. I would say, and I know the rest of the board completely agrees, that Patrice has done us proud! We congratulate you on a wonderful year at the helm. We are proud of you and confident in every step of the way forward with you in charge. You have endeared yourself to children and families alike.

Energy doesn't even begin to describe the extra hours you have put in and the excitement you have generated across the wider school community. You have wisely chosen a path of evolution this year, not revolution as we move forward. (Maybe though, coming years will bring revolution – more on that in a minute!)

Congratulations on a fantastic first year.

Behind you though, is a seriously good team. We have seen you lead your team with dedication, genuine care and compassion, and strength. The whole Greytown staff has risen to your challenges without missing a beat. I thank you all – deeply – every one of you, without exception. You are a truly talented group of people and your commitment is outstanding.

I want to turn to the word Evolution for a minute.

There is no question that Greytown School and our wider community is changing very rapidly around us. As a Board and management team, we are committed to staying ahead of this and being prepared. There are some 300 or more new sections to be developed in our town, holiday homes becoming home to permanent residents and more families arriving almost by the week. We need to be ready for this, preferable a step ahead, and plan for the future. One of the first steps this year was to introduce zoning to our school. We are now unfortunately only able to accept children from in-zone families. This is a move that's not unique to Greytown. It is a tribute to our school that so many out of zone families have wanted to come to our school. But we simply haven't got room. What most of you wouldn't realise is that out of zone students are not counted as part of the total roll when determining the need for additional classrooms. The way the ministry funds and manages schools

buildings is by allocating funding to in-zone children only. They still fund us for teachers and the education of every child in our school no matter whether they're in zone or not, however the end result of this funding model is that having a lot of out of zone kids directly effects our classroom numbers.

Speaking of buildings and classrooms, this has been a big focus for our board this year. A couple of years ago, our planning was for building upgrades. Now, we are faced with possible building or bringing in new classrooms at some point in the future. Due to funding from government, we are unsure what we will be able to achieve on this front and when. So in the meantime, it's an evolution in regard to our buildings. You will have noticed we have begun to freshen up the school with painting. The whole school is being painted from top to bottom and children will arrive back next year to a very smart looking school!

As many of you have noticed our senior block is looking very tired indeed. It is due – or overdue – for some reasonably significant maintenance. We hope, if funding is available, to commence on this block later next year. We will use this opportunity to evolve towards the modern learning environments the Ministry requires of building upgrades.

Modern learning environments are not just about knocking down walls. They are about putting in place very strong and committed teams of teachers who work together in such spaces. I am hugely confident we have a dynamic senior teaching team ready and prepared to do this. I believe they are working collaboratively anyway, with walls they don't really need! This building work will mean a degree of inconvenience, but we will aim to do it seamlessly, with as little disruption as we can. Again, we are unclear at this point what the scale of renovation will be.

Alongside that, we are doing everything in our power to convince the Ministry we need new classrooms. But we are not the only ones, and it's a Wairarapa and nationwide problem.

We are doing our best to manage our roll, and the changes Patrice has made for 2018 are aimed at keeping class sizes down and teacher numbers up. Four syndicates of evenly spread age groups means that as families come into Greytown over the year, we have more flexibility about where we put them. All tribute to Patrice, it's a clever way of managing.

As a board and senior management team, we are committed to evolving the school in a way that school community is comfortable with. This year we, along with Kuranui College, commissioned some very important research, trying to find out our school's strengths and weaknesses, and what our families are looking for in our school.

This was invaluable and I would like to thank all of you parents who took the time to complete the survey. We refer to its findings all the time and we are using it to guide much of what we do.

It was heartening to hear that on balance, parents are very positive about and proud of Greytown School. We know there are areas to build up, improve or change and already we're exploring new ideas.

We are using the research to help us with our long-term planning – including defining what we stand for and want as a school. But there is a lot we can do differently. And this year's evolution could become an exciting revolution, next year! I've a feeling Patrice's energy is just a warming-up!

Patrice has put her mark on the school though, with simple but effective changes.

For example, next year's seniors will be taking more active leadership roles, with wider and more specific allocation of duties. You will see those seniors who choose to, wearing a new senior uniform top in reverse colours. She has introduced "crazes" for lunchtimes which the children have enjoyed immensely and which has encouraged friendships and fair play. She has introduced a new final awards assembly for pupils across the school. And there's been more that the teachers and children probably know the most about.

As is always the case, the end of year signals a changing of the guard in some areas. I want to acknowledge some staff who are sadly leaving us, all for exciting new opportunities. In all cases, we will sorely miss you.

Tina Reynolds, the much loved and always smiling year 3 and 4 teacher. Desiree Pearce, who has made enormous contributions in her 9 years with us, particularly in technology. Jackie Grey, one of our very dedicated teacher aides. Finally Sarah Robinson. Sarah has been our Reading Recovery and special needs teacher and we thank her for her invaluable work with the children at our school who need a bit of extra help. The results of her efforts are clear and there are many families who are very grateful for her commitment and care.

And to our whole community – thank you. The support for Greytown School we receive in kind and financial support is acknowledged and deeply appreciated. In particular, Chris and Lindsay Ward, from Fresh Choice, Greytown Trust Land Trust and Jackie and Jeremy and their company Pope and Grey who remain very generous supporters. And Murry Searle, Tony Lincoln and Brent Oliver, local land developers who allowed Greytown School to dig up and sell thousands of peony bulbs and flowers from land they are developing – reaping us an incredible \$14,000 so far.

But also, to the many volunteers and donors of all levels – thank you so much - it is all greatly appreciated.

And now finally, to our year eights and other pupils who are leaving Greytown School today. We wish you all the very best in your next educational and life steps. We hope you will look back on your days at Greytown School with happy memories and treasure all you have learnt here. We're proud of you and look forward to hearing of your successes in coming years. I hope your next steps are indeed Exciting, Energetic and Evolutionary!

Good luck and happy holidays everyone!