

UHO

PUTTING WELLBEING AT THE HEART OF ARTS EDUCATION

TECHNIQUES FOR WELLBEING
BUOYANCY IN SCHOOLS

EMOTIONAL CONTAINMENT:
A MODEL FOR SAFE PRACTICE

KIA TŪ
KIA MĀĪA

RESULTS OF THE ARTS AND
WELLBEING NATIONAL SURVEY

SEIZE THE DAY

THE BENEFITS OF A DRAMA TRIBE

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EST. 2018

HEALTH & WELLBEING
FOR ARTS EDUCATION

FOREWORD

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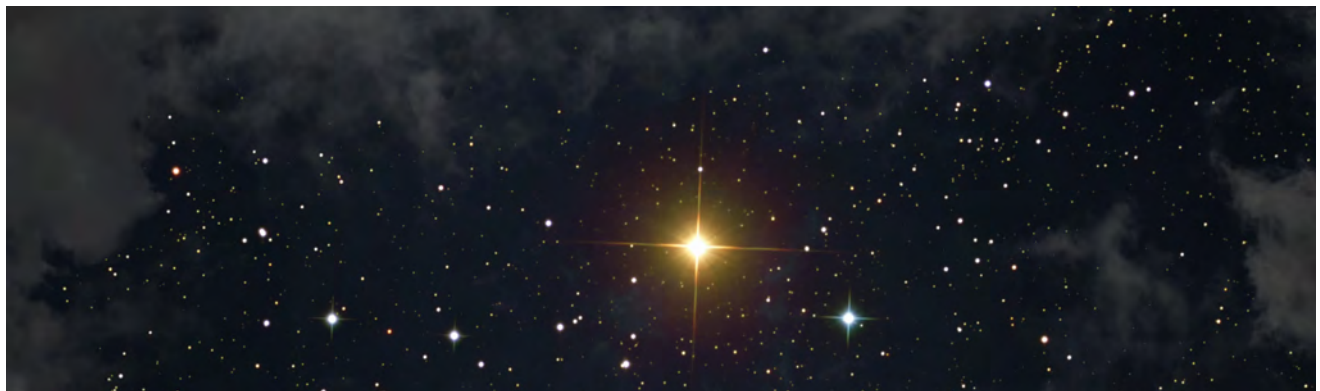
"KO ATUTAHĪ TE WHETŪ TĀRAKE O TE RANGI."

This famous whakataukī is about Atautahi, Canopus, being such a bright star that it stands out, providing a guiding light in the night sky.

It is a fitting proverbial saying to highlight the importance of teachers who nurture the creative lives of our tamariki mokopuna.

Arts educators who support the creativity of our tamariki, literally light the way in this critical aspect of life long health and wellbeing.

I had incredible teachers growing up who not only embraced the importance of creative expression but who were skilled in fostering this area of life. Persisting with me despite my lack of practice at piano, and in encouraging me in dance, theatre, singing, these experiences have made me a better mum, a better doctor with a better appreciation for the importance of the healing potential of the arts. And, these parts of me have provided much employment and enjoyment over the years.



This journal is a vibrant resource that brings together a number of these practitioners and disciplines aimed at strengthening the value placed on teachers focussed on creative expression.

As a child and adolescent psychiatrist, I can see very real benefit in this volume adding to the significant literature in areas of arts education practice such as Music Therapy. These authors provide vital documentation of practice-based evidence to benefit all teachers, whānau, community and importantly this work can inform the decisions of those who fund such activities.

Enjoy these inspiring accounts, from these shining stars of their field.



WHO ARE WE?

Gillian Towle

We are five passionate people who believe in the wellbeing of educators as well as students. Our organisation was created at a DramaNZ Conference in early 2018 and since then we have taken our individual knowledge, skills and passions into our own workplaces and now into wider communities.

In grateful acknowledgement of a DramaNZ Scholarship, we are thrilled to present to you this inaugural publication with aroha, with manawa and with UHO, the umbilical cord that connects all those who care about our teachers and our tamariki.

Purpose: To create policies and guidelines regarding mental fitness and wellbeing. To generate and share resources for, initially, arts educators. Support other educators with the implementation of mental fitness strategies

· **Vision:** To be advocates for wellbeing in the arts education sector by providing quality resources, policies and support. To empower arts educators to make positive choices regarding their health and wellbeing; to gather evidence on the 'flow-on' effect for students and the community

· **Mission Statement:** Our focus is to increase wellbeing in New Zealand arts education



WELLBEING IN THE CLASSROOM

Health & Wellbeing for Arts Education strategies

Box Breathing

Box breathing, is a technique where you take slow, deep breaths.

This simple breathing technique can heighten drama performance and concentration while also being a powerful stress reliever.



HEALTH & WELLBEING FOR ARTS EDUCATION JOURNEY

Gillian Towle

Sometimes people come into your life for a reason and there is a grace to that. In April 2018, at the annual DramaNZ Conference in Auckland, the stars aligned and 5 like-minded educators met; One presentation concerned Burnout in the Arts, one focusing on Hygge in the Classroom (the drama space) and the other on Cultural Competencies in Drama. These connections could have ended there. I was based in Canterbury whilst Ria was in Invercargill and Kimberley, Rachel and Diane were teaching in Dunedin. But from this meeting, a group was formed: Health and Wellbeing for Arts Education, and now, in September 2020, we are meeting once again and this time with a DramaNZ Scholarship. Our minds were conjoined but we all brought individual experience and expertise to the group, becoming 'stronger together.'



