



AWAHOU SCHOOL

POHANGINA VALLEY.

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"To meet the educational needs of the Pohangina Valley community by fostering individual excellence in a dynamic and caring environment."

EXCELLENT LEARNING FOR A GLOBAL FUTURE

Week 9, Term 2, 2017

27 June, 2017

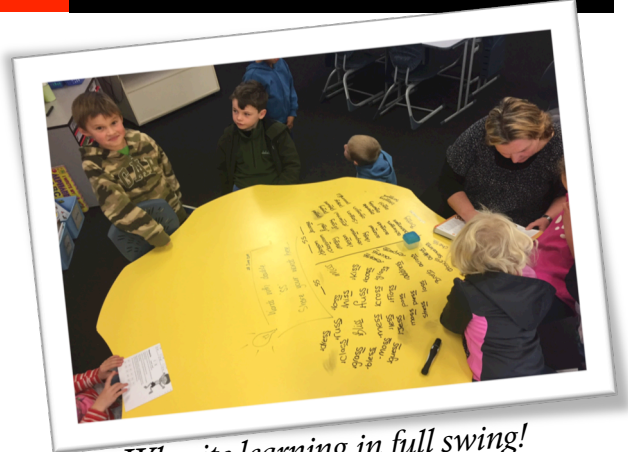
Respect Whakaute - Honesty Matatika - Effort Ngaki

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Kia Ora Awahou Community,
Today's newsletter is a bit different to the norm and a very personal one for me. As I'm sure you all know by now, I'm the type of person that likes to tackle challenges head on and be open, honest and transparent about things.

Currently I am going through a challenge in my life, further outlined by Alistair, our BOT Chair, below. Recently, I have been diagnosed with depression, a common illness that seems to be a lot more prevalent in society than it should. It is also an illness that carries some stigma with it, especially with males, and something that people often don't speak out about. I am determined to break this mold, and be open about the journey I am on, to help others as well as myself understand what it's all about, and that it's not a sign of weakness. Today I had a brief chat to the kids about this and what it means, and to reassure them that apart from some days off between now and the end of the term, it will not impact their schooling or the success of our school. Working with our awesome kids is when I'm happiest! The teachers, staff, and BOT are all being extremely supportive of me and I really appreciate their understanding and support, and know I have a strong team around me to help me get back on track. I'm still the same me, and still here for our kids.

Arohanui - Matt Schmidt Principal



Wharite learning in full swing!

Virtue of the week:

Understanding

Understanding is thinking clearly. It is using your mind so that you can see the truth about things. It is paying careful attention and thinking about things in order to see their meaning. Understanding is also having empathy and showing compassion. Understanding gives us the power to think and learn and also to care.

"What the heart understands today, the head understands tomorrow - Anon"

BOT MESSAGE

First up, I would like to praise Matt for seeking help as soon as he felt things weren't right, and then taking the very brave step of making his diagnosis public. Depression is an all too common ailment (particularly among rural school principals), and one that has been kept in the dark for far too long in New Zealand, to everyone's detriment.

Depression can affect anyone at any time. It is not a choice. It does not mean someone is "nuts", or even significantly different from the person we have always known, but it does affect how they think, feel and act in tough times.

The path to recovery is different for everyone, but usually involves one or more of the following:

- Professional help
- Spending quality time with family and friends
- Reducing stress and workload
- Improving health and fitness

Awahou School will be supporting Matt in his recovery by:

- Giving Matt the time off he needs to rest and spend time with his family
- Managing Matt's workload by delegating tasks and responsibilities to other staff
- Dusting-off the big bopper challenge

As a result of the above, Matt will not be at school every day through to the end of term. But rest assured, running of the school and lessons will not be disrupted by Matt's absence, as we have arranged cover to ensure there is a full complement of teachers and other assistance at all times. Our children's education remains our number one priority.

A number of other changes will be put in place, which I will update you about in future newsletters/Facebook posts.

During this time I ask for your patience and support, and please don't treat Matt like a stranger – depression isn't contagious!

I'll finish by saying Matt has the full support of the Board of Trustees and staff, and he remains the best principal for Awahou School.

I wish you a speedy recovery Matt.

Kia kaha

Alistair - Awahou School Board of Trustees Chair

- If you want to know more about depression, visit the excellent www.depression.org.nz website
- If you have any questions about Matt's diagnosis or the steps we are taking to support him, please contact me on alistair@thecatalystgroup.co.nz, 3294007, or 022 108 7703.

