

*Dear Danville family*

*As I write this email my first year of teaching is coming to an end, and what a year it's been!*

*I am a Grade 3 teacher in Cape Town, at a no-fees school in an area ridden with gang violence and where alcohol and drug abuse is rife. There is little to no parent involvement and many learners are absent for more than 50 days of the school year. It has been an extremely challenging year where I have faced extreme circumstances, but everyday has left me more and more grateful for the education I was fortunate enough to receive, for the remarkable school I was fortunate enough to go to and mostly, for the unbelievable teachers I was fortunate enough to have. I am quite an idealist but I have come to my senses enough to realise that teaching is not always easy and it is not always fun. The learners who need the most love often ask for it in the most unloving ways; but as teachers we continue to do what we do wholeheartedly. This is what makes teaching draining, tough and sometimes even impossible. So I would like to take this opportunity to thank Danville and all of its remarkable teachers, and I'm sure this 'thank you' will also resound in the hearts of these lovely Danville ladies here today.*

*Thank you. I mean it. Really. Thank you!*

*I thank you for the time you took to plan. I thank you for the hours you put into your lessons, but also your willingness to be flexible and scrap your plans to teach where we were at.*

*Thank you for the time you took to set up your classroom. Thank you for the posters and funny jokes about your subject. Thank you for the seating arrangements, table arrangements and classroom setup. As a teacher I now realise how time consuming these seemingly pointless tasks can be but I realise the value of them and have also realised that unfortunately teachers hardly ever get thanked for the effort they put into these tasks. So, thank you!*

*Thank you for the genuine care you showed. Thank you for going the extra mile for me. Thank you for providing a holistic education for me and encouraging me to pursue my sporting and cultural interests and passions. Thank you for committing to professional development. Thank you for trying new strategies. Thank you for all the extra hours of work you put in for me. Thank you for working so hard even when you were drained. Thank you for being a great teacher!*

*I am a better teacher today because I have your shoulders to stand on.*

*Did I mention, "Thank you"?*

*Lots of love, Cindy Stephens, Class of 2010*