The presentations we gave had, of course, been planned apart from one another. Kimberley and Rachel must have Danish Ancestry as they love and are knowledgeable about Hygge :

**A QUALITY OF COSINESS AND COMFORTABLE CONVIVIALITY THAT
ENGENDERS A FEELING OF CONTENTMENT OR WELL-BEING
(REGARDED AS A DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC OF DANISH CULTURE)**

They called their Presentation: "Hygge Happiness - Finding Joy in the Drama Classroom and Beyond". Those of us fortunate enough to attend also received herbal tea and buns - worth noting for your own staffrooms! My Workshop on Burnout came from a very personal place, having been diagnosed with Burnout and Adrenal Fatigue at the end of 2016. My teaching tree was withering and dying; I needed time and took a year's unpaid leave in 2017. Diane's Cultural Presentation was Whanau ora and Ako- Cultural diversity in the Arts and a wonderful reminder of the cultural richness in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Ria came to Conference as a newly registered teacher who was beginning to experience fatigue due to her lack of key tools, skills or strategies to develop a solid foundation for her personal hauora as a dance and drama teacher. During the Korero session of the powerful “Shot Bro: Confessions of a Depressed Bullet” - a one man show by Rob Mokaraka - a question was asked: ‘...should teacher and student wellbeing be included with school policies? Or are they already?’ Many of us agreed that they should but unsure if these policies already existed. Our discussion led to the formation of HAWFAE and the seed was planted.



At a Think Tank in Dunedin, only 2 months after the Conference, we met and our first mission was to create a Mission Statement, Vision and Purpose:

PURPOSE: TO CREATE POLICIES AND GUIDELINES REGARDING MENTAL FITNESS AND WELLBEING. TO GENERATE AND SHARE RESOURCES FOR, INITIALLY, ARTS EDUCATORS. SUPPORT OTHER EDUCATORS WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MENTAL FITNESS STRATEGIES.

VISION: TO BE ADVOCATES FOR WELLBEING IN THE ARTS EDUCATION SECTOR BY PROVIDING QUALITY RESOURCES, POLICIES AND SUPPORT. TO EMPOWER ARTS EDUCATORS TO MAKE POSITIVE CHOICES REGARDING THEIR HEALTH AND WELLBEING; TO GATHER EVIDENCE ON THE ‘FLOW-ON’ EFFECT FOR STUDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY.

MISSION STATEMENT: OUR FOCUS IS TO INCREASE WELLBEING IN NEW ZEALAND ARTS EDUCATION

We made a connection with The Hope Centre, Albion Place, place of hope for all those navigating mental health agencies or the aftermath of suicide.

The roots of our newly planted tree were very slowly starting to spread and reach out to others. That first year we watered, nurtured and cared for our group and each other. We may have been separated geographically and professionally but we were now a tribe with intertwined roots and it felt empowering. "A seed is small but rich with possibility, like love, which is as humble as it is powerful" (Pir Zia Inayat-Khan). Individually we set about enhancing and enriching wellbeing in our respective schools. Initiatives included setting up Staff Wellbeing Committees; applying for Kahui Ako Communities of Learning Wellbeing roles; giving Presentations to our own staff regarding aspects of Wellbeing; adapting our teaching spaces, and asking our Senior Management teams about their Wellbeing policies.



THE SAPLING

**Ki te kore te putake e makukungia. E kore te rakau e tupu.
If the roots of a tree are not watered, the tree will never grow.**

On our collective journey, we focussed on our strengths and skills; this made us stronger as a whole:

Kimberley: Oranga mahi / Emotional Wellbeing- a whole staff approach / Wellbeing kete in the Drama Classroom.

Gillian: Positive Psychology and Positive Education / A Character-Strengths Approach.

Rachel: Manaakitanga - respecting the values and hospitality afforded by the Arts / Arts Education Relationships-embodiment efficacy / Identity- where the social and the psyche meet.

Diane: Supporting the Wellbeing of Neurodiverse students through the Arts / Whānau Ora and Ako- Cultural diversity in the Arts / Resilience and Mindfulness.

Ria: Wellbeing as an Arts Focus Inquiry / The Hesitant School / Counselling

As we grew individually and collectively, we also supported one another not just professionally but personally. This reinforced the benefits of belonging to a tribe and leaning on each other through good times and bad. We held each other up during difficult periods of our life and celebrated successes. We shared Links and Resources and discussed how effective our own school Wellbeing Committees/Groups were progressing.

Our confidence led to individual Presentations within our kura and disseminating surveys to gain further knowledge.

In February 2019 we held our second Think Tank in Dunedin and planned a combined 90 minute Presentation to delegates at the 2019 Annual DramaNZ Conference in Ōtautahi Christchurch. Gill also presented at the 2019 Positive Education Conference that same year, focussing upon staff wellbeing.

These talks were extremely well received and led directly to contact being made with the Ministry of Education and receiving an Invitation to speak at the Drama Australia Conference in Brisbane, April 2020.

A great deal of watering and feeding of our tree was happening, whilst also holding down full-time jobs in education! Many branches were growing and becoming stronger each year. In Term 3, 2019 funding was offered by DramaNZ to create policies, guidelines and physical resources to support the wellbeing of staff and students from primary through to secondary. This was a wonderful opportunity and helped to bring awareness of our HAWFAE tree to even more educators.



A STRONG STEM

We have all been consistent advocates for the arts and knew that, during lockdown, it was the arts that people turned to for enrichment, for hope, for joy. STEAM not STEM! "In the midst of the seriousness of Covid-19, the arts bring joy and playfulness into classrooms and provide a safe way for teachers and students to navigate the emotions, fears and questions children have about a changed world" -- Professor Peter O'Connor of the University of Auckland. On June 24 a free online workshop was offered from DramaNZ's Reaching the Edges; a panel workshop called "Unpacking a Wellbeing goodie bag!" We discussed aspects of wellbeing whilst unpacking the resources available to all members through the DramaNZ website.

