



The Wonder of Matricdom



The Class of 2020:
Growing in Acceptance, Rooted in Youth





First Week of Matricdom





Life is hard and easy, terrible and great, miserable and happy, messed up and put together.
It is all temporary.



The Matric Class of 2020 left no room for bad vibes on the last celebration before the approaching Trial Examinations. With the questionable cold weather leading up to our Matric 40 Days, being greeted by sunshine and blue skies was more than enough to add to the excitement for our Picnic with the Stars (not the night time ones, but the ones who are amazing people making their mark). This year of unfortunate events had wounded our final year and robbed it of most of its prescribed festivities, so the Matrics were adamant to make this event one that would not be easily forgotten.

Nothing could extinguish our burning enthusiasm by the time we had arrived at school, especially considering the great efforts made by Mrs Stear and our teachers as to ensure that we would be walking into school in high spirits for the day ahead of us. The matrics were pleasantly surprised to find our principal at her usual morning post, but this time, decked out as our school's most beloved bee mascot. One could not miss Mrs Stroebel's electrifying presence as Thing 1 from Dr Seuss's *A Cat in the Hat*, nor Mrs Gerber, fresh off the Harry Potter movie set. Mrs Mapoma looked absolutely stunning as Princess Diana. The staff welcomed us into the school grounds all dressed up. The matrics rose to the occasion too. Brazil Kilian and Zaraa Isaacs looked invincible in their matching outfits, twinning as the masked figures from the hit show, *Money Heist*. Our childhood heroes were thankfully able to feature in the festivities, with Kayla Kriega dressed as Katara from *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and Chaneal Labercensie as Violet from the *Incredibles*. Other costumes stood out as being a bit more close to home, such as that of Sibahle Mtyingizane, who geared up as a Richard Parker look-alike from our network novel, *Life of Pi*. Our favourite Disney Princesses paid us a visit, with Robyn Minnaar as Belle from *Beauty and the Beast*, Samantha van Jaarsveld as Snow White and Sisipho Vumazonke as

Cinderella. Even villains were allowed their time to shine, with Danita Prag as Maleficent and Lisakhanya Maseti as the Queen of Hearts from *Alice in Wonderland*. Kelly Wildskut's Kim Kardashian getup earned a chuckle or two, and while Amber du Plessis claimed that she was uncertain about who she had dressed up as, and we collectively agreed that she made a very good Ariana Grande impersonator.

Even with social distancing standards preventing us from renting a jumping castle, the matrics took on new and innovative approaches to make the day extraordinary. 10:30 marked the beginning of our festivities as we began to spread out on the top hockey field. Each matric received her party pack and a picnic spot. Eager to have our outfits photographed, we were also given the opportunity to visit the beautiful Social Distancing Photo Booth, where Joanne Miller and Chaneal Labercensie had carefully coordinated the tying up of balloons to the hockey goalposts earlier that morning.

About an hour into the proceedings, Vishani Patel, dressed as Severus Snape from *Harry Potter*, took to the 40 Days stage and stole the show with her musical item, performing a "Bella Ciao" remix by Sound of Legends, with Zaraa Isaacs and Brazil Kilian stepping in as her devoted backup dancers. Mr Hartley made his debut in the entertainment industry, showing off his wealth of knowledge in the properties of metals and other chemical substances with outdoor science experiments. As a result, the matrics had fire and smoke as our backdrop!

With our time together gradually depleting, we were suddenly taken on a bitter-sweet trip back to our childhood as we listened to the theme songs of all the hit television shows that made our younger days brighter. A sense of unity befell us as we belted out the lyrics to the opening themes of *Finneas* and *Ferb*, Hannah Montana and the like, albeit slightly off-key. To add to the rising nostalgic atmosphere, we were finally given the opportunity to open up the Time Capsules that dated back to Grade 7. While the moment itself was enough to bring about bright smiles of recollection of the early days, it became quite clear

that remembering the past had us fighting off the sudden tear or two. Remembering the times where we were 13-year-olds with big dreams was a special and sentimental addition to the afternoon's happenings, and one that will continue to hold a dear place in our hearts.

Our Picnic with the Stars could not have possibly been a success without those who had worked hard to make it so. A special thank you goes to OK Mini Mart Mosel for their generous sponsorship of the party packs for the Matrics, and to Mrs Razya Nathoo for her contributions towards co-ordinating the arrangement of the treats. We extend a warm thank you to Mrs Darweesha Rockman for the efforts made in organising the goodies and for her efforts in ensuring that the packs arrived safely at school.

