

22nd May 2020

Return to Onsite Learning

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As I am sure you are all now aware, the College will be re-opening on **Monday 25th May** for full face to face learning for our **Prep and Year 1 students**, along with senior students currently enrolled in **VCE Unit 3 & 4 subjects**. The remaining students will return in the subsequent weeks as outlined below.

- **Monday 1 June – Year 2 to 6 and all students enrolled in VCE Units 1 & 2 subjects.**
- **Tuesday 9th June – Year 7 to 9 students and all remaining Year 10 students.**

As outlined in my previous letter on 13th May, children of essential workers and vulnerable children will continue to be able to attend school for supervision up until their specified return date and for other students, the current home-based remote learning arrangements will remain in place until their specified return date.

I would like to thank all those parents who have responded to the recent Return to School Survey. This has provided the College with valuable information which has enabled us to plan effectively for the return of students in as safe a way as possible. If you haven't yet responded to the survey sent in the last letter, I would really appreciate it if you could do that today.

If you have already responded, please do not take the survey again as it will distort the overall data that we collect. The link to the survey is at the end of this letter.

As mentioned in my last letter, the College will be adopting the protective measures outlined by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our students, teachers, staff and families.

Attached to the email along with this letter is our **Return to School Guide** which contains everything you need to know as parents along with information that should put your mind at ease in regard to how we will be ensuring a safe environment with your children back on the College site. We will also post this guide on our website shortly.

One important rule that I would like to reiterate is that if your child is sick, **they must not come to school**. You must keep them at home and away from others. Furthermore, if there is any sickness in your household, please keep your child at home even if they are not sick themselves.

Also attached to this email is a Family Matters update from Fiona Dumitrache, Head of Student Wellbeing. This edition of Family Matters will help you to create a positive and supportive home environment which will assist your children before they return to school.

Although the return to onsite face to face learning will be something that we are all cautious about, we are very much looking forward to having your children back at school where rich and active learning can take place again. Hopefully, in the not too distant future, we will be able to engage again in all the wonderful things that make our community special.

Please read carefully through the **Return to School Guide** and contact the College office if there is anything you are still not sure about.

Once again, here is the link to the parent survey for those who have not yet responded:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfyNEmgns7iXDA9PnPYuV0g0KFgWrvUrT268uq9ZDuY0tqrfg/viewform?usp=sf_link

Grace & Peace

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Damian Higgins', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Damian Higgins
Principal



FAMILY MATTERS!



Managing Well During Change!

FOR PARENTS & CARERS

This guide was created to provide parents with some tips to help you create an environment in the home which will support your child's or adolescent's return to school.

CHANGE...SOME MORE!

There is no rule book for dealing with the changes that you and your family have managed over the past few months. Every student and every family have experienced this time differently. Some have found it easier, yet others have found it more stressful and difficult.

Staggered start...How do I manage this? Even though having some of your children starting back at school at different times, remember that each child will be with HIS or HER class. Learning is still going to be taking place, either on campus or in the home. It is your family's choice as to when you feel comfortable in sending children back to school - good communication with the College will be a key.

*COMMUNICATION provides the insight into the
thinking & feelings of another person.*

It will be easy to get task orientated
and to have high expectations of your child, the College, yourself...

instead

BREATHE, RETHINK, GENTLY COMMUNICATE, CHEER ON, CELEBRATE!

Kids learn from what we do and what we say.

Be compassionate, gentle, respectful and kind...

to sooth worry, disappointment, anger, fear and uncertainty.

SchoolTV.me https://schooltv.me/wellbeing_news/special-report-coronavirus-transition-back
Dr Michael Carr-Gregg speak about the return to school.

Northside Christian College Wellbeing Team:

Jared Stocks— Chaplain

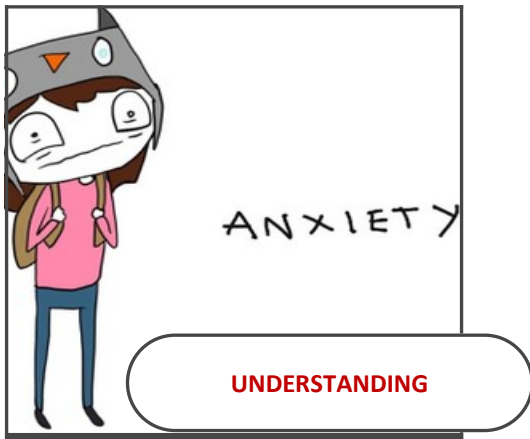
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Compiled for
you by Fiona





WHAT IF...THE ANXIOUS MIND

This will not be like coming back together again after the holidays because connection has been different during this time.

Remember, we have told our children of (the invisible virus) and modelled danger to them (by staying home). Their brains are thus operating at a basic level. When in this mode children will be: reactionary, sensitive and will tire easily.

What if I go to school and I become sick?

What if my friend tries to hug me?

What if my friendship group changed?

Is that group that I enjoyed still there?

Where will I fit?