Our group had the disappointment of the national PPTA Conference being postponed due to Covid-19; we had been asked to present and were motivated to further support New Zealand educators. Our presentation, entitled "**ACT**ivating Creative **WELL**being", will now be delivered in April 2021 as the PPTA considers Whakatairangatia and advancing the dream of public education.

In May 2020 a scholarship proposal was submitted to DramaNZ. Thrilled to have this accepted we then began to meet on Zoom with Scott Wilson, Senior Lecturer at Massey University, who was able to guide us through our goals and how to submit a significant project. This led to a Spring Hui in Dunedin where, unexpectedly, heavy snow fell and covered the city like a white sheet. In hygge clothes, Kimberley, Rachel and I met at the wonderful AYU building for two days of brainstorming and planning. As a result of this hui, the idea of a bi-annual magazine was born.



Our rakau is strong and is weathering the storms. We hope that you, the reader, will be inspired to plant your own seeds and begin your own journey in wellbeing. And now, our journey so far is up to date. Our magazine will be published twice yearly and, as you have seen, is called UHO : the heart (of a tree), the pith of a tree, an umbilical cord, the core. Health and Wellbeing for Arts Education will continue, putting wellbeing at the heart of everything.



KI TE KOTAHI TE
KĀKAHO, KA WHATI;
KI TE KĀPUIA, E
KORE E WHATI



A
“If a reed stands alone, it can be broken;
If it is in a group, it cannot.”
(*Aroha*, Elder, 2020)

BUILDING A DRAMA TRIBE - THE BENEFITS OF A DRAMA COMMUNITY

Kimberley Fridd

Wikipedia describes tribes as originating “around the time of the Greek city-states and the early formation of the Roman Empire”. The Latin term, *Tribus* has since been transformed to mean, “A group of persons forming a community and claiming descent from a common ancestor”. Seth Godin, the author of 18 international bestsellers that have changed the way people think about work, described a tribe as being “a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea. For millions of years, human beings have been part of one tribe or another.

A group needs only two things to be a tribe: a shared interest and a way to communicate.” In later years, the concept of tribes has become what we know as communities. Nowadays, these tribes or communities have even become digital with the addition of social network platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Just as the Scottish have their clans and Māori have mātāwaka, we as teachers belong to a series of groups comprising of like-minded individuals, and we can draw on these tribes for inspiration and strength.



As part of the Health & Wellbeing for Arts Education (HAWFAE) we've seen first-hand the benefits of a drama tribe and how connecting with educators from different schools (and even cities) has been great for both our mental and physical health. Enrique Fiallo, Leadership Speaker, Writer, Coach – Making Ethical Choices: How Great Leaders Make Decisions Differently, said one of the benefits of belonging to a tribe is authenticity and that “one major advantage of this authenticity is that time is not wasted on pretence and gamesmanship. Instead, all of the tribe’s energy can be focused on the mission, the work, and collective outcomes.” This is so true of HAWFAE, as we’ve all worked collectively towards a common goal while supporting each other in the process. We’ve been able to be there for each other, inspire each other through our work and different passions, problem-solve, share the workload, and provide assistance when we need it. We’ve used each other as sounding boards for new ideas, edited each other’s work, listened to each other, and cared for each other when we are having rough times. Teachers need more tribes, to be supported and nurtured in their work.

We are well aware of how time-poor we are in our roles as educators and what a struggle it is to find a balance between work and home life. When I began my role at John McGlashan College 10 years ago, I was aware there was no current regional branch of Drama NZ, which meant that there was a giant regional gap in the national drama subject network, one which spanned from Timaru all the way down to Invercargill. In the first few years I was at McGlashan I connected with a couple of local drama teachers and we began an online Facebook group, as a way of connecting teachers and keeping up with events. Fast forward to 2015 and after a lovely discussion with Drama NZ President, Emma Bishop, at NIDA in Sydney while attending the joint Australia New Zealand Drama Conference, I was convinced I had to get the regional branch going again, and that we did. Whether we connect in person (which the Dunedin members do regularly) or digitally for those more geographically challenged in the wider branch, getting together to participate in PD, share a meal, attend a show, or just have a drink and a laugh are important. You can't underestimate the power of connecting with like-minded people.

Over the summer holidays when I like to enjoy a slower and more hyggelig pace of life, I try to read books for personal and professional development. While up north at a family bach in the Coromandel, I picked up Dr Hinemoa Elder's beautiful book, *Aroha - Māori wisdom for a contented life lived in harmony with our planet*. This book is full of whakataukī, Māori words of wisdom. This kind of work really speaks to our wellbeing mantra, the concept of Hauora and the desire to intertwine Māori values into the arts and wellbeing programmes in our own schools. As a drama practitioner, I've been using inspirational whakataukī in my classroom for some time now. I feature whakataukī on a whiteboard lightbox on my desk as inspiration for my drama students on a regular basis. The students have come to expect this and ask me to change the whakataukī if I get busy and forget! Now that this practice has been woven into the fabric of our classroom, it has become a regular feature of the drama classroom. My desk becomes a meeting place, the topic of conversation (almost like a water-cooler), as class members discuss different whakataukī and what they mean for them. We try to promote a culture of *co-operation* over *competition* in our drama classroom, with a pedagogical approach to learning which sees socially critical collaborative learning, with lots of discussions, forums, and teamwork.



