

Te Rapa Primary School



Newsletter

Friday 17th April 2020

School Student Roll : 541

Day #3 Distance Learning

Things have started well. Te Rapa teachers are working hard to re-connect with their students. This new school Term is similar to the start of a new school year, with teachers building relationships with their students, and students trying to 'find their way' forward along a new pathway. This is what we do in Week 1 of Term 1 at the start of a new school year. Gaining a better appreciation of each other and learning about what needs to be done, and when, is Stage #1. Then Stage #2 commences once teachers have a better understanding of the educational needs of their students, and they can start to step things up a gear. This includes setting a daily / weekly timetable or programme for learning, and they also start to tailor specific learning for individuals or groups of students. This is much easier to do face to face in a classroom, so trying to do all of this under the current 'distance learning' umbrella is certainly a very new challenge for us all. Thanks mum / dad for your patience.

Well-Being & Mental Health

At these early stages our main focus continues to be the well-being of our students, and our school families ... but we also need to keep a close eye on ourselves (as a school staff) and our own families too. We are always very committed to our physical health, but at this time we also need to focus on our mental health too, so please take 10 mins a day to carefully consider your mental health ie. your well-being. Perhaps go on-line to research the tools that might help you to look after yourself, and / or look after others in your bubble. Consider visiting the new free APP called "Mentemia" being made available to all. This is being promoted as a great guide to how we can boost our well-being, and also develop ways to reduce stress / anxiety, create calmness for self and others and how to think positively.

Essential Service Workers **THANK YOU SO MUCH**

Our sincere thanks to every Te Rapa parent / carer who is an *Essential Service Worker* under Alert Level #4. You are amazing, and Te Rapa Primary School students, staff and community applaud you for everything you have done so far, and will continue to do for us. We salute you, and we acknowledge the sacrifices you have made over the past 3 – 4 weeks to feed us, protect us and keep all the services operating.

Learning from Home in Lockdown

Parents and carers need to remember you are not alone during lockdown. All of us, with children at home, are having to complete our own work requirements, juggle the household, keep the peace and also do our best to ensure our children are learning. This includes every Te Rapa teacher and member of our support staff team too. Every household will be dealing with challenges, just like you. Remember Te Rapa teachers do not expect you to be the teacher. Just do your best, and do not feel you have let your child down if very little gets done on any given day, and don't over-do things either. Keep to a couple of hours before lunchtime, and if everyone is still keen, consider 1 x hour after lunch. Learning can be more experienced based too, so encourage your child to play outside or inside, watch some "education" TV and to have fun. Less "adult" directed tasks will help. Be sure to use the contents of the take home Learning Pack too. These were created by our Te Rapa staff before lockdown started and were made available for collection for every student in their class.

Email Communication with Classroom Teachers and Setting the Scene at Home

Continue to work with your child's class teacher, and expect daily communication or certainly every second day. Take advice and guidance from the teacher, and when the time is right in your household for a formal "head down" task to be completed try to provide a quiet space for your child(ren) where you are also in attendance. Shutting them away is not ideal. Turn the TV off and perhaps set things up on the kitchen table, or clear a bookshelf or benchtop so they have the space they need to "be a student" working from home.

Programmes

As time progresses our Te Rapa Teachers will provide more work via email, but this won't be loads of worksheets. There will be times where they will be asked to "discuss with" or "create" or "think about". Teachers will also encourage children to play board games or cards, do some cooking or complete a craft type task. Often the tasks a child might take 30mins to do at school, might only take 10mins at home, so if they finish something and do a good job, have an *extra for experts* task ready to go. Make it something they like to do, and be flexible, because what they like doing today might not appeal tomorrow. Remember to be positive praise, praise and praise again.

Parents / Carers Working from Home

It is crucial that your own work gets done too, so please do not feel pressured to complete everything shared with your child. Fit the school work in around your work, and not the other way around. I suggest you create a timetable for your own work each day, including any phone calls or on-line meetings, and use the educational TV programmes to provide you with the time you will need. This will ensure the time with your child / student is less stressful. There are sure to be times during your working day where you can complete your tasks next to your children. This ensure you can shift your focus between what you are doing, and also answer any questions they may have. As outlined above ... identify your work needs first, and then you can allocate time to assisting your child.

