

There has been a lot of sickness circulating in our community this winter. Perhaps we are not as good at protecting each other as we were a few years ago when COVID forced us into better practices around sickness and going to school/work. I was afflicted by a nasty bug that knocked me off my feet for at least a week. The only benefit was that it allowed me to watch a little more of the Olympics than I may have otherwise seen.

I love the Olympics but I've always thought that it highlights rich, resourced countries and, inadvertently through participation or not, the freedom of women, globally. However, I love the athlete stories that emerge, particularly the more unlikely ones. How does someone like Hamish Kerr dream to be the best in the world at high jump? And then become the first New Zealander to jump onto the podium (not literally!) achieving the gold medal? Hamish finished tenth at the Tokyo Olympics in the same event. To be in the top ten in the world in a particular event is a stunning achievement, but Hamish strove for more and followed that with Gold at the Commonwealth Games in 2022 then rose (pun intended) to further milestones in 2024 with two national records, then a gold medal and a world-leading mark at the World Indoor Athletics championships in 2024, and then the gold medal in Paris. If you watched it, you will know that he almost didn't make it to the final, failing at a much lower height in the qualification round before easily lifting himself, literally and metaphorically, to his later heights.

Clearly, when one looks at the athletes who undertake the high jump there are certain physical traits which seem requisite if you are going to jump over a horizontal pole that is placed well above your head. Hamish has those physical traits but how did he use those traits and translate his innate ability into success? There are many Olympic athletes who have represented their country, come tenth in an event, to be never heard of again. Hamish obviously wasn't happy with tenth. Or maybe he was but he wanted to test himself further. He was competing against athletes who had previously beaten him but he rose (sorry!) to the top! He knew failure was a possibility, and nearly a reality in the qualification round. After he was nearly eliminated, Hamish spoke about his "belief", and the importance of the people around him in giving him that belief.

At school we talk about excellence. It's in our WERO and it's one of our school priorities in our strategic plan. From time to time, I find myself addressing it at assemblies with students. Whenever I do, I always stress the very personal nature of excellence. Not everyone can be the top in something, but everyone can do their best. And doing their best involves perseverance. Robert Collier, an American author of self-help literature, stated that

"Success is the sum of small efforts - repeated day in and day out".

It is the day in, day out efforts that Hamish was able to draw on when he needed to. The fact that he had done this before so many times helped build his belief and the belief of those around him.

Perseverance also builds resilience - the ability to withstand the difficult times. And in those difficult times we want to be surrounded by people who share our belief; who are there in the good times and also, in the bad times.

These are all terrific lessons for our young people and I hope that some of the Olympic charm inspires them to their own great feats.

I hope the mid term break gives students a chance to recharge and refresh, perhaps catch up on some work, or just have some well-deserved downtime. It's also an opportunity for our students in years 12 and 13 to visit the various open days of Massey University, Victoria University, Weltec, and Yoobee, to name a few.

Ngā mihi

Dominic Killalea  
Principal