As well as using whakataukī, I have been able to build the feeling of community with my drama classes by using students' pepehas as a way of introducing themselves and allowing the class to get to know each other in a more meaningful way. A pepeha is a way of introducing yourself in Māori and it helps students share their connections with the people and places important to them. Each student contributed their pepeha in digital form (one Google slide with visuals) and chose to either present them in te Reo Māori (if they felt confident) or in English. The sharing of student pepehas was a lovely way of getting to know my students and for my students to get to know and connect with each other. During one of my Year 7 classes, I realised during the presentation of one of the student pepehas that I shared the same maunga, river, waka, iwi, and marae with this student. What a way to realise you are connected!

For many students, a drama class is a place where they can be themselves, take risks, be heard, play a variety of roles while working together, and build empathy skills. As drama students work co-operatively, they build essential 21st learning skills, working together on goals, sharing thoughts, ideas, questions and solutions, taking cross-curricular approaches, and building creativity skills by using their imaginations and creating things of value. For some students the positive time they have in drama class with their tribe might be the only time they feel accepted throughout the entire school day. We as drama teachers need to respect and nurture that so all students feel included and encouraged.

**“AS IT TURNS OUT, HUMAN BEINGS NOURISH EACH OTHER,
EVEN MORE THAN SPAGHETTI. AND THE HEALTH OF THE BODY REFLECTS THIS.”
~ LISSA RANKIN M.D.G**



References:

Elder, Dr. H. (2020). Aroha: Māori wisdom for a contented life lived in harmony with our planet. Penguin Random House New Zealand.



RESULTS FROM THE HEALTH & WELLBEING SURVEY

Gillian Towle

There were a very pleasing number of responses to the HAWFAE Wellbeing Survey in September 2020. All DramaNZ members could access the survey and answer a range of questions regarding their wellbeing and their personal experience of teaching Drama in Aotearoa New Zealand.

1. Over half of the responders think that they integrate the concept of wellbeing into their day to day teaching. It is interesting that there is some doubt attached to this, indicating that teachers believe they teach holistically and care for their students, but are not sure if what they are doing would be seen as explicit 'wellbeing' teaching. 41.5% are confident they are doing so.
2. Nearly 76% agree that, at a departmental level, they are supported well with their workload and 48% in their arts faculty. The numbers then begin to decline even at a school level. Only 34% of drama teachers who answered the survey said they are well supported school-wide, whilst only 24% and 29% at a regional and national level respectively. This makes sense in terms of the support we give to our fellow drama teachers and colleagues but it seems to become more challenging to fully support individual teachers on a wider scale.
3. 37% of drama teachers are aware of professional development opportunities in wellbeing and, we would hope, are taking advantage of them even in the current climate of budget restrictions. 17% said maybe, but a worrying 46.3% are not aware of these opportunities when they arise. There may be a need to ensure that those teaching in the arts know where to access and see wellbeing PD courses etc when they are advertised.

4. There were many and varied responses to whether drama teachers are in a designated space for their junior and senior classes. 73% said that they can teach in a theatre or auditorium, but that break out spaces are an ongoing challenge. The worrying statistics show that many teachers have to share a space; are not allowed to decorate their space with drama posters and the metalanguage of our subject; that they are not timetabled in a designated area and their space is often removed from them for other curriculum areas. Drama should be highly valued in schools and effort made to ensure the subject is taught in the way we need to - eg group work; separate group rehearsals and a space we can rely on for extracurricular activities.

5. Nearly 54% of responders said that they would recognise the warning signs of burnout in themselves or a colleague. There was still a small number who worryingly said they would not and 36.6% said maybe. More education will need to be given on this common syndrome. Teachers, nurses, counsellors, social workers, doctors, and mental health workers, are all in the top 10 professions that have the highest incidence of burnout. And we know what they all have in common. Anyone can become exhausted – drama teachers especially – but (as it says on the website Mind Tools) “What is so poignant about burnout is that it mainly strikes people who are highly committed and devoted to their work. You can only burn out if you have been alright in the first place.” Some drama teachers said yes, they would recognise the signs but would not be able to change their situation.



6. 66% indicated they knew how to access professional support in wellbeing and certainly it is management's duty to inform their staff about services such as EAP. 17% said "No" and another 17% were not sure, saying "Maybe".

7. A good number of drama teachers see themselves still teaching the subject in 10 year's time. As challenging as teaching is, we who teach drama know how incredibly valuable it is for all our tamariki. It is crucial, though, that we look after ourselves and our colleagues. As the founder of Positive Psychology, Martin Seligman, said “The wellbeing of children is closely bound to the wellbeing of teachers. We do it because we love it, and long may that continue, but we need to take care of ourselves as well.