A special mention must be made to all those who had assisted in the process of organising this special event. The matrics would like to use this platform to thank Mrs Stear for allowing us the opportunity to host a 40 Days Celebration amid the circumstances we are faced with. Thank you, Miss Oliphant, for your help in the planning process of the 40 Days Celebration, and for printing and laminating the invitations. A huge thank you goes to Mrs Stroebel for overseeing the arrangements and for arranging the teacher duty roster and the programme for the day. We appreciate the teachers on duty who supervised the celebration so well. With Mrs Gerber, Mr Weidemann, Joanne Miller and Romesa Muhammad constantly on standby with cameras at the ready, the matrics were able to have the best moments captured and we thank our photographers for the day. We also thank Joanne Miller, Mr Calitz and Mr Weidemann for the technical assistance for the event. A word of thanks also goes to Chaneal Labercensie, Justine Matthys, Alexandra Dennis, Tarryn Barry and Lisakhanya Maseti for their assistance in providing music, decorations, and the design and distribution of invitations as the Matric 40 Days Planning Committee.

I would love to thank my fellow Matrics for sharing this beautiful moment as a memory to take into the future. I hope that we can continue to share moments like these, because it is in sharing something that binds us to one another. And surely, by being bound, we will never really lose each other, even beyond the walls of Riebeek.



While we are all busy sanitizing the heck out of everything, maybe we could also clean up our attitudes. Let's work together to flatten the curve on hatred, ignorance, misunderstanding, miscommunication and blame.



It is the job of each generation to solve more problems than they create, and to lift up the next generation to be better than the last. Simply repeating the past does neither.





I asked a wise man, Tell me, sir, in which field I could make a good career? He said, "Be a g good human being. There is a lot of opportunity and very little competition."

Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.





The days that break you are often the days that make you.



Valedictory









The 2020 Matrics have a special place in my heart as they were the class that walked with me on my road to healing the first year after my husband passed away. They would wait for me near the prefabs every morning and give me the best hugs and Zhane Meintjes tried daily to touch my calves as she wanted to feel my muscles! It is also the class I shared the trauma of the loss of Jayde Panayiotou with and so we developed a closeness.

This is a very different Valedictory service from normal and it is very tempting to moan about all the things that have not happened. At Valedictory 2019, I spoke of What the Future Holds. I pointed out the way humans interact with each other would change and more people would work remotely and that human connections would be critical. Little did I know how profound those words would be! Fortunately, as we entered lockdown some of you were more prepared than others. Onesimo Sishuta had already had a trial run of lockdown when she got locked in the change room in grade 6 and slipped a note under the door saying "SAVE ME!"

The Class of 2020, instead of moaning about losses, let us look for the silver lining. Many of you had a chance to learn and grow in ways that will transform your lives. We do not want to lose sight of the life lessons and good things that have happened. I would like to focus on #life hacks #life lessons because lockdown certainly gave you, much to complain about and also so much to take forward and learn from. As former White House Chief of Staff, Rahm Emanuel, famously said after the 2008 economic recession, "you never want a serious crisis to go to

waste." So, without wasting this crisis but still acknowledging the financial and emotional hardships many faced, let us take a few moments to dwell on what we learnt. We started off the year with the theme of What a Wonderful World! Well, two months into your matric year anything wonderful was wiped out by Covid-19! But there was, in fact, much wonder to be observed and we had time to wonder. You got to experience never-before experiences on both a human and environmental level.

There have been positive environmental consequences from the pandemic. For example, the air quality across the globe has greatly improved. Wildlife is making a comeback in many areas – even penguins were seen walking down the street in Cape Town. We learnt that the Earth can be rejuvenated.

On a human level, we have been brought face to face with the most basic questions of life. What are we here for? What have we done with our lives? What do we wish to do? Who is truly important in our lives? What do we truly cherish? The pandemic lead us to some painful insights: If we know who is truly important to us and what we truly cherish, then why have we spent so little of our lives pursuing these things?

