



31 March 2020

Dear parents, carers and students,

This term I had the privilege of taking on a new role at our school, one day a week, as Student Wellbeing Officer. This involves establishing, promoting and ensuring student safety and wellbeing at school. In just a few short weeks I started to meet with students and staff to understand specific needs and, help individual students feel heard and understood. I was feeling genuinely excited for what we could achieve and the positivity that would result from this valuable role. I was so proud to be part of the staff and a community that values this area of education.

Suddenly we find ourselves in a new era of education and learning. We couldn't predict that in 2020 we would find ourselves learning online at home seemingly disconnected and remote from each other.

This time is hard for many reasons. One of the biggest is because it is uncertain. No one can easily predict how long this way of educating and living will last. When will we get to be back together again? None of us can really answer that question. So inevitably we worry. We all feel differing levels of anxiety, and this can manifest in various ways.

I want to reach out and tell you that although you may feel alone or disconnected you are not. We are in this together. But rather than just say that I wanted to come up with a way we can show it.

When I feel sad, lonely or anxious, my best defence is to be thankful and replace negative feelings with positive ones. I try to think of one thing I am grateful for.

I discovered that there is science behind this theory. Lots of scientific research with positive results. If you search the science of gratitude, you will discover so much evidence behind the theory that practicing being thankful makes you happier. What does that have to do with us? Before this period of learning from home began, my idea was to start a gratitude tree at school. A place where students can display things that they are thankful for. I wanted to do some learning around being thankful, knowing it's a great habit to establish in childhood, setting them up for their future and making them happier and more engaged in the present.

Little did I know we may need this practice more than ever right now. But how can we encourage each other, and ourselves while we are socially distant? Here's my idea, a gratitude tree.

Attached to this letter is a picture of a leaf. If you can, print a few of them out. Start each morning with by writing something you are grateful for. You can spend some time decorating the leaf, or just scribble something down. Parents, please encourage children to come up with something they are genuinely thankful for. It can be as simple as "the cereal I'm eating for breakfast" to big ideas like "our neighbours who will help us if we don't have enough cereal". You could use paper leaves, make your own shapes or use leaves you find fallen on the ground. Your children will probably come up with their own creative ways to express themselves.

The next step is to find a space to display your gratitude. Below are some examples of gratitude trees but you could be as creative or as simple as you like. If possible, display your tree outside, or in a front window. You could then go for a walk around the neighbourhood to see what others are thankful for this could become a way you feel connected. You could also share pictures of your tree with the class on Seesaw.

I encourage you to find a way to keep being thankful during this extremely stressful time however this activity is not compulsory.

For many of you this could become a lovely time of connecting and slowing down with your family, but I am also very aware that for some of you it may feel too much to handle. If that is the case for you, please know that you are not alone. I listed some phone numbers below that will provide 24/7 support.

If your child is missing connection and you feel it would be helpful for them to have someone to just chat with, please feel free to email the school, who will pass it on to me and together we will find a way to make that happen.

Stay safe and well. Reach out if you need help. I'm thankful for each and every one of you.

Carlie Pack
Wellbeing Officer



FREE 24/7 SERVICES:

Mental health Line – 1800 011 511

Kids Helpline - 1800 55 1800 - kidshelpline.com.au

Headspace - 1800 650 890 - eheadspace.org.au

Parent Helpline - 1300 1300 52

Beyond Blue - 1300 22 4636 www.beyondblue.org.au

Lifeline - 13 11 14