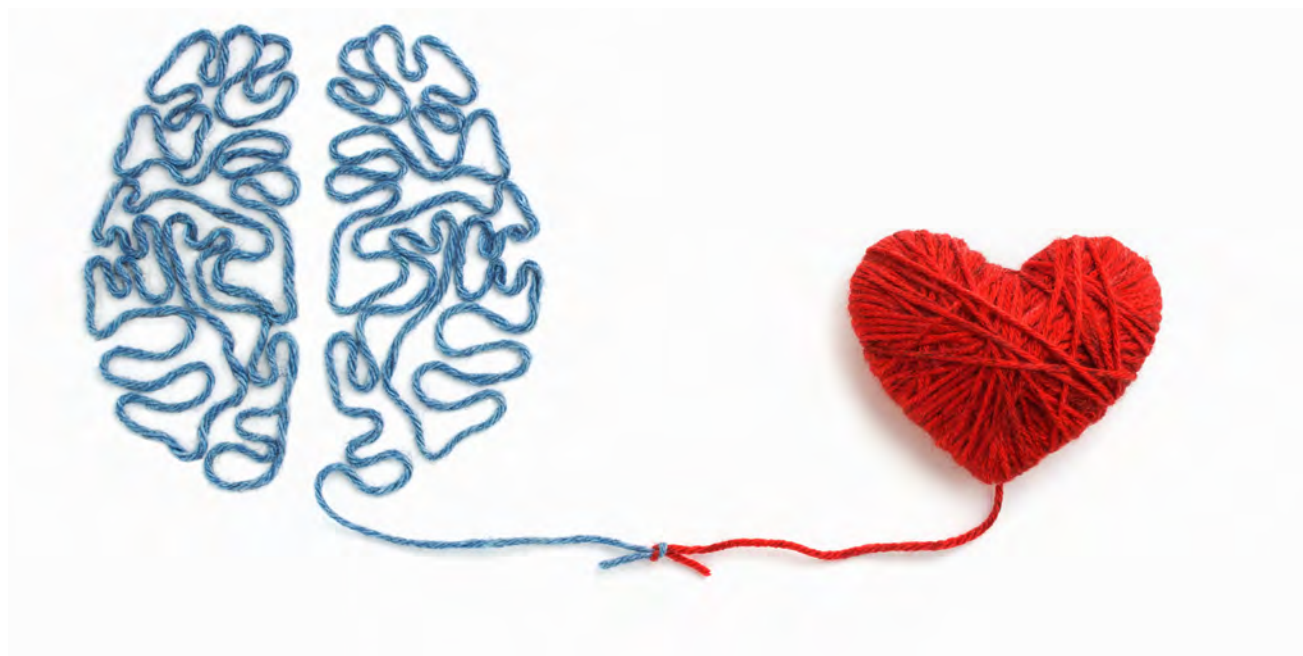
EMOTIONAL CONTAINMENT: MODEL FOR SAFE PRACTICE FOR ARTS TEACHERS

Diane Dupres

Judy Buckingham (J) School Guidance Counsellor at Logan Park High School, spoke to Diane Dupres (D), HoD Drama at Logan Park High School.

D: So the big issue that I wanted to talk to you about is containment for teachers, with reference to performing arts teachers, particularly drama teachers. What do you mean by the term containment?

J: The idea that we are asking people to express themselves or become engaged in feeling we are asking them to be vulnerable. When we ask people to engage with vulnerability, people need to feel safe about being able to do that. Being safe to be able to know that it's OK to be upset but to recognise this is a learning environment. What is brought up (in class) has to be contained within that, so that students aren't left feeling exposed within the group or as they leave.



D: We spend a lot of time scaffolding the two rules of drama, which are safety and danger; you can't take a risk if you don't feel safe. Usually I apply that concept to taking risks with ideas, taking risks with creativity, or to taking risks physically but I haven't thought about it so much emotionally. How do we give safety and risk taking emotionally to our students?

J: well to provide an emotional safe environment there are a couple of ingredients that you really need. One is around trust and one is around the limits or boundaries that hold emotion, that hold this person feeling safe. In counselling, we don't want to talk about things that mean that people are going to leave the room feeling completely vulnerable and exposed. We want people feeling empowered and strong. Sometimes we do need to go there emotionally and touch on things that are difficult but we do that in the safety of a relationship. In the bounds of knowing that too much vulnerability can be unsafe for a person.

D: Nowhere in my teaching career have we ever broached the subject of containment. I talked to some graduates recently and it doesn't seem to be a part of our training. We talk about what makes a successful lesson, we have rituals around leaving with the idea that you leave your role behind. That you are going out of this space and into another, so there's a ritual of ending. What someone chooses to bring to the table is their choice, so I get quite shocked when some young people pour out all this emotional baggage to everyone in the class. What is your suggestion for how we, as non-counsellors, who are possibly going to experience this, what should we do?

J: The thing with containment is first of all specifying the boundaries and limitations of the work. It's really important that we say 'This is a learning environment and we are all here to learn. Sometimes some of the things we talk about will be sensitive and that's ok but you need to hold yourself emotionally with that because this is a learning environment, not a counselling or therapeutic environment.' So actually preparing students for the fact that some nerves may be touched, and it's your responsibility to hold yourself in that emotion. Because as soon as we are expecting the teacher, or the group to hold emotion in that space, we are placing additional people in vulnerable situations. They may not be able to hold what they are not experienced in working with.

D: Normally I would suggest that if students found something triggering, they could leave the room. You are talking about personal responsibility around emotions. That's something that is emphasised at the moment. I really like that idea. So what would that look like to a teenager?

J: The thing is for young people is to figure out their own boundaries and limitations. There are certain things that they know that if they go into, like grief or fear for example, that can have strong emotions and responses. If they know that type of material can bring up responses, then they can know that this may not be the forum for them to bring up those feelings. We are not using drama to do therapeutic work and process problems. Drama is about expression, it's not about working through problems. It's making a very clear definition for young people. These are the limits, we are in a learning environment, this is about expression, it's not about processing problems.



With a young person, there would be all sorts of things you'd be needing to say. Make the definition very clear. Secondly encourage them to come up with a bit of a plan. This might take the shape of a worksheet or a series of conversations. For example 'What are the areas that you feel comfortable in, what does that look like? If something were to come up and you did feel your emotions rise and that intensity rise, what do you need to do for yourself to support yourself? If you are feeling vulnerable, what are things that we as a class can do to support you? I would probably not be encouraging people to leave because if people are vulnerable they need support unless they are going to places where they are going to get support. I wouldn't want to raise issues that may cause them to feel vulnerable and then leave them to go and self soothe unless I knew that they were safe and supported. A lot of our akonga don't have the ability to self soothe and they haven't been taught those important skills. They need other people with them to self regulate and part of our role is around teaching self-regulation.

