

Jonathan Ramsay
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ACEL Report to APPA

Passion and Purpose: setting the learning agenda

Firstly, thank you to the Executive of the APPA that provided me with the funding to register at this conference. With your support and my own I was able to attend a very worthwhile meeting of educationalists. It was great to see over 130 Kiwis attend and to meet many other Australian educational leaders. Of particular interest were the keynote speakers who really did make the conference stand out.

The main three things that I have taken from this conference are:

- i) the importance of physical activity for the effective functioning of the human brain;
- ii) the importance of providing schools that allow/support all children in finding their “passion” and “purpose”.
- iii) that it is possible to prepare ourselves / our children for the future and this may just mean taking risks as a leader.

1) Dr John Medina:

School leaders are learning leaders. If learning leaders are to inspire and support learning in staff and students, it is imperative that they are up to date with the science of learning.

John explained how the memory works in the human brain and the effects of robust executive function skills on cognition and how emotional regulation is important knowledge for learning leaders to understand. Executive function has been shown to be the only cognitive gadget capable of predicting a student's future schooling success.

Worth watching: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ah85pJuyoc0>

2) Charlotte Danielson

Charlotte talked about how standards of teaching practice have gradually become accepted around the world as a potential engine to fuel professional improvement. While known largely as a foundation for teacher evaluation, their more powerful use is by teachers, individually and with colleagues, to understand and improve their practice in what is enormously complex work. It is impossible to strengthen teaching if one has not even defined it.

Teaching standards are used for many different purposes: teacher preparation, recruitment and hiring, mentoring and induction, professional development, and teacher evaluation. ***Their most powerful use, and the use that should accompany any other use, is for teachers' own use in self-assessment, reflection on practice, and professional conversation.***

Worth watching: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6nnchLGSIXU>

3) Prof Tim Flannery

Tim Flannery believes that human activity is drastically altering the earth's climate and before too long these changes will have devastating effects on life on this planet. He works to mobilise community and political will before it is too late.

This passion took Tim from being Director of the South Australian Museum, to co-founder and chair of the Copenhagen Climate Council, advising governments and businesses on

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environmental policy and then to the founder of the Climate Council in 2013, where he continues to communicate authoritative climate change information to the Australian public.

His story of passion and purpose contains many lessons for all leaders. Leaders work from a position of influence. They find their passion and mobilise the community to act.

4) Richard Gerver

Richard Gerver shared some of his own thoughts and perspectives on what the future challenges may be and how we can prepare ourselves and our schools for them. He explored the concept of the 'edupreneur' and challenged us to think differently about some of the ways we do our job. He shared some of his experiences as a former headteacher and some of what he has learnt since leaving his school through his work with organisations like Apple, Google and Morgan Stanley.

5) Prof Lee Wing On

Prof Lee highlighted some of major shifts in the learning agenda. Coming from Asia, he shared his own observation about how some high performing Asian education systems cope with the changing learning agenda, particularly in ***emphasizing the significance of intrinsic learning, resilience in learning, as well as how equity is achieved through improving the quality of education.***

6) Prof Linda Darling Hammond / John Hattie

7) Noel Pearson

Noel talked about our indigenous status is recognition of our rightful place in the Commonwealth, and the contribution of our ancient heritage to the nation's heritage, and the ongoing vitality of our culture. He discussed resisting assimilation into the dominant culture. He discussed how when the recognition of Indigenous Australians comes to pass ***Indigenous children will need an education that meets the challenge of a bicultural future.*** His work in northern Australia - The vision of the Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy is that our children will achieve their full potential, talent and creativity and have the confidence and capacity for hard work so they can orbit between two worlds and enjoy the best of both.

Also (workshops):

a) Mr Max Gracock (technology to support teacher coaching (Aus))

Max talked about a suite of free iPad applications designed to support teachers to coach one another and build capacity. The apps capture hard data about what's happening in the classroom and automatically generate a report with statements and questions that provide a springboard for a high quality discussion based on quantifiable data.

b) Mrs Janis Powley and Sandra Jenkins (collaborating to create a personalised learning scenario for students and teachers – Freemans Bay School (NZ))

c) Dr Esme Capp (collective inquiry research projects approach (Aus))

Esme talked about how in 2009 the school community reviewed the school's practices and procedures and outlined a plan to develop an ever evolving shared vision for the school. They

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have a focus on collective inquiry led research projects. Children and their team of teachers create a community of learners within a neighbourhood. Curriculum is focused on exploring Big Ideas relevant to the community beginning by exploring the communities' pre-existing understandings, sharing experiences to provoke new possibilities, determining and enacting a research project and sharing findings with the community. Documentation of projects in progress and completed projects is key to making the learning visible to all members of the community.

d) Mrs Kerry Mitchell (appraisal: valuing difference and fostering self responsibility (NZ))

Kerry's presentation would have been familiar to those who have participated in the NZTC "what is evidence" workshops this and last year in Aotearoa. The presentation explored the concept frame that now underpins appraisal in many of our schools and Early Childhood Centres (ECE). The evaluation data was shared and described shifts that schools and ECE have made as they move towards an empowering model for appraisal. Examples of practice were also shared and they exemplified how teachers and professional leaders have taken control of their own appraisals.

e) Dr Deidre Le Fevre (supporting educators in navigating the challenges of change (NZ))

Deidre's presentation drew on research undertaken by herself with teachers, leaders and professional developers in New Zealand. This research was part of a systemic schooling improvement initiative.

f) Dr Michael Thomas Walker (the neuroscience of decision making: from heuristics to matrices (Hawaii))

g) Secondary student panel (Aus)

What did these students say the *purpose* of school was?

- "to find out who I am", "academic learning is important but social learning / extra curricula is also important", "learn how to get myself a job, to find myself, kids need to be taught to explore their own career path", " about how to connect to the outside world", " what you teach us, is what we teach others", " what a passionate teacher brings into a classroom rubs onto students", and "find a balance between helping those that are equipped and those who are not (education for all)".