In Grade 4 you wrote about your blessings and perhaps you thought about these blessings as you wondered about the meaning of life during lockdown: Andisiwe de Boo, Cameron Jackson and Nangamso Pepetha said that it was a blessing that there no boys at Riebeek. Chevelle Ludeke said she was blessed by her dogs because they guard you and keep you safe. Anda Mbola said she hopes to be blessed with smart children and a great life. Mhlali Rasimeni was most blessed to know Phillipa Nelson because she was her best friend in the whole world. Onesimo Sishuta was blessed to have parents because her mother makes her food and does the ironing and her Dad buys her clothes and shoes.

Covid-19 forced us to appreciate the true value of many people whose roles in society tend to be undervalued in normal times: the nurses, the hospital orderlies, the people sitting at the checkout counters in supermarkets. We need to treat them with the respect they deserve. A lesson we learnt is that the people most important to us are not the famous celebrities or sports stars. We need more people considering careers in these essential fields. It is therefore very



heartening to know that the Class of 2020, from little, wanted careers that make the world a better place, such as Naomi de Boo who dreamed of being a nurse and Alexandra Dennis, Amber du Plessis, Okuhlekwehu Mjuza and Ammaarah Tiry who dreamed of becoming doctors. People learnt during lockdown to appreciate their loved ones and make deeper connections with them. I hope that we can sustain some of this when the pandemic is over. It stands out for me that in February most of the matric profiles referred to a family member that were valued. As Nichole Mackiedann put it, "My parents are my biggest inspiration because they are prime examples that a person can still be successful in spite of past circumstances. They always put their family first and always try their utmost best to give their children what they need most." I wish to salute your parents Grade 12s, as they have had a difficult year supporting you and I hope you have thanked them.

The arts played an important role during lockdown. Musicians created beautiful virtual concerts that have wowed millions. We saw musicians perform concerts on roof tops. We can hopefully look forward to musical contributions from our grade 4 dreamers, Sani Dili who wanted to become a singer and Azraa Rockman who wanted to be a famous singer. Cooking also became a popular during lockdown. It is reassuring that Jessica Craill in Grade 4 had her heart set on becoming a recipe book writer.

As individuals, we are often ignorant about the realities of other peoples' lives, but that changed to some extent during the pandemic. Covid-19 did not discriminate, but it did expose discrimination and privilege. There was, and is, a stark contrast between the privileged and under privileged. Suffering through this time has shown us that there is still much that needs correcting. If the pandemic has opened new eyes to these inequalities, then perhaps there is hope that we can face these challenges in a more united way without blame, without denial and with a sincere attempt to right the wrongs.

A crisis brings out both the best and the worst in people. It is an excellent test of character. Some people rise to the occasion and selflessly give of themselves. It is as Sibusisiwe Ketshegana pointed out, "We make a living through what we get, but we make a life through what we give." However, some people's evil side came out and they tried to use this crisis for personal gain. Corruption is



a pandemic in South Africa and one we must collectively fight. Many have learned new skills needed to hold virtual classes, meetings, and social gatherings online. Many of you quickly adapted to learning independently and online. You learnt that you were solely responsible for your success. As Uyathandwa Lupondwana wrote, "We should not be so expectant that the world will do us favours if we are not bringing favours to the world. As much as we want to take from any given situation, we must also be willing to give". More than anything your matric year has been defined by a recognition that entitlement will not cut it, that you will have to do your share.

One of the most important lessons from lockdown is the value of resilience. As Dean Becker, the CEO of Adaptiv Learning Systems said: "More than education, more than experience, more than training, a person's level of resilience will determine who succeeds and who fails. That's true in the cancer ward, it's true in the Olympics, and it's true in the boardroom." And, I would add, it's true in a school. Matrics you were called upon to draw on your strength to be self-disciplined to keep up with the work. Your resilience will stand you in good stead.

Families were forced into homes with each other during the pandemic, which sometimes led to fights and gender based violence.

Girls as you go out into the world, you need to establish financial independence so that you can get out of any abusive relationships. You always need to have money set aside, no matter how much in love you are. We also need to distance ourselves from cultural norms that keep women in abusive relationships. Most of us have relied on social media to stay in touch with people during the pandemic, but it is not the same as seeing people in person. Perhaps you would not have bunked school as much if you had known that your days together were so limited. Perhaps you would have attended more extra murals if you had known there would be no more chances. So seize the day in the future and make time for the people and events that give you pleasure as they are not guaranteed. I hope you realised how very special your school and teachers are. Your teachers transitioned from standing in front of you in the classroom, to communicating with you via social media and had to become very inventive in how to present the work to you. May you never forget that in this crisis your teachers were heroes. From the cold and dark mornings in June when they met you at the entrance in freezing conditions, to trying to teach without the shield falling off, to presenting speed

lessons so that the syllabus could be completed; your teachers served you. You have much to be thankful for.

