

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

As we have moved into Covid-19 Level 3, here is the latest information from the MOE regarding school holidays.

School holidays are being brought forward so that they are completed within the 4 week period. Holidays will now start on Monday 30 March and run until Tuesday 14 April inclusive (a reminder that the Tuesday after Easter Monday is always a closed day for schools).

At the end of the school holidays, schools will be open for distance learning but not physically open for staff to work at the schools.

Please note the instruction to stay home (Alert Level 4) will continue beyond the new school holiday period but schools will be technically open for distance instruction. Teachers will be working offsite.

This week, teachers will be trialling and setting up communications with parents and students in order for their online learning to start on the 15th of April. Please do not expect any online learning to be sent home during the course of the holiday break.

May I take this opportunity to thank everyone for their support and understanding over this very trying period. I reiterate the words of our Prime Minister – be kind, keep safe, and look after each other.

A letter from a school principal and teacher...

Dear parents with school-aged children,

You might be inclined to create a minute by minute schedule for your kids. You have high hopes of hours of learning, including online activities, science experiments, and book reports. You'll limit technology until everything is done! But here's the thing...

Our kids are just as scared as we are right now. Our kids not only can hear everything that is going on around them, but they feel our constant tension and anxiety. They have never experienced anything like this before. Although the idea of being off of school for weeks sounds awesome, they are probably picturing a fun time like summer break, not the reality of being trapped at home and not seeing their friends.

Over the coming weeks, you will see an increase in behavior issues with your kids. Whether it's anxiety, or anger, or protest that they can't do things normally - it will happen. You'll see more meltdowns, tantrums, and oppositional behavior in the coming weeks. This is normal and expected under these circumstances.

What kids need right now is to feel comforted and loved. To feel like it's all going to be ok. And that might mean that you tear up your perfect schedule and love on your kids a bit more. Play outside and go on walks. Bake cookies and paint pictures. Play board games and watch movies. Do a science experiment together or find virtual field trips of the zoo. Start a book and read together as a family. Snuggle under warm blankets and do nothing.

Don't worry about them regressing in school. Every single kid is in this boat and they all will be ok. When we are back in the classroom, we will all course correct and meet them where they are. Teachers are experts at this! Don't pick fights with your kids because they don't want to do math. Don't scream at your kids for not following the schedule. Don't mandate 2 hours of learning time if they are resisting it.

If I can leave you with one thing, it's this: at the end of all of this, your kids' mental health will be more important than their academic skills. And how they felt during this time will stay with them long after the memory of what they did during those weeks is long gone. So keep that in mind, every single day...

Keep safe whanau

Gary Pasfield
Principal

Waimauku School