

MENPS News

Te Whare Akoranga o Maungawhau, 17 April, 2020

Level 3 Parent Update

From The Principal

Kia ora koutou

I trust everyone is safe and well in their 'bubbles'. I wanted to offer an update at the end of our first few days of distance learning, and some information about the anticipated move to Level 3, the timeline for which is due to be confirmed next Monday.

First of all, I hope you have managed to settle into a routine that works for you and your family with distance learning. We have really been quite taken aback by the overwhelmingly supportive, positive feedback we've received. Rest assured, however, we are under no illusions. This is a significant challenge, and we do appreciate that it can be much more difficult than it sounds, particularly when so many parents have their own work commitments.

None of us chose the path we are on at the moment and - as a profession that is usually so social in nature - I can tell you that we miss the children and the atmosphere of school very much. We are certainly as keen as everyone else to get back some semblance of 'normality' as soon as it is safe to do so. It is also worth remembering that many of our teachers - myself included - are also dealing with exactly the same challenges of managing our own children's learning at home while also juggling our professional duties.

Unfortunately, there is simply no realistic way to easily 'simulate' the classroom and the sense of community that goes along with it. To begin with, it isn't practical for teachers to monitor children 'live', so to speak, via video conferencing, or to somehow manage learning on 'remote control' in numerous households simultaneously (as I'm sure anyone who has been participating in online meetings with other adults for work might appreciate!).

While it may sound like a nice idea in theory, we made the decision early on that not only would this be ineffective (and potentially chaotic) to manage for any significant period of time, but that it would also mean both teachers and students locked into set schedules and staring at a screen for hours on end each day, which just wouldn't be appropriate.

Above all, we must remember this is a temporary mode of teaching and learning intended only to bridge the gap until the path ahead becomes clearer. It is imperfect. It involves compromise

for all concerned. We hope, however, that the model we have made available offers enough flexibility to meet the needs of all families for the time being.

The next step for the classrooms may involve building on the model further. This tentatively includes plans for conferencing 'live' with groups via Google Meet, creating more social opportunities for children to connect to peers and other innovations that make use of available technology. At this early stage, however, we will be holding fire on this. Not only would it be a significant undertaking in terms of scheduling and organisation, but we first need clarity on when students will be returning to school (and in what numbers) before we consider how we might develop the programme further.

At the moment, we have more questions than answers. It is clear, however, that Level 3 will involve a partial re-opening of schools. The challenge in this is that we will effectively be running parallel models of teaching for a time, alongside health & safety and social distancing considerations that will have to be attended to. We are also awaiting clarification on what 'voluntary' attendance at school actually looks like, to whom it applies, and how we will manage potentially unknown numbers of children arriving at school on a day to day basis.

It is, of course, an unprecedented and evolving situation, but we will keep you up to date on all of the above as the picture becomes clearer. What I can say is that the health and wellbeing of both staff and students is the guiding principle of any decisions that we make.

I can also assure you that MENPS continues to be in the business of delivering meaningful, high-quality, teacher-created learning experiences, whether online or in person, and that we will always make every effort to ensure our role as educators is much more than simply to keep our learners 'busy'.

Ka kite anō au i a koutou

Alan Jackson
Principal



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