A community is not only a collection of people. It is not a random grouping who are together for no particular purpose or understanding of time and place.

A community is essentially a place of presence. It is a truly meaningful expression of how humans are nourished by community life which renews us and opens our hearts. Community is strong because of the small things like fidelity, justice, listening and welcome. It is when one person is present to the other and notices their feelings and empathises with them.

In a school context community may be built on religious values, an historical story of the buildings or founders and on shared stories of families. For each student they come to the school community bringing their hopes and their dreams to achieve something for themselves that they haven’t done before. They are inspired by the stories of the past and encouraged to dream for themselves a new future that is different from those who have gone before and learn to live a life that reflects values of hope, justice, respect and community.

Schools provide an opportunity for the exploration of self in community. It is the most challenging and engaging time of a person’s life, during the years of high school, where the child emerges into adulthood and the path for the future begins. It is a time of experimentation in ideas and exploring relationships with peers and adults. In a community which accepts all members for the valuable person they are, the student can show courage and conviction in their ideas and actions.

Learning is most effective where a person is allowed to fail without judgement and the lessons learnt from this experience create more productive learning in the future. The pursuit of excellence is not the same as excellence achieved. It is the pursuit which is important for self-esteem and the capacity of the individual to know their limits and develop them to their greatest level. When an individual is in pursuit of excellence they examine firstly the goal then their capacity to achieve it. This is followed by energy and at times risk taking with their abilities and their talents to pursue an ideal and to understand their limits.

When this energy, drive and pursuit of excellence are applied to helping others and making the community better, young people are a force to be reckoned with as they show their commitment. The use of social media makes the connection with each other for a cause efficient and successful. The core of community is still PRESENCE to each other even on an international scale. It is the message created by one person to touch the heart of another which transcends race, religion and status in society. The common good is the beneficiary and the community of trust, faith or learning is enduring beyond the particular cause as the individual discovers their greatest gift to others in their school and wider community and that is their unique self.