D: Now I feel empowered to say this is the play we are going to study. It may have difficult issues in it (of course because that's what plays do) If you're feeling triggered what is your plan for dealing with this. Would that be the right way of approaching it?

J: It probably needs a few categories. For example, What are the sorts of things that are upsetting for you? How do you usually manage that? What support do you have around you? Are there strategies you can use to soothe yourself? And how are we going to manage this, in class, if you become upset?



So there's a stepped programme in place. Every young person in that class is totally prepared for potentially being distressed or upset. Within that they've got a plan around how they are going to manage it. This provides the container. We've got these messy emotions that can spill out all over the place and here's the container that holds them. And within that they have got a plan around how they are going to manage it. It's all in this worksheet and it's a really good idea to get it on paper and keep it on file. Because it provides reassurance. When people are upset they often can't recall. If you have it handy you can say "Hey Joe, let's go out your plan and see what we're up to". It's really important that everyone around this young person has the expectation that we know you've got these feelings, you've got a plan around these feelings, you've got this. We're all going to do this together, so there is no buying into the problem, no buying into the emotion, no trying to calm things down, trying to settle things down. It's more 'yep we are here, we thought this could happen, that's why we prepared for it. Now we are here its time to put the plan into place.'

D: When do you recommend the best time to create this plan?

J: I would suggest setting this up at the beginning of the year. You might set up a class Kawa, that would be a part of that process. Perhaps as a class here are the expectations we have of each other.

As class, here's how we do things in this class and here's how I do things for myself.

D: Any suggestions for young (or beginning?) teachers starting out with all of this? The most significant factor in student achievement is the quality of their relationship with their teachers. Young teachers coming through are really keen to support their akonga. What recommendations have you got for those people.



J: It's important to recognise that people come into this profession because they are kind and compassionate people. People coming to subjects like drama that are expressive because they have their own ability to identify with emotion and express emotion. So naturally beginning teachers are going to have that knowledge of how to express oneself, but are also going to have to have a real desire to have strong relationships with ākonga. Relationships are not dependent on feeling and expression and emotion. Relationships are about being held and supported. What beginning teachers need to be thinking about is providing a safe boundary and a safe container because then young people will know what is going to happen and feel safe in that environment.

Consider easing into some of those expressive lessons. For example instead of saying "I want you to set up a play that represents a dark and wintry, frightening night." You might say "I want you to create a scene of a night with excitement". You are shifting the topic and then you can begin to test the limits of the class once trust and the safe container are in place. You can kick the tyre for a bit to see how the class responds. This approach is slow and gradual, which is important for all beginning teachers. You don't need to just jump in and boots and all with emotions, focus on safe ones first then move toward harder emotional areas. It's important to remember that feeling talk (or expression) can create vulnerability, there is risk when we are working in feeling, and in our current climate, it's even more so.

TECHNIQUES FOR WELLBEING

BUOYANCY IN SCHOOLS

Rachel Mcmillan

Tena koutou e te hunga auaha - greetings precious creatives. Schools whai mana ki (have the power to) meet a multitude of needs to nourish the individuals within, thereby increasing wellbeing in the wider community. Boards of trustees, senior leadership teams, guidance networks, parent/friend associations and support staff are UHO agents with the capacity to maximise the wellbeing of all staff and students by recognising wellness is the core/centre of everything else.

Over the past few years, my school has introduced a range of buoyancy aids for wellbeing. These floatation devices are predominantly the deliberate, well-intended use of tools we already have at hand.

We all have the capacity to apply our voice, body, movement and use the space around us without spending a cent. Realising this can be an equaliser, as the efficacy of these techniques will enrich the ecosystem of a school (with positive knock-on effects beyond the school gate).

As drama professionals we know that using drama techniques produces powerful, connected, effective communicators. The strengths we have as arts educators can be seized upon to add abundance in our subjects, departments, schools and communities. Ko te tumanako ka kitea e koe he wairua i konei - I hope you find inspiration here.

VOICE

The importance of communication lifelines have been highlighted by global health events over the past year. Vulnerable, isolated and traumatised people need to be asked if they are O.K. because people are often lost for words in a crisis.

Check-in on the people around you to foster a caring culture where there is no shame in admitting you are struggling. UHO is like a lifeline (the cord between foetus and placenta) to receive free crisis aid any time of the day or night-visit www.mentalhealth.org.nz, phone 0800 LIFELINE or text 1737. Remind support people (who are like lifelines), that they can seek advice and guidance too. School 'home pages' with a health and wellbeing portal will ensure information is easy to access anonymously. This could include; how to access EAP (Employment Assistance Programs) with psychological professionals, sick leave and extensions. Having this information at your fingertips helps to avoid stress escalating when you feel alone, or stuck and you are wondering where to turn.

At the grass-roots level, surveys and well-facilitated staff forums are good starting points to air health concerns. Regularly asking staff what would improve their wellbeing will result in a more dynamic, energised, school culture that has a positive knock-on effect for students.

Amplify student voices with prefect roles that reflect human needs (such as culture, wellbeing and community liaisons). Students might want to start up their own solution-focused, wellbeing, kindness, mindfulness, contentment groups, which can be supported by counsellors.

Keep projecting your positive, dynamic voices. Schools can be a sounding board by regularly facilitating staff, students and whanau to share their needs. Then strategic plans can target what would make the most difference to wellbeing wealth from macro to micro levels. I have experienced first hand how a school rich in wellbeing languages, can better negotiate unexpected changes such as loss, grief and a pandemic! Your school will already have a wellbeing vocabulary, so kōrero, project your care and increase the power of those vital languages.



