



# OPIHI COLLEGE

P O Box 175 Temuka 7948, New Zealand

14<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Greetings to all our Opihi College Whanau

First I must apologise for the length of this letter, but there is a lot to share with you all.

We know that the first two weeks of lockdown have presented challenges to all of our whanau, regardless of your bubble size or its arrangement. We are very aware that some have faced trials during this period, whilst for others it has been fairly seamless. Regardless of your circumstances, we hope you have been able to take some time to enjoy the enforced relaxation period.

To those of you who are essential workers, we offer thanks from our whole school community for your commitment to ensuring the wellbeing and access to services of us all.

This letter serves as a reminder that our students have been on 'holiday' over this period, but that school begins tomorrow, 15<sup>th</sup> April. While our Opihi College site will remain physically closed, we are fully prepared to ensure that all of our students' learning will continue in their homes during this time. Teachers will be delivering teaching/learning to students remotely/online. Whilst I genuinely hope that your children have taken time to relax and rest over the early holiday period, the expectation is that from 15<sup>th</sup> April they participate in daily learning.

I want to emphasise that we are aware that for many this level of 'self-directed' learning is a new challenge. We do not expect that students will copy a 'normal' school day with 5 full hours of learning. But students must be participating in a reasonable amount of school work every day.

Our message is that Senior students should be engaging in 3-4 hours of school work a day (Year 11, 12 and 13), and for juniors (Year 7 and 10) 2-3 hours per day. Students have been provided with work for each of their subject areas, by a combination of email, online programmes and hard copy work, and can select what they work on, although it will be essential for students (seniors in particular) to take responsibility for keeping a balance across all of their subjects. Our teachers have provided a generous amount of work, to ensure that all learning levels and abilities are covered, but there is NO expectation that ALL of the work will be completed.

At this point we require the input of all of our parents/caregivers to support your children in your home environment. In this new home learning setting, the onus falls on you to encourage your students to get on with some school work. Whilst teachers will be available to your student at both set times and by email, you are currently the 'influence' during the school day. Thank you in advance for your support with this.



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If we find that a student does not engage with any school work at all over time, we will be in touch with you via phone. Our biggest concern here is that, when school finally does return, students who have not engaged, will be a long way behind their peers, which will be stressful for those individuals.

One key commitment that we ask of your child, is that they check their school emails and google classrooms for communication from her teachers. These should be checked every day. If your child needs help with something, they should email their teacher about it; all of our teachers are available during 'normal' school hours, to help. We are aware that each home has individual routines and needs, and we fully support flexibility in how your student's learning day might look. While it is essential that students focus on school work at a time that is optimum to their learning, we realise that will look different in various homes.

We suggest that you ask your students about how their school work is going and what they are working on for that day. This will encourage them to think about what they are learning. It would also be helpful if you were to help set up some sort of learning plan/timetable with them; however, we encourage you to build flexibility into it as their focus needs to be on well-being as much as schoolwork. This is a very stressful time for some, and it is important that we are all still emotionally healthy at the end of lockdown.

The only time where there might be set time constraints for your student, is when a teacher is timetabled to hold a whole class session. For each week we have timetabled teachers for meetings with their classes. Your student's teachers will let them know when those times will be. These have been scheduled during the usual timetabled classroom periods to avoid clashes. A wee reminder that although we know a lot of our students have part-time jobs, employers should NOT be employing them during school hours after today.

For our senior students, I know that some may be feeling stressed about what is going to happen with NCEA. Please do what you can to alleviate that stress for them. The focus at the moment is on engagement. Your child just needs to be engaging in some sort of school work on a daily basis. When more information comes to us from NZQA around what implications this lockdown will have on NCEA, we will share that information to you asap.

We have done our best to identify which of our students do not have an available digital device or internet access. We have arranged to send chromebooks from school out to some students, and for others the Ministry of Education will be sending out digital devices. They should be delivered by the end of this week. We know that some of you have limited internet access and the Ministry of Education is working on this. We have no further information on this as yet, but will advise you as soon as we have more to share.

As you have probably heard, we are expecting an announcement from the Government on the 20th April, regarding next steps for this lockdown. Following on from that announcement, we



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will be back in touch with you all to outline next steps for our students.

A teacher from school will be in touch with you over the next couple of days, but if you have any immediate concerns, and wish to speak to a member of the senior leadership team, please do not hesitate to email us:

Bernie Rose – Assistant Principal – [roseb@opihicollege.school.nz](mailto:roseb@opihicollege.school.nz)

Vicki Henderson – Assistant Principal – [hendersonv@opihicollege.school.nz](mailto:hendersonv@opihicollege.school.nz)

Tony Robson – Deputy Principal – [robsont@opihicollege.school.nz](mailto:robsont@opihicollege.school.nz)

Tina Johnson – Principal – [johnsont@opihicollege.school.nz](mailto:johnsont@opihicollege.school.nz)

Nga mihi nui,

Tina Johnson

Note: Look out for the Learning Channel that starts on TV shortly. This can be accessed on TV2+1 or on Freeview 7. I posted a timetable for their learning sessions on Opihi College Facebook this morning.