This lockdown has been a learning phase for everyone. The most important thing that I have learnt is that I cannot take anything for granted. Things like early morning walks, chatting with my daughters, meeting friends, nothing is trivial. There are some burning questions that the Coronavirus has raised. Once this threat has passed, these are the questions that the next generation will ask us. History will judge us harshly if we were to proceed, post-Covid-19, like before, as if we have learnt nothing from this historic experience.

So, it seems that we learnt a lot from lockdown besides how to make pineapple beer. We learnt that to truly live is to adapt, grow and love. I think we all had a chance to truly see how very human and vulnerable we all are. I hope that we found that there really is more that unites us than divides us.

We have learnt that every person we meet has three things in common with us: we have all loved, we have all lost and we have all hoped. May you all love and be loved, may you grieve, but accept your losses and may you all have hope. Hope heals us. Hope drives away fear. Let your **hopes**, not your hurts, shape your future. We have great hopes for you, Class of 2020



A hurting, angry human is not a healthy human. A hurting humanity cannot create a healthy, peaceful world.

Valedictory Head Girl Address



We blinked once... twice... and in a little less than an instant later, it was all over. We closed our eyes for a moment, and upon reopening them, we found ourselves here, seated beside one another, just as we had envisioned for so long.

Parents, teachers, my beloved fellow Valedictorians, I would like to begin by extending the warmest welcome that I could possibly muster. No feeling could amount to the immense pride that resides in me for having been given the opportunity to relay the story that celebrates our nine years of growth. In the years leading to ours, we witnessed Valedictories come and go, and with each passing year, we grew all the more impatient. We could not wait until it was *our* time to sit on that stage, could not wait until we could finally leave it. It was as if each passing year made the sweet scent of freedom all the more taunting. And now, here we are, at one of the last pit stops before the end is with us.

However, to get to the end, I think it is only right to first acknowledge the beginning, because surely, that is where all of the greatest stories start. Now, I may be biased, but in all honesty, no one made ankle-length maroon skirts and oversized blazers look as good as the Grade 4 Class of 2012. It was at this point in

our lives where we could share BBM pins faster than we could share a packet of WikiNaks. And even then, ETV had proven to be the place to be on a Sunday night at 8. If Q-Lynn were here today, she probably would not admit coming to school crying after *her* 8pm experience, which entailed having to bear the second-hand trauma that came with watching Jack die in *the Titanic*. To summarise: we all miss Q-Lynn.

Grade 5 seemed to be an awkward space for us, because suddenly we were devoid of the attention that was paid to us the year before. However, still we were determined to make the year our own, with or without being placed in the limelight. A little bit into the second term and the 5C Afrikaans class was sure that Alexandra and Sanelisiwe would drop the mixtape of the decade, after confirming that the opening lyrics to their title track were: *"Broken eyes. Rotten nose. Een-en-twintig dags tot holiday... Yo."*

And considering the fact that we were quite an enthusiastic bunch to begin with, it was merely a given that momentum would pick up in Grade 6. Those lucky enough to have witnessed the strange sequence of events may remember Vishani's acts of heroism as she climbed through the window of Miss Johnson's class to get Breslin Byrne's lunch bag during break. Vishani had also shown us in the following year that throwing a bomb of bicarb and water at Phillipa Robinson was not the best way forward. Keeping in mind the amount of tears that spilled after that single incident, no one was seen with a bicarb bomb ever since.

Those who remained at Riebeek carried their swagger into Grade 8, while the new girls seemed to quickly adjust to their new home. And perhaps Lutho found the

furniture a bit too comfortable, considering the fact that she'd fallen right off her chair during SS after apparently trying to imitate the grace of a butterfly.

Fast forward to Grade 9, and Samantha claimed to have been going through a *"phase"*, spelled out clearly by her fresh but fierce haircut and her freshly shaven eyebrows – her own doing, might I just add. In an attempt to alleviate the damage, Brazil tried her best to draw Sam's eyebrows back on with a permanent marker. Glad to see that you've grown out of that phase, Sam.

