

Assembly at Merchiston Castle

- Thought long and hard about what I wanted to say
- Remember sitting on that 'bench' and tried to think what I would have found useful all those years ago.
- So, I'm going to talk to you about opportunities
- Your curriculum
- The story of a rural school in India:
 - 1 teacher who could not read or write
 - 174 children; 3 with no name
 - many mutilated for begging
 - 5 subjects to study:
 - 'personal hygiene'
 - 'the role of women in the home'
 - 'the role of men in society'
 - 'understanding childbirth'
 - 'how to vote in a general election'
 - at school for 1 year
 - all children desperate to attend
 - their curriculum did not provide opportunity – it simply provided facts they needed to know
- Back to Merchiston Castle – your curriculum is not about just providing you with important facts. It is about shaping your character opening your eyes to the endless possibilities for your futures.
- What are you going to do with your opportunities? Are you going to grasp them and succeed in doing what it is that you dream of or are you going to avoid opportunities because you can't be bothered putting in the required effort?
- I chose the latter when I was at Merchiston. I did what I had to do, I completed enough to get me by, just. I didn't study hard – I did only the amount I had to pass. I gave up the piano. I never played rugby again after school. I failed myself and I failed all those people who would give anything to have had the opportunities I had – like those children in that school in rural India. So as an adult I had to work so, so hard to create new opportunities.
- Don't make the same mistakes
- Be all you can be
- Be proud of yourself
- And remember the good fortune you have had in being given these opportunities. Do not forget those who have not had your opportunities. When you see homeless folk begging on Princes Street don't judge too harshly. By accident of birth it could be you sitting on that street doing the begging.
- When you are an old man what will you remember of your life? I hope you will remember those you helped, those you cared for and those whose life you made that little bit happier.
- In conclusion, be all you can be. Don't settle for anything less.

Rod Grant
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