

Cultural Assembly

Principal of Secondary School's Address

Friday 21 August 2026

Evert van Florenstein



Nau mai, haere mai. Mōrena koutou katoa.

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to our Cultural Assembly. A very warm welcome to the parents and friends who have joined us today, and a special welcome to our new Head of Senior School, Mrs Julia Shannon.

"Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi."

With your food basket and my food basket, the people will thrive.

This whakataukī reminds us that strong communities are built through the contributions of many people, each bringing their own gifts, talents, and passions. It is through these collective contributions that we flourish.

The visual and performing arts are an important part of that contribution. Artists, musicians, actors, dancers, designers, writers, and storytellers each bring their own *rourou*, enriching our lives and strengthening our community.

At St Andrew's College, we see this every day through our Pipe Band, musicians, actors, dancers, kapa haka performers, writers, designers, and visual artists. Their creativity, commitment, and courage make our College a richer and more vibrant place.

We also see the power of the arts in the achievements of Old Collegians such as Phil Keoghan, Principal Ballet Dancer Joshua Guillemot-Rodgers, novelist and playwright Carl Nixon, actor Patrick Carroll, musicians Sacha Vee and Alice Burnett, and astrophotographer Tom Rae. Their success reminds us that creativity can become a pathway to excellence, influence, and meaningful contribution.

Today, I would like to reflect on the importance of the arts through the PERMA-V lens.

Positive Emotion: The arts bring joy. Whether performing on stage, completing an artwork, or hearing a moving performance, the arts inspire us, help us express emotions, and provide moments of happiness and wonder.

Engagement: The arts allow us to become deeply absorbed in what we are doing. Whether practising an instrument, rehearsing a scene, painting, or dancing, we experience moments of focus and growth that psychologists call "flow". These experiences help us develop skills and discover our potential.

Relationships: The arts bring people together. Choirs, orchestras, kapa haka groups, dance ensembles, and theatre productions all depend on teamwork, trust, and collaboration. Through shared experiences, strong friendships are formed and a sense of belonging develops.



Meaning: The arts help us tell stories, celebrate culture, and preserve traditions. Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, kapa haka, waiata, storytelling, and visual arts play an important role in strengthening identity and passing knowledge between generations. The arts connect us to something greater than ourselves.

Accomplishment: Success in the arts requires commitment, discipline, resilience, and perseverance. Every rehearsal and every performance teach the value of effort and continuous improvement. The arts show us that accomplishment comes not from perfection, but from growth and persistence.

Vitality: The arts support well-being. Dance develops physical fitness, music can reduce stress, and creative expression supports emotional health. In a demanding world, the arts help us maintain balance and flourish.

In conclusion, when viewed through the PERMA-V lens, the arts offer far more than entertainment. They bring joy, deepen engagement, strengthen relationships, create meaning, foster accomplishment, and support well-being.

So, whether your contribution comes through orchestra, jazz band, choir, drama, dance, visual art, kapa haka, design, writing, the Pipe Band, or simply through supporting and celebrating the talents of others, know that your contribution matters.

Every one of us brings something valuable to our community. Every one of us has a *rourou* to offer.

My sincere thanks to performing arts teachers, Duncan Ferguson, Ginnie Thorner, Mallory Swadel, Rachel D'Arcy, Wiremu Pickering, Alys Webster, Carolyn Cairns, Richard Hawke, Stuart Lloyd-Harris, and everyone else who contributes to making St Andrew's College such a rich and vibrant place for the visual and performing arts. Your creativity enriches our community and helps our young people thrive.

And to those who are not yet involved, I encourage you to give something a go. You may discover a talent, a passion, a lifelong friendship, or a new source of purpose and fulfilment.

"Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi."

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Before I hand over to our Cultural Captains, I would like to acknowledge and celebrate the outstanding achievement of our Pipe Band, who recently secured third place in the world. This is yet another sensational result and a testament to more than two decades of sustained excellence on the world stage under the leadership of Pipe Band Director, Richard Hawke, and his team.

We will not invite the band onto the stage today, as many members are still travelling home from Scotland. Later this term, the Pipe Band will perform for us, and we will take the opportunity to formally present them with their medals. Please join me in congratulating them on this remarkable achievement, and enjoy the Cultural Assembly.