



Totara Syndicate Newsletter – Term 1 2021

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Apologies for the slight delay in sending out this newsletter. It was all good to go out a couple of weeks ago, but then held over as we moved up and down alert levels. Hopefully we now have a smooth run through this term and the rest of the year with minimal disruptions.

Totara Syndicate remains as three classes, with no change to our core teaching staff, although we do welcome Natalie Heather in on Wednesdays to cover senior teacher release. Student numbers remain about the same as they were last year. We welcome three new students to the school - Ben Hooker, Bertie van Eck and Tomiteau Finau.

In terms of physical space, we have the Hub back in action and Room 27 is slowly being transformed into a Digital Tech / STEM space. This involves the addition of green screens, editing gear, non-digital construction equipment and all measures of other equipment that will expand learning opportunities beyond the usual.

Core Curriculum

We are continuing our programme of differentiated maths classes this year. It has proved successful in the past, offering more targeted support to students that need it and extension to those who had already mastered the requisite areas of the Year 7 and 8 syllabus. These cross class groupings begin in Week 3.

Our Inquiry for the first term will be "Take Action for Water". This is an environmental science unit that looks at everything from the water cycle through to the health of our waterways. The unit of work will culminate with a field trip later in the term to test local waterways. Science will also be a focus in the second term when we make preparations for a Science Fair. Other scheduled Units this year include Puberty, the Olympics and a History/Social Sciences Unit on different cultures throughout the world.

For the most part, our Literacy programme will integrate in the various Topics being studied. So Term One will be focusing predominantly on report writing.

We are awaiting details on various sporting opportunities beyond the school gate, but these will likely include volleyball, cricket, rippa rugby, triathlons and other team games. We will feed information through as we get it. Athletics has been moved to Term 4 so that our own school competition can be run closer to the scheduled Parumoana Sports Day.

Other Activities, Opportunities and Events.

There are a plethora of other activities, opportunities and events that should be noted throughout the term and year. I will endeavour to list the more important and immediate ones below.

- An Open Evening will take place for parents on Wednesday the 10th of March from 6.00pm to 7.00pm.
- Technicraft commenced on Thursday the 11th of February and will continue every Thursday throughout the year. Please ensure your child makes it to school by 8.30am on these days, as buses leave for Brandon Intermediate at 8.45am.
- Our Kapa Haka continues in the first term under the leadership of Matua Whaitiri. From Term Two he will then switch to teaching a couple of more specialised groups - He Māori Ahau and He Toa Taioh.
- Languages commenced on Wednesday the 10th of February. This year we are offering French, German and Spanish. Students will need to bring headphones (cheap in-the-ear ones will be fine) as some sessions will have individual digital/audio components to them.
- School Photos (class and individual) will be taken on Friday the 12th of March.
- Learning Conversations will take place on Tuesday the 30th and Wednesday the 31st of March.
- Easter Holidays fall within the school term this year and the school will be closed on the 2nd, 5th and 6th of April.
- The last day of Term One will be Friday the 16th of April.
- 2021 is an EOTC year and this will take place in Term 4.

There is much more that we will be putting into play over the course of this year, too much in fact to mention in this first newsletter. I would like to close though by saying that we are all excited not only by the new opportunities and challenges, but also by the prospect of working with such a great bunch of students and supportive community.

Thanks and regards on behalf of the Totara Syndicate.



Mark Hughes