Vena remembers joining forces with Uya Lupondwana and Kelly in hiding everyone's pencil cases and putting them all in Teneal's desk. Vena would also like me to put forward that she's still holding receipts against Justine and Zhané for telling Miss Mintoor that she had hidden the whole class's SS textbooks, even though everyone supported that Vena should go ahead with the prank to begin with.

Even with the new surge of pressure that came with the dynamics of Grade 10, the 10Cs were privileged enough to get regular visits from Mr Kobus, Mr Weidemann's alter ego, who steered us away from *Romeo and Juliet* to teach us a bit of philosophy here and there.

However, our fun times were short lived by the time that Grade 11 entered the group chat. We had barely taken two steps into the year and the Maths girls were already dancing to the tune of Mr Bacon's imaginary guitar. While his stay was fleeting, his presence still wafted in the air for a while, thanks to Onesimo's Oscar-worthy Mr Bacon impersonations, as offered during Science lessons. On the basis of our Science class's affinity for danger and Mrs Kruger's depleting patience, the highlight of our year was





probably our class fire, among the others that Anda had caused on Mrs Kruger's laptop while constructing them on the Phet Simulation games. While I could go on bragging about the unparalleled supply of laughs that came out of the Science lab, the 11Gs would like Miss Pot to know that never will they forget the time that "Cumberland" became "Cucumberland" during Macbeth reading sessions.

Soon enough, the doors opened to a whole new universe. And with that, we had come to realise that Matric looked way better when we were admiring it from a distance. Up close and personal, and the workload became a bit too much to balance with the added stress of trying our best to balance in our nurse shoes. However, even when we were thrown out of orbit, we still gravitated back towards each other. Together we faced the negative effects of a global pandemic, but upon our return to familiar grounds, it was almost as if the national lockdown had no effect on the bond we shared before. This became all the more clear to me upon writing this speech and upon feeling the sincerity behind the messages a few of you wanted to share with your friends and teachers:

Samantha, Kelly would like you to know you that she will always treasure you in her heart for being the light that keeps her going daily.

Romesa and I would like to thank Jodi-Leigh, Kayla, Robyn and Naomi for being both a source of comfort and care even in the darkest of times.

To Mrs Ferreira from the heart of Vena, she would like you to know that she loves and appreciates you so much and that she will miss you as much as much as she will miss the Consumers Pracs. Vena would also like to thank Mrs Stear for being the coolest Grade 7 Maths teacher ever, even though she never liked Maths at all.

Mr Bowles' Maths Lit Class would like to express their gratitude for all the laughs and amazing times they shared. They would also like to apologise for never doing their prescribed work in class.

On behalf of the Fake Scientists, I would like to thank Mrs Kruger, our favourite "girl hunter" in her absence, for learning to love us even on days where it was quite difficult. The Fake Scientists would also like to say that we miss Onesimo, our Uitenhage Einstein, very much and that we appreciated the time we *did* spend with you, because if you didn't answer questions in class, no one else would have.

I, too, have a few people to thank.

First and foremost, I would love to take this opportunity to thank my parents, the two pieces that make up the whole of me. To my father, my mirror image when it comes to striving for perfection, thank you for showing me the leader within me, and for having more faith in me in times where I had my doubts. We are both stubborn, but you have undoubtedly assisted in shaping me so that I can forever strive to be the best version of myself. And my dearest mother, the lighter side of my heart--my best friend. Your unconditional love and unparalleled support has steered me along even the darkest of paths. You have a beautiful soul and a tremendous mind, and I do hope that I can hold your heart close to mine for the remainder of this life and the whole of the Hereafter.

I would also like to thank Mrs Stear and Mrs Snyman, whose offices had become my first stop almost every break before Lockdown began. Thank you for keeping your doors open to me and my team. Although our term of service was short-lived, you have taught us enough about leadership to last us a lifetime, and no amount of thanks could ever be enough.

To Mrs Peltason, Mrs Gerber and Mrs Stroeel my Golden Trio of mentors, and of course all of my teachers, both those who have taught me and those who have not. I seem to find a lesson in every experience I have with each and every one of you, and I cannot thank you enough.

To my prefect body: I hope that the little time that we all did spend together as leaders had treated you well. I know that we had faced a multitude of challenges as a team and as individuals, but these were only few of the challenges we are yet

to face. May your path be illuminated wherever you wish to travel.

