

Speech by Iain Taylor, President of the Auckland Primary Principals Association to deputy and associate principals at the APPA Senior leadership conference in August 2010

Kia hiwa rä, kia hiwa rä!

Kia hiwa rä ki tēnei tuku!

Kia hiwa rä ki tēnā tuku!

Tihei mauri ora!

E ngā reo,

e ngā mana,

e ngā iwi

huri noa huri noa

tēnā koutou tēnā koutou tēnā koutou katoa

Be alert, be alert! Be alert to this extremity, Be alert to that extremity,

I have the spirit of life.

It is my pleasure and privilege as the President of the Auckland Primary Principals Association, representing over 500 Auckland principals, to be here this morning to open your conference for 2010, appropriately titled, considering the journey we have all been on this year with National Standards, **The Intrepid Journey**.

I am a teacher and I am proud to say that I am also a school principal.

I am also proud to say that I chose, and continue to choose to be a teacher and a principal and the journey of my career has been hugely rewarding, both personally and professionally and I hope your journey to date has been as well, and that it will continue to be!

Thank you for being here today. Thank you for choosing to be teachers and obviously successful teachers. **You are** here today, because you have demonstrated leadership qualities and they have been recognised.

You are the future principals of our schools. You currently teach the decision makers of tomorrow.

You are on your own intrepid journey in your schools and in your careers. After your students, you are the most important people in your school. You are the backbone of every school. You are the pipelines for change and improvement. We rely on you to imbed best practice into our classrooms to make the journey for students in our schools as exciting as possible.

Unlike the principal who takes the opportunity to think about new developments and strategic vision, you have the added challenges of not only being part of this strategic thinking but also having to manage stuff! Organise the relieving teacher, supervise duty, sort out the fights, and that's just the ones with kids in the playground, locate resources, clean up after people, find where the heck all the coffee mugs have gone from the staffroom, smooth out tensions all around the place and many of you while teaching your own classes.

You are often also the interface between the management of the school and the staff, the one who cajoles the staff along. It is you who have to be continually positive about happenings in the school both with students and staff. In doing so, you can have an incredible impact on the school tone, the people in it and the school's achievements. This is not an easy journey! It is a complex one! It can also be the best career journey in the world, if you don't let it get on top of you.

Who else on a daily basis gets to help young people reach up and grow into their future on the path of their own journey?

You are probably also part of the team in your school trying to make sense of the National Standards system and how these fit, or not, into your school. This is indeed an interesting journey for us all – the kids, the teachers, and the parents and a journey that is already proving to be incredibly time consuming for all teachers at the chalk face! Time that I believe could be better spent on far more relevant and exciting journeys for kids. I am sure like me, that it is not standards you fear at all - we already use a wide range of assessments which are standardized. We already know where a child's performance sits compared to their peers of similar age or stage and teachers already use a range of measures to inform judgments on where a child fits. What we fear is the impact of the proposed national standards system on the journey of our learners and how it could ever add value to that journey?

I am sure I speak for many of you here today, but perhaps particularly for lower decile schools it is "value added" that is far more important and valid than reaching a set achievement standard... we all know kids' journeys' are different - they arrive at school with a wide range of strengths and of course weaknesses, all the result of differing personalities, differing home backgrounds and experiences, and a host of immeasurable factors that make our kids who they are.

The revised NZ curriculum I believe is fantastic... and we really must ensure that 'testing' in the broadest sense does not signal a narrowing of its intent whereby schools only focus on literacy and numeracy. A broad education IS most important and we are all responsible in ensuring that, that broad educational journey IS exactly what our kids get!

An education which recognises the huge array of children's strengths and successes and builds on those. We want our curriculum to actively combine challenging life type experiences with academic rigour and creative opportunity in the personal educational journey of every student. BUT a journey of this ambitious nature cannot be confined to the classroom alone with a focus solely on literacy and numeracy. It needs to have elements of intrepidity and therefore the distinction of core curricular and extracurricular components is invalid in my opinion. In order to develop students across a spectrum of intelligences we cannot merely focus on literacy and numeracy, we must still do all the other interesting things... the things that make the educational journey for our kids memorable - we need to integrate experiences on the sports fields, in outdoor education, using technology, through service projects, in the art room, and in musical and dramatic performances. It has always been the strength of the NZ school system that an active, challenging curriculum journey provides students with the opportunity to develop all their intelligences and these then strengthen each other leading to well balanced, perceptive

individuals who have the confidence to take risks, to think outside the box and to take action to improve the lives of themselves and others. We all expect our students to be fully and constructively involved in a range of activities on offer in our schools and National Standards could well put a stop to many of these relevant and motivating experiences that our kids are doing every day, in every Auckland primary school. The message we want to constantly convey to every Auckland student is to grasp every opportunity available in their school. The worst thing that can happen is for students to leave our schools saying "I wish I had tried that" and we don't want that to be the case! National testing and any national comparisons or league table scenario could create that sort of environment and subsequently diminish the excitement of our kids educational journey.

But what about your future and your journey?

The paths to the future are not found, they're created and so part of our future journey now, is to make sure that a diminished educational journey for kids is NOT the case!

The theme of this conference, the keynotes and the workshops over the next two days will enable you to reflect on your role as a learning leader and how your intrepid journey may continue. Into principalship I hope as it truly is the best position anyone can have. It is exciting, it is different every day and it really is fun even if your Boss says otherwise!

To your conference coordinator, Linda Vane and her team, George Danielson, Dave Shadbolt, Paul Cochrane, Pelu Leaupepetele, Jackie Taylor, Michael Mayer, Faye Hauwai and Sue Maloney a huge thank you for taking part in this journey by putting this leadership conference together.

To our APPA Business Partners and friends, another HUGE thank you for your support and commitment and perhaps just as important, your interest in us and our journeys in our schools.

AND finally, to you, the leaders

Have a wonderful two days...

Enjoy your time away from school....

Be challenged, be focussed, take time to reflect, think about **you**, take time to socialise, checkout old friends, make new contacts and establish new networks because if you don't create your own journey, someone else will.

No reira, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.