

Speech on behalf of Award Winners: 17 February 2012

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Great education relies on the successful collaboration of a number of factors –Among others, a passionate and motivated staff, great curricula which inspire students to develop an interest and learn more about a subject, and great exams which allow students to work towards and achieve their goals.

There is a lot to celebrate about the Cambridge International Examination system.

Take its rigour. Whatever the subject, we have all had to overcome what seemed originally like tough mountains to climb. Obstacles that made us temporarily question our self-belief. Whether it's struggling to complete a 50km tramp in AS Physical Education, having to analyse 29 poems in English Literature or navigating the roughly three hundred learning outcomes in IGCSE Combined Science, no subject is without its challenge. The difficulty motivates us and makes the success in achieving our goals more rewarding.

We appreciate how CIE allows us to explore international concepts whilst maintaining local relevance. Whether it's through studying the regeneration of Wynyard Quarter in AS Geography or the impact of the Christchurch Earthquake on our economy in AS Economics, we are always able to enrich our interest in the subject with a New Zealand context.

We embrace the challenges that CIE provides us. With exams that demand nothing less of us than in depth analysis and freshly personal insight. We are called upon to judge the causes and consequences of major historical events in A Level History and encouraged to openly disagree and contradict famous literary critics in A2 English Literature. We face examinations in which we are forced to do much more than merely recall rote-learned knowledge, we must apply it, use it to analyse new situations and demonstrate we understand the relevance of what we have learned.

CIE faces its fair share of unworthy criticism and as a student I become frustrated reading about the critiques in the media. CIE writes on its website that it is "...committed to extending access to the benefits of high quality education around the globe." This fact, and CIE's presence in over 160 countries has given cause for some to label it a "third world qualification." CIE's presence in the third world should not be something to criticise but to celebrate. When we learn that there are schools in Sri Lanka and Swaziland teaching Cambridge, that should be cause for great hope. With CIE partnering alongside governments in some developing countries to help them develop their own local version of the IGCSE, we should recognise with optimism CIE's emerging presence in these countries. In AS Geography last year I learnt that a child born today has a 97% chance of being born into a developing country. We in this room might consider ourselves lucky, but we are not unaware of the unlucky. We don't need a university qualification to know that the future of the children in these "third world" countries is strongly dependent on the strength of their

education system. I hope that in the years to come, CIE's presence in these countries continues to expand. We are proud to sit a qualification which provides services to students in some of the countries that need it the most.

Part of what we are also here to celebrate tonight is the passion we have developed for our subjects over the past year. Passion motivates. Passion for our subject and the passion to succeed drives us. Passion is what gets us up early in the morning for that final pre-exam prep and what keeps us going late into the evening as we revise with determination and not for the first time, more concepts and likely questions, fighting tooth and nail for any potential extra marks that will allow us to reach and exceed our goals.

A friend of mine said to me the other day that there's nothing more inspiring than someone who is really heart-beating passionate about what they do. We thank our teachers who are here tonight because they are inspiring: They believe in the importance of the subject they teach and they teach it with vigour. Most significantly, they believed in us – they set high expectations for us and told us we could and would reach them. We thank them for their incredible teaching and for their vote of confidence. The great curricula of CIE unleash the best in our teachers, whose own passion for the subject they teach we came to see embodied in ourselves as we strove to achieve great results in subjects we came to love learning.

CIE is a system that, at its core, believes in its students. Believes that they can cope with the demands of a challenging course. Believes in instilling passion in students through eye opening curricula. Believes in setting tough and rigorous examinations which push us to our limits. We thank CIE for believing in us. We thank our teachers for believing in us. We thank our peers and family for believing in us.

At my school, ACG Parnell College, which I am proud to have attended for seven years, we are encouraged to aspire, to Reach for the Stars. To get here tonight that is what you had to do. You had to aspire, you had to aim-high, you had to go for it. Congratulations to everyone who received a prize and have a great evening.