Chaneal, my confidant, my cute and fluffy Chanealie-Poo: No words can describe how grateful I am to have had such a charismatic soul by my side when I needed it most. The amount of energy you possess exceeds any possible human understanding, but I hope that you never lose your shine, because at the end of the day, that is what separates you from the rest of the world. So keep shining, my friend.

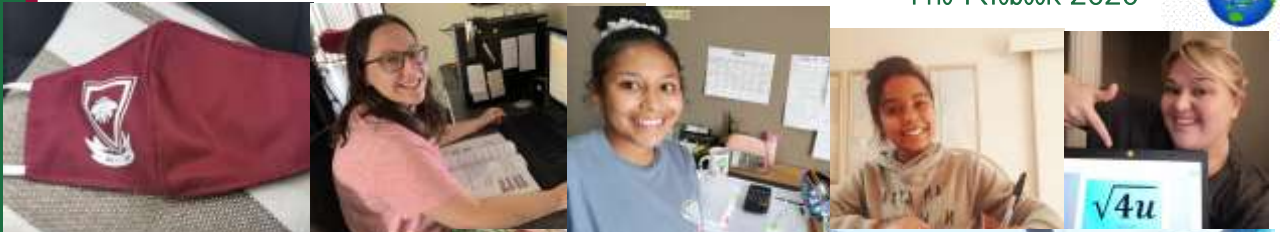
Finally, to my fellow warriors, the Class of 2020: we have waited so long for this year and now we find ourselves near its end. Thank you for not giving up on yourselves and thank you for having faith in the fact that we would all see each other at the finish line. We will often look back to this year and find ourselves wondering if perhaps we could have done something better, maybe said something better, wished that something did not happen when it, in fact, did. It is, however, important to know that you are not your mistakes, but that those mistakes rather contributed towards your growth and to who you are now. Remember that the best version of yourself is waiting for you far ahead, somewhere over the greyish horizon. And even if the road ahead is embedded with thorns, keep going. Run.

Thank you.

I would love to wish Wade-Lee and the Prefects of 2021 a blessed year of leadership. The road ahead is not an easy one to travel, but I have full faith in the fact that you and your team will keep your heads high until the very end.



Working on forgiveness can help increase self-esteem and give a sense of inner strength and safety. It can reverse the lies that we often tell ourselves when someone has hurt us like, *I am defeated or I'm not worthy*. Forgiveness can heal.



In three days' time the matric class of 2020 will sit for the National Senior Certificate examinations. It is the culmination of twelve years of schooling and a gruelling final year of preparation. For many this is an exciting moment, but one that is also fraught with anxiety. This year's exam will be written under unprecedented conditions. We are in the midst of a global pandemic. The nationwide lockdown we had to impose in March to contain the spread of the coronavirus caused immense disruption to everyday life and cost valuable hours of learning and study. The Class of 2020 has had to endure conditions their predecessors never had to confront. They had to adapt in real time not just to finish the curriculum but to catch up with the learning hours lost. Though some had access to online learning platforms and other resources, many had to struggle with access to learning material and teaching. They had to endure the mental strain of social isolation, and for many months were cut off from friends and their teachers. They were not able to participate in sporting, recreational and leisure activities that are so essential to a well-rounded life and that relieve the stresses of prolonged study. Yet,



despite having the odds stacked against them, our learners are determined to present for this exam that is the pinnacle of their schooling. It has been equally difficult for our educators. Despite the risk posed by the virus and resource challenges inside our schools, the majority of our teachers heeded the call to return to school to salvage what was left of the academic year. They presented for work every day to support our matriculants. They put in the extra hours to get our learners over the finish line, making the most of the resources they had to ensure learning continued. I salute our educators who have been there for their students when they were needed most. They have given so

much, personally and professionally. They put our learners first and in doing so affirmed once more that our teachers are among our finest public servants. This pandemic has brought our nation together in ways not experienced before, and this was demonstrated in the matriculation examination preparations. Without the support of parents, families and communities, our young people's path to the matric exam would have been considerably harder. We thank them for their support. To the Class of 2020, I wish you the very best. You have overcome difficulties that would test the resolve of even the most experienced and hardened adults. At your tender age, there are so many demands upon you. There are the pressures of rigorous study, the pressure to excel and to achieve the results you need to study further. And yet you have come this far.