Being Patient and Being Understanding

We love our children, and they love us, and right now they are much safer at home and not at school. Home is the best place for all of us, so parents and carers will need to mentally prepare yourself for a distance learning programme at home for at least another week or 2. Over the weekend as we move into next week beginning Monday 20th April make sure you have a good strategy for your household. Be aware of space, so you can manage things if space is limited. Plan accordingly if you have more than one child at home and limited device time. Children are at school for 6 x hours because they share the time with 25 – 30 others. In the home setting learning time will be significantly less, but it is likely to be much more intense. Children are comfortable with their parent / carer / sibling, just as you are with them, so they are more likely to say what they are thinking, and even more so if they are frustrated or tired, and taking it out on the ones we love is more common in the heat of battle. Parents and carers must try to avoid conflict, so learn to read the situation well. Do not back your child into a corner, and more importantly know when it is best to listen, and not speak. A teacher's ears are just as powerful, as a teacher's ability to speak.

Some Things Your Child Might Need *Books / Comics*

If you are limiting screen time, and the Education Channels do not have a suitable show, try to find a few old books or comics that might be of interest. These could be old favourites, from their younger years, or something more appropriate to their current reading level. This is a time to be entertained so look under the stairs, in the attic, under the bed and dust off a few books / comics that bring back memories. Perhaps read to your children some of your old favourites too eg. Asterix and Obelix, Marvel comics, Thomas the Tank or anything that appeals to you (the adult) because if you are enthusiastic about something, then they are more likely to be enthusiastic (for a time) too.

A Place to Let Off Steam

No child can sit still for too long, so let them get up and move about, have a bounce on the tramp or do a circuit on their bike / scooter / skateboard. Burning off energy between distance learning tasks is important, as is stopping for m/tea and lunch etc. Have an obstacle course ready to go, or a walk routine too and remember to be positive, and share lots of praise.

Space

As outlined above ... make space available during learning time. It doesn't need to be a whole table, or a whole room. Older children may already have a study space in their room, but make sure you are there-a-bouts and available to keep an eye on progress.

Storage

During distance learning at home there will be lots of cross over between work time and home time, so if things need to be packed up and "made ready" for the next session, your student will need a storage space or perhaps a container for their 'stuff'. This is important if their work space is shared, or is also a common space enjoyed by others in the bubble eg. kitchen table.

Paper, Pencils / Pens, Rubber / Twink, Glue, Tape and Scissors

These items are needed for a variety of tasks, so try to locate a set so everyone either has their own, or there is a shared set. Add to this coloured pencils, felt tips and perhaps some paints / brushes too. If your child is getting into some crafty type tasks remember to find a sheet or mat to place on the floor or table top first so they are free to try things without making too much of a mess.

Alert Level #4

Many of you will have heard the Prime Minister on the TV yesterday afternoon, and obviously we are still at Alert Level 4. Iona Holsted (Secretary for Education - Wellington) has indicated to all School Principals that there is still a lot of detail to work through before schools might re-open either in part or in full. Any decision is yet to be taken of course, and is dependent on Ministry of Health advice.

Moving to Alert Level #3

The Ministry of Education's National Office (MOE) have organised meetings today and over the weekend with key education groups. This is to carefully consider and work through the practical issues that need to be addressed before schools might resume. School cannot maintain social distancing guidelines for every child. This is simply not practical, so staying home and maintaining the distance learning programme is still seen as the best option. Seeing the "lockdown" through to a conclusion is paramount and to come out of lockdown too quickly could be detrimental to everything achieved so far. The meetings being held will try to provide the support a school will need so we can do the very best we can, but we must recognise that schools are simply not equipped to "get it right". The MOE has confirmed that they will give us time to do the best we can once the decision / dates are determined to move to Alert Level #3. It is in everyone's best interest that children do not return to school. Attendance at school will only be for the children of essential service workers, and those parents / carers who are identified as workers who are required to return to work under Alert Level #3 restrictions. All other children are to remain at home, and will continue to be supported via distance learning programmes.

Keep watching the COVID-19 daily announcements on TV1 at 1pm

Pressure on Schools ... and School Staff

This is a really, really challenging and stressful time for our school and our staff. I want to publically via this newsletter, personally thank my staff for all their work so far over the past week to 10 x days, and especially these first few days of the new school Term. Their professionalism and their commitment, as well as their leadership and flexibility has not gone unnoticed. You are all appreciated.

When we do move to Alert Level #3 my teachers will have to juggle 2 x jobs (1) teaching some students face to face at school, while (2) teaching others via distance learning. This is a huge undertaking. On top of that they too will have a household to manage at home, and will also have all of the challenges associated with their own children's learning and the well-being of everyone in their bubble too.

Please remember to support our teachers and support staff once we make the next transition to Alert Level #3, and the best way to do that will be to **keep your children at home with you**, so the only children at school will be those children who "have to be a school" so their parents / carers can get out there in our community to keep us safe and well, and keep the big wheels turning for our nation.

Thank you for your continued support of Te Rapa Primary *Waikato Top School* 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 & 2019
..... a full primary school where "everyone knows your child's name"

V W Franklin (Principal) and Staff