St Hilda's Collegiate - staff room opened 15/3/21 to better facilitate staff wellbeing

BODY

The lifeline - uho - between voice and body is the breath. Mindful techniques centred around our breath raise awareness. Breath is a constant in our life and a brilliant illuminator of how we are doing at any moment. Our school invites staff to lead mindfulness during staff meetings to experience the benefits and promote staff to use mindfulness with ākongā every day.

This year, new students have reported how helpful (and grounding) mindfulness has been for them. The deliberate use of antidotes to anxiety, such as mindfulness, will help maintain wellbeing buoyancy in schools. Like the breath, our body is a constant in our life - the vehicle that carries us everywhere. By regularly scanning the body, you will notice patterns and make subtle changes to feel considerably better.

Pat Ogden PhD, a pioneer in somatic psychology, knows how the body communicates for us when we are at a loss for words. We can consciously engage the body to disrupt entrenched, negative patterns. One tangible way to do this is to use better posture. A more upright posture will enable more oxygen to nourish you with direct benefits to your frame of mind. Try planting your feet into the floor while pushing the crown of your head to the sky, you will feel different because the way you hold your body directly affects your mindset. Encourage your students to use this tall posture when they are feeling unsettled or nervous. They can visualise the ancestors who paved a path for them and draw strength from their tūrangawaewae.

We have just begun art installation to represent the idea of tūrangawaewae with each member of our community contributing a stone to form a river effect. Many bodies can purposefully combine to create something beautiful and unique. Our intelligent bodies deserve our attention and appreciation. When our body functions well, we are ready to embrace learning opportunities.



A river art installation begun in 2020 inspired by Jerry Howlett (artist in residence 2019)

By observing your body, mind and breath closely you can know yourself better and be kinder with your internal thoughts. Make headspace to feel more uplifted and reset the lymphatic system by taking one minute to lightly observe your breath, body and thoughts. A hug will often help us feel better (by releasing serotonin to the brain). Experience this for 30 seconds by putting your dominant hand on your heart, wrapping your other hand around the dominant arm and squeezing (while thinking about someone who loves you unconditionally).

Another way to fill your body with a sense of joy is by raising your arms to the sky with your palms up. We have swapped the school bell for upbeat music instead. This has changed a fight, flight, freeze reflex (because school bells often sound like an alert/alarm) to a mini dance break where we tend to smile and relax.

By navigating our own wellness we model self-preservation, and enjoyment of life to our he akonga tino nui - precious students. We can help ourselves and others to feel comfortable, safe and calm by the way we treat our bodies in shared school spaces.

To encourage regular check-ins with how we are, our school is currently trialling EI Pulse <https://www.educatorimpact.com/pulse> This generic pulse taker asks five different (anonymous) questions every time you check in but you will always be asked how you are doing? A 'not good' answer is seen (by an agreed-upon person) who can find the best assistance for you. We are curious to see if the information gathered will help us with early intervention as we aim to mitigate negative trends and address stress points in the year. Honouring our physical, spiritual and mental health is a bit like taking the emotional temperature of our school community so the best prescriptions can be found.

MOVEMENT

Self knowledge will also grow through physical experience. A memorable staff only day offered a smorgasbord of wellbeing tasters for staff to try. This was popular with staff because we had the opportunity to embody experiences ranging from voice and art workshops to lessons on the staff e-bike (our parent and friend association generously invested in this after staff suggested we would like one to share).

Our campus is situated close to town so using the e-bike to attend a meeting or run an errand makes life easier and reduces angst caused by parking scarcity. Subsequently there has been a staff walking group, a pilates group, yoga and more socialising after work. Another motivating force has been our beautiful therapy dog, Mathilda aka Tilly, a golden retriever who works (and lives) with our counsellor.

Students and staff take turns to walk Tilly at interval and lunch time. Our wellbeing prefects have introduced a lunchtime walking group once a week (we already have a group who go for a run at lunchtime). Giant rocks and logs align our field to encourage students to climb and we have plans to continue enhancing the playground areas in our school.

Routinely our sports prefects will bring out equipment to encourage younger students to break up their routine (and play). To be able to move more easily we plan changes towards a more comfortable, inclusive, gender diverse environment. Family Zone has been installed on all junior student phones (if students prefer not to have Family Zone they have to leave their phones at the student office), to discourage technological distractions and promote active socialising instead.

Last year we put a portable dance floor in the quad so hip-hop music and dancers could bring life to the school as part of a mini Fringe festival. There was a palpable need to celebrate (and heal) after all the cancellations, disappointment and uncertainty lockdown induced in 2020. This was one way to acknowledge the amazing artists in our community who had missed out on so much in the previous months. Watching students running away from stilt walkers or jamming in a music event, even repurposing books in a Zine workshop, felt like we were celebrating being back together.

This year we are introducing an open dance class to encourage students to move in different ways. This creative physical simulation gives people the autonomy to expand their movement vocabulary and subsequently adjust how they feel.



St Hilda's Collegiate Hip hop dancers warming up for Nationals in Lower Hutt 2020

SPACE

To stay well, ideally we listen (and respond to) our bodies while remaining aware of the spaces we occupy. As a staff we questioned how user friendly our staff room was. The layout felt segregating and the furniture was not ideal for working or relaxing. After raising this issue at a staff forum, it transpired that most staff wanted to preserve this space to rejuvenate and connect with each other. So we have decided to host staff meetings elsewhere. After further consultation we have renovated the staffroom to have multipurpose areas, a much more inviting kitchen and more inclusive places to gather. We are fortunate to be able to enjoy being outside on the balcony, out of the wind. Space upgrades like this cost money but the excitement amongst staff is palpable and the payoffs will count when we arrive to class more refreshed. With no budget it is still possible to reconsider how shared spaces are being used. There could be a psychological shift with a rearrangement of furniture, donated colourful cushions and plants, shared puzzles, photo boards, lilliput libraries and fruit bowls.

