

Term 4 Assembly – Rector's Address

Mark Wilson

Friday 24 October 2025



Morena koutou katoa, nau mai, haere mai.

This morning's assembly gives us a final opportunity to recognise more outstanding achievements before our Leavers Assembly next week on Wednesday morning; and of course, our whole school prize giving on Friday 28 November.

A warm welcome to our parents, families and whanau who have joined us this morning as we have much to celebrate.

I am very pleased to also welcome and thank our Board Chair, Mrs Felicity Odlin.

It is good to have you here, joining us this morning, and she will be assisting with some presentations within this assembly.

At the end of Term 3, over the break, there was a remarkable number of individual students and school groups competing and performing across the country at a range of sports and performing arts, and even travelling overseas.

A number of these teams and groups will be recognised later in this assembly.

Since my start at the beginning of this year, I have been so impressed with the vast and diverse range of opportunities on offer here, means you can find your place and become the best version of yourself. Many schools talk about offering a holistic offering of opportunities for their young people, but here at StAC we truly deliver this.

It is important that we gather today, and celebrate the wonderful achievements and successes that come from all these active participations, as these achievements don't come easily. They are the result of hard work and strong dedication from everyone involved. It can be a mistake to wish that life was always easy and comfortable, and we could be happy all the time.

However, it is often through the tough times, our personal challenges and difficulties when we grow and develop the most as a person.

Our PERMA-V well-being framework teaches us that there are many positive emotions we should experience in life, and each day.

This doesn't mean being happy all the time. Therefore, I disagree with the theory that says: *"The purpose of our lives is to be happy."*

Happiness should not be our focus. Happiness is a by-product emotion from doing good work and experiences related to living out our own purposes and meaning.

I have a short parable, or story, I'd like to share about the importance of needing to work hard and struggle in life so we can grow and be the best we can be.



I've called this ***The Butterfly Story...***

A student entered her classroom to sit an end-of-term test.

She had chosen not to study, believing that revising was tedious and unnecessary.

After all, she had always been told she was bright and capable, and she trusted that her natural intelligence would carry her through.

But as she stared at the test paper, she realised she couldn't recall the facts, nor could she perform the required skills—she hadn't practiced, and now it showed.

Later that day, feeling disheartened, she sat quietly in the garden.

As she reflected on her disappointment, she noticed a butterfly struggling to emerge from its chrysalis.

Moved by compassion, she gently helped it break free, hoping to ease its burden.

Yet once released, the butterfly tried to fly—but its wings were weak.

Without the struggle to push through the chrysalis, it hadn't developed the strength it needed.

It fluttered briefly, then fell to the ground and died.

In that moment, the girl understood.

The butterfly needed to work hard and struggle to grow strong enough to live.

And so did she.

Shortcuts may seem kind, but they rob us of the growth that comes through effort and perseverance.

Life can sometimes seem like a struggle, especially when we are young.

But without the struggle, making some mistakes, without trying hard and making the effort, we actually never really grow.

It can be hard struggling with a problem or a challenge. You could see a friend trying to succeed at school, trying to solve a math's problem or spell a word, someone grappling with their music or sports practice, or a friend upset by a painful relationship separation.

While it is instinctive for us to want to help, and we can often do so by giving unasked advice or help. But sometimes we need to learn to wait, not jump in, and let the process unfold on its own.

We can watch and most importantly we can be there should any help be required, yet not intervene when there is no real need to. Sometimes, well-being means learning to wait – to trust in the inner strength and resilience of a friend, and to let the process unfold in its own time.

With wisdom we need to learn is to recognise when a situation is like the butterfly and the chrysalis when they need to do it, or when they may need our helpful intervention.

An example of when you would help someone is if anyone at any stage asks for help with their mental health, in such cases 100% the time you should get involved and help support them.

The wisest people I know practice this:

When we go through a personal challenge, they make it clear that they are there in support, but that we need to deal with it ourselves.



Some people can get too involved in other people's problems and challenges and can do so to make themselves feel better. Be honest with yourself and don't try to rescue people when they may just need you simply to be there for them.

We all play important roles as a guide, an encourager, a supporter and a friend. It is equally important that we are courageous to reach out for such help and support, when and as we need it.

As this girl and the butterfly found out, there are no shortcuts.

Life is full of good stuff and also tough challenges. It is often challenges that actually make us strong, teach us resilience and develop our character and skills. And, in the end, we shall value the prize more deeply if we have made the effort, fought the good fight and achieved our own goals.

As teachers, our gift to you is to help you build stronger wings... so you can and will fly to your potential.

I would like to acknowledge a group of young people who have achieved wonderful outcomes, which have come from many hours of hard work and dedication.

They were all recognised last night at the annual regional Zonta Sports Awards.

They don't need to come forward onto the stage, I will simply read them out, and we can applaud them at the end.

Congratulations to the following students selected as regional Zonta finalists in their categories;

Contributions to Sports Administration:

- Alexander Black

In Most Outstanding Achievement in one sport – Female StAC had four finalists:

- Catherine Cook – Volleyball
- Ava Jones – Basketball
- Mia Montgomery - Volleyball
- Maniah Taefu – Basketball

Most Outstanding Achievement in one sport – Male:

- Noah Cole – Football

Most Outstanding Team – Female:

- 1st XI Girls' hockey

Best All Rounder – Female:

- Orla Motley – Basketball, Touch, Rugby and Athletics.

I congratulate all of our young people here, who have put in the many hours of hard work, overcome their own challenges, and achieved such outstanding results in your own specific fields.

Tēnā koutou katoa.