

Principal's Update 28 January 2022

Kia Ora whanau - one and all

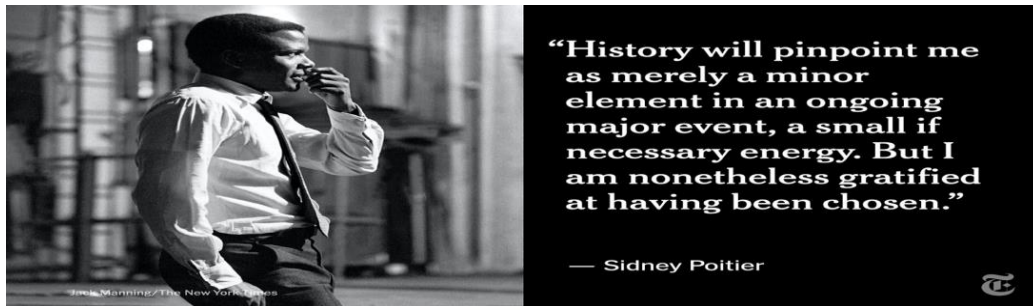
A very happy new year to you all. Wow, here we are ready to again start school for another year.

"I hear the Lord saying, "I will stay close to you, instructing and guiding you along the pathway for your life. I will advise you along the way and lead you forth with my eyes as your guide. So don't make it difficult; don't be stubborn when I take you where you've not been before. Don't make me tug you and pull you along. Just come with me!"

Psalm 32:8-9

It is with sincere gratitude that as a school we reflect on the COVID ravaged year of 2021. Not only did you as parents support us exceptionally well and became masterful teachers in your own right, but we always entrusted ourselves to God and most certainly experienced HIS strength and enabling daily last year.

I was deeply moved when reading and thinking about this quote below over the break.



I have just seen a glimpse of our 2021 NCEA results and they are exceptional. Well done to our amazing, wonderfully resilient students and to our superb Botany Campus and incredible Y11-13 staff at Mt Albert. We will be publishing these results with analysis.

I'm sure you have been as shocked as I have to see the number of drownings this summer. I believe in this island country and with many beautiful swimming rivers, we have a huge responsibility to do all we can to enable students to swim and have training in water safety.

Currently all campuses are being prepared for opening and numerous meetings are being held by staff. Enrolments continue.

The admin block has been completed at Botany Campus but the last church construction project adjacent to us has been halted due to the disrupted supply chain. Work is in full swing in the demanding renovation of Rahiri House at Mt Albert and it too has been hit by supply chain issues. We have planned for this and will be ready to accommodate the large roll expected at MAC.

Yesterday we inducted twelve new staff spread across the campuses. This is always a privilege to welcome our newest team members and we will introduce them to you in upcoming campus newsletters.

As we have entered a new year, I will in due course and as promised, publish a list of those staff who left last year. We don't like losing staff but we realise life is full of different seasons of opportunity. And as you know some of these staff left through the mandate.

We are incredibly grateful for the strong uptake this year already to the contribution of the proprietor's special character donation – thank you so much. If we can keep this up all year, it will seriously aid our financial recovery and future planning. Last year was tough.

Naturally we can't wait to welcome your tamariki back to school and are super keen to commence school with our start-back routines, events and practices. All our staff training days next week are designed to set up the most superb learning environments we can so that all students can thrive and grow. However as we all painfully know, we again have the virus to deal with and this brings challenges and changes.

COVID-19

This is the way we see it:

1. We are ready to open and invite full attendance on our campuses
2. Our planning is based on MOE and MOH advice and guidance
3. As we always do, we will do all we can to offer warm, welcoming and quality face to face education taking all reasonable steps to provide a healthy and safe physical and emotional environment for all students.
4. This is a good time to ensure your contact details we have on file are up to date.
5. We are reviewing all our events and activities for the upcoming term to ensure we meet the health guidance for the Red-Light Level. Campus newsletters will shortly inform you clearly with guidance for your campus operations.
6. Apart from those who have 5-year-olds starting school over the next days and weeks, no parents can come on site unless they are part of a specific meeting for which an online platform just won't suffice.
7. All our signalled overnight camps will not go ahead but immediate plans are being put in place to either hold them later in the year or hold an alternative non-overnight outdoor experience. Our senior high school outdoor education option will proceed as planned.

These are indeed challenging times, and **we pass the following information onto you:**

- Omicron is more transmissible than previous strains, but most people who get COVID-19 will have a mild to moderate illness and will fully recover in their own home.
- Some of our community who are immune compromised, are ill or have other vulnerabilities, even when they are fully vaccinated, could be more affected by Omicron. **So, we all need to continue to play our part to minimise the spread of the virus.**
- Vaccination including a booster shot, remains an important tool to help prevent the most serious harm from the COVID-19 virus. If children and young adults who have been vaccinated do develop COVID-19, they are far less likely to get seriously ill and less likely to transmit the virus to others.
- The free five- to 11-year-old vaccination programme is now underway.
- If you are symptomatic, ill in any way, please access a test as often as you need to. We need any student or staff member with symptoms to get a Covid-19 test and remain at home until a negative result is received and they are symptom-free for 24 hours
- We will do all we can to ensure good ventilation and we will be receiving a CO₂ monitor in the coming weeks to further support our ventilation operations.

- Staff and students in Years 4 – 13 must wear face coverings when inside at school. Public health advice is that an appropriate face covering will fit snugly and seal well around facial contours.
- When parents are doing the drop-off / pick up and this necessitates the parent getting out of the vehicle to approach the school gates, masks must be worn.
- Any student who has mask-exemption status must on the first day present the evidence to our campus leads.
- We have a good contact tracing system in place, will ensure good hygiene practices and will maintain appropriate cleaning regimes, including cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces.

Regarding online or hybrid learning and thinking ahead to the possible virus spread

- We aim to start with on-site schooling and encourage all families to return
- We are not asking staff to teach both on site and online
- We understand that some families may not feel comfortable to return at this stage and therefore will need to facilitate their own learning activities at home
- We are still planning for a more permanent online facility but are currently restricted by finances. We have not lost sight of many families who indicated via the survey last year that they would like a serious online option
- We will operate with agility and clarity if transmission is evident. The MOE and MOH have supplied us with a list of actions.
- If students and therefore staff are required to isolate due to transmission, we will activate the online learning programme outline previously followed.
- If numbers infected escalate, we will aim to manage on site learning for as long as is reasonable, safe and doable until such time as the Board may approve us to close the school and all go online.

As I close, I just needed to share this quote - terribly unspiritual I know...but if you know me it suits me...

"My new year resolution was to enjoy more coffee.....so far so good"

Nga mihi nui



Murray Burton MNZM
PRINCIPAL