In 2019 our Year 13 leavers commissioned an artist to spray-paint our native whanaungatanga (vertical group) birds on a wall outside the common room. In 2020, the wellbeing prefects commissioned the same artist to paint the doors and walls of the student toilets with uplifting images and quotes such as 'the best view comes after the hardest climb', 'just keep swimming' and a Jon Kabat-Zinn insight 'you can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf'. Tilly and a tui feature in the paintings - you can spot them in the picture.

On our borders' hallway another quote that resonates with our 'seize the day theme' is: 'if you don't like it, change it, if you can't change it, change your attitude (unknown)'.



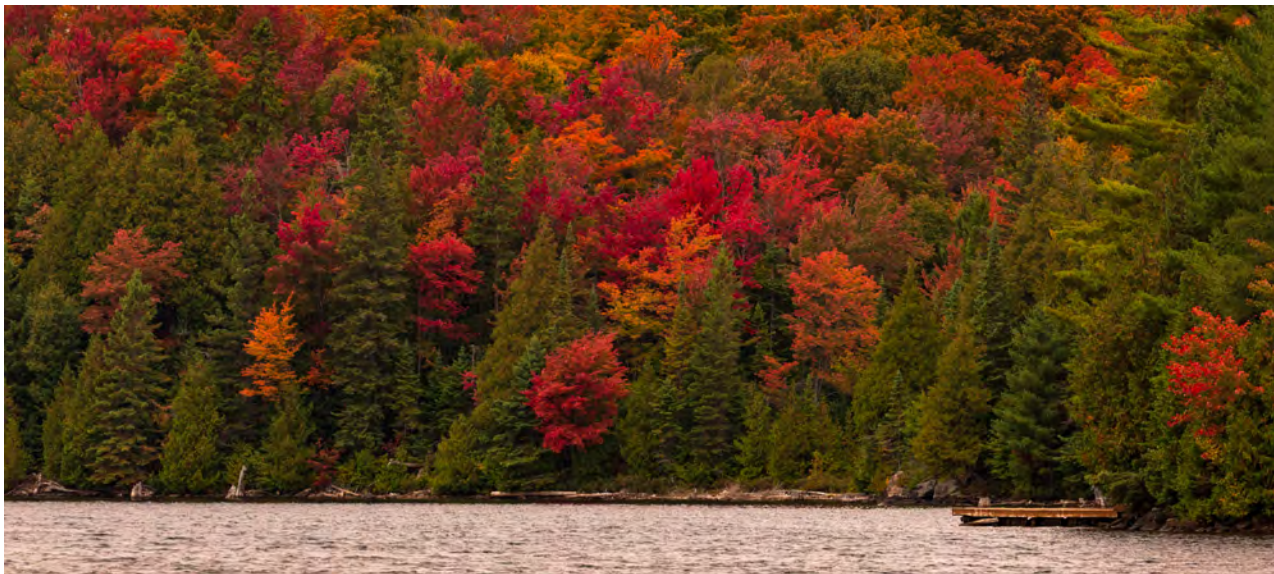
Frank Gordon's Student Toilet Art installation 2020 - inspired by the Wellbeing liaison prefects

Recent experiences of loss have highlighted the need to constantly invest in wellbeing reserves. Buoyancy works when you foster individual and collective wellbeing in schools. We now know for a fact that we will be more resilient and bounce back, when unexpected traumas arise. Since voice, body, movement and space techniques help us make (and communicate) meaning we can apply our innate skills to this cause.

Drama techniques help us connect with who we are, with each other and the world and this can determine our sense of wholeness and fulfilment (our overall wellbeing). Using the lens of our creative forces we can improve our world. Take simple steps such as making space for mindfulness every day and start with your inner world. Share your emotional IQ to foster your school's use of student and teacher voices. Create opportunities to move differently and respect the body's intelligence (listen to your body) in your shared spaces.

Multifaceted, embedded, wellbeing approaches will evolve with your school culture, which in turn make more prosperous communities. Please be encouraged to speak up and listen to each other's needs. Try not to be disheartened if you meet resistance. Wellbeing looks different for each person so a gentle yet multi-pronged approach is advisable. Go the extra mile to improve your school life, the spaces you inhabit and your overall wealth to invest in a more enjoyable life.

Kia kaha, kia māia, kia manawanui; be strong, be confident, be patient. Arohanui.



**RUREA, TAITEA,
KIA TŪ KO
TAIKĀKĀ ANAKE.**

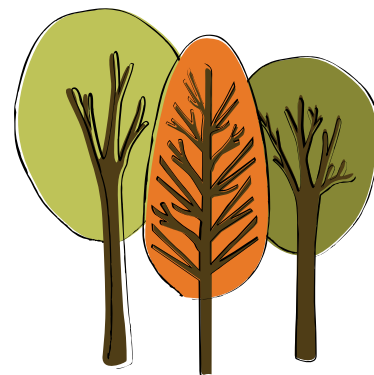
**STRIP AWAY THE
BARK AND EXPOSE
THE HEARTWOOD.**

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- Our schools for their support

NEXT ISSUE:

- Hygge happiness - finding joy in the drama classroom and beyond
- Teacher Burnout
- Benefits of a drama tribe / Part Rua
- Wellbeing teacher resources
- And much more!





EST. 2018

HEALTH & WELLBEING
FOR ARTS EDUCATION

Ki te kore ngā pūtake e mākūkūngia, e kore te rākau e tupu
If the roots of a tree are not watered, the tree will never grow



Drama
NEW ZEALAND

mahi whakaari o Aotearoa

Want to get in touch? We'd love to hear from you...

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