What if I am behind my friends in my learning?

There may be a general uneasiness of the unknown.

Developing strength

VALIDATE

"I can understand why you might be worried about that."

"I also have the same concern so I thought I might be able to..." (share possible other ways of thinking about it)

DISCUSS possibilities—don't give solutions.

CORRECT misperceptions

MODEL resilient and flexible thinking - *don't tell them not to worry. They already may be!* Use the example of previous adjustment to Remote Learning as evidence of their resilience. Remind them that it might be hard at first but that it's going to be OK, they are not alone in this, and that history tells us we are going to get through this!

ASK "Is there one thing that I could do that would be helpful?"

"What would you like me to do?"

"I'm noticing (your shoulders are up, you're tearful, you are talking more loudly...) Tell me about that."

SAY "I also feel a little this way."

"Do I understand you correctly when I hear you saying..."

DO Keep listening, keep reflecting, keep reassuring prayerfully.

WATCH FOR

Watch for signs of change. **Kids will often present their anxieties physically.**

- ◇ *Trouble sleeping or poorer sleep on nights before school*
 - ◇ Restlessness
 - ◇ *Emotional bursts of anger or tears or greater swings between the sad, mad and glad feelings.*
 - ◇ Becoming unhinged over seemingly small things
 - ◇ *Withdrawing more than usual*
 - ◇ Complaints of headaches and stomach aches, sore legs or jaw.
- There will be every chance you may see:
- ◇ Reluctance or refusal to go to school, including tantrums
 - ◇ Increased clinginess in the morning

PREDICT AND ASSUME THAT THIS IS A CHILD WHO IS WORRIED OR INSECURE RATHER THAN DISOBEDIENT, DEFIANT OR NAUGHTY.

AWARE strategy

A Acknowledge or Accept the anxiety. "I know my nervous system is working. This is normal." It's an unavoidable emotion.

W Watch the level. Rate it using a scale of 1-10 and notice that it changes. *It doesn't always stay at one intensity level.*

A Act as if... Don't let your anxiety prevent you from life! *Attempting to avoid it only makes it grow.*

R Relax yourself and Repeat. There are things you can do to reduce the sensations and anxiety itself. *Breathe, pray, write, move...*

E Expect the best ... but also know this may happen again.

Doing this TOGETHER! God is with us always

PREPARING TO BE PHYSICALLY TOGETHER AGAIN...

BE OPEN

- * Emotional check-ins
 - * Discuss:
 - the safety procedures and physical distancing when at school. "You'll still be doing lots of hand washing"
 - different classroom seating arrangements
 - kiss and drop delivery to school & supporting staff
- Minds will work overtime in order to try to keep us safe.
Kids may not want to share their back-to-school worries.*

NORMAL ROUTINE

It's been lovely to have flexibility but it will be helpful to start return to school routines before returning.

- ◇ Sleep and wake times
- ◇ Meal times
- ◇ School /Work
- ◇ Family times
- ◇ Hobbies or sports

Once back, prioritise PLAY...for all age groups. Mental health protection is critical!

COUNT DOWN

For younger students or those who carry more anxiety with change

- * Drive by!
- * Start to talk about "when you go to school" instead of "if"
- * Use visuals to incite positivity

SELF CHECK

How parents manage their feelings will have a direct impact on how confidently students will return to school. If adults present as very anxious, children will pick up on the worry and may approach the change with fear rather than confidence. It's important to focus on the belief in ABILITY rather than letting the EMOTION of the moment determine the decision of going to school or school avoiding! Think about how you can support your child's re-entry to school. If they express concern or questions, include them in the problem solving, joining the dots with reassuring healthy behaviours and safety measures. Build in respite or self-care for yourself. **It is** emotionally taxing to feel ahead of the game!

CELEBRATE

Despite tiredness, which is predictable whenever there is change, remember to check in before the day starts—looking forward to, have questions about, what might be different, what are they expecting. Then finish the day with a celebration of wins in the day. Rocking up to school is a huge start!

NAME FEELINGS

- * Give feelings a name and describe them.
"I'm feeling a bit nervous. My legs feel a bit wobbly, my tummy is a bit bubbly" or with older students "I'm feeling a bit nervous. I didn't sleep as well as I usually do."
- * Model feelings "I feel a bit nervous. How do you feel?"

COMMUNICATE

Plan and coordinate with the College if there are already concerns or reluctant children. Teachers have been and will be managing the emotional load of many children. Take the return to school slowly, and moment by moment. Everyone is doing their best in this exploratory process. Invite the College to be a part of sorting THIS out together. *Discuss what has helped your child feel safe and calm.* How have they expressed their feelings recently?

PLAN FOR SUCCESS

Focus on any new learning successes, challenges, new skills or strategies, and overcoming challenges during remote learning. Then help them to link it to their capacity to transfer this to ANOTHER new experience.

If we want kids to learn they have to feel safe first.

What is the message of their behaviour?

Home has felt safe and predictable with potentially less sensory stimulation. School will be a change!