



Te Awamutu Primary School Te Kura Tuatahi o Te Awamutu

NEWSLETTER

29th January 2025 (Week 1, Term 1)

Welcome back!

It has been simply amazing seeing 'our' children back at school and hearing about their holiday adventures, challenges and experiences. Hospital visits to windswept beaches, baches to tents, whānau time to peace and quiet, busy activities to relaxing at home and everything in between.

It was lovely to see so many parents and to catch up with you all too! I look forward to the picnic on Thursday night between 5pm and 6pm to see more of you. Details on that are further below.

News

Speaking of hospital visits; our lovely Mrs Brady has been terribly unwell over the holiday break and has spent a significant amount of time in hospital. It is hoped she will undergo surgery this Thursday before she can focus on completely healing. With this in mind, we won't see her around school for a number of weeks, perhaps even the whole of Term 1. We wish her all our love and a speedy recovery. Staff will visit her at different times, so if any students wish to make a card or write a letter to express their well wishes, they can drop that into the office and we will pass it on.

Gully School

TAPS is starting our own forest or bush school, which we have named Gully School. We have employed Mr Pettit (or Mitch to adults), who comes to us with an army and teaching background. Combining these skills, Mitch will run an outdoor classroom to suit the needs of our youngest students to our oldest. Each classroom will get two days per term at Gully School. We believe this opportunity is an efficient use of the five days that teachers are legally entitled to as "classroom release" or CRT.

Uniform is not required on the day your child is at Gully School. Sensible outdoor clothing and footwear is encouraged as it will proceed regardless of the weather. You will receive a Hero notification the week before your child attends so you can be prepared. Specific information about Gully School can also be found on Hero so please log in and read it.

Thank you to Dave Pendleton for completing a safety check of the trees in our gully and for his offers of help. We've had other parents step forward to offer help too and we very much appreciate your involvement. This has the potential to be something great for our students and our school! You can contact Mitch at mitchp@taps.school.nz. The office will be in contact with Mitch via walkie-talkie predominantly, so please ensure all messages are conveyed to your child before school starts as we don't want to interrupt their programme with notices to "meet Mum at the front gate" etc.

New Curriculums

Over the holidays, the teachers spent a number of days setting up their classrooms for a successful year ahead. Last Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, teaching staff gathered together and we pulled apart the new curriculums rolled out nationally for Reading, Writing, Oral Language and Maths. We examined each year in detail, looked at the before and after stages and discussed the skills at each level, in detail.

In Term 1 2025, all Primary and Intermediate Schools in NZ need to be using the new English and Maths Curriculum. They must also ensure that all Year 0-6 students receive 10 hours per week of structured literacy instruction. Now, TAPS is well ahead of the game here. We've been running a structured literacy programme for four solid years. So while other schools were coming to grips with learning about structured literacy these holidays and how to best implement that in their setting, we were able to focus our attention on the new curriculums. All of the staff worked extremely hard on those 'call back days' and during the last days of their 'non-contact time' also known as holidays. I'm so incredibly grateful and appreciative of their efforts and I believe that our school is incredibly well placed to negotiate these changes in a way that is positive for all students. Change is a challenging process, we may not notice the benefits straight away - remember you need to crack a few eggs to make an omelet - but once we work through the challenges we will excel.

This note is to highlight that TAPS is exploring the possibility of cohort entry for our five year old students. This does not impact anyone who has started or is due to start in the next term. It requires a term of consultation, so if we did adopt cohort entry, it would not be until Term 2 or 3 of this year. Cohort entry means that instead of rolling enrolments as children turn 5, whenever that may be, we would have two enrolment dates per term, restricting new enrolments to starting on the first day of term, or the first day of Week 5 of the term. If a child had started school elsewhere, moved to Te Awamutu (in our zone) and wanted to start at TAPS, they could start immediately, without waiting. Any students in Year 1 - 6 that are in our zone could start immediately, this would only affect those turning 5 and enrolling in a NZ school for the first time. The benefit is that we would have increased certainty about the number of students expected to start school. By starting a group of students simultaneously; each child would have other peers in the same situation providing a sense of support, we'd know when we needed to start a new classroom, and be able to advertise and recruit a suitable teacher in advance. Importantly, with the new curriculums being year group based (Reading, Writing and Maths), we could start teaching from the start of the Year 1 curriculum for all new students instead of them missing vital content because they started 2 weeks or 2 months after their peers (which currently happens). The only downside for parents is that they could end up having to pay daycare or kindergarten fees for a few weeks longer, until the next cohort entry date rolls around. As I say, we are in the exploration phase. Please feel free to share your view with me, particularly if this may impact your family. You can do that via phone, email or by popping in for a chat. All methods are welcome.

The Board – are you interested?

The Board re-gather on Wednesday 12th February from 6pm. Any of our community members are welcome to attend. In September of this year we will be holding our triennial elections (3 yearly). I know some members are looking to step down as their children move on from TAPS, so we are seeking other parents to step up. We need five elected parent representatives with a range of strengths and abilities (knowledge of accountancy, property, health and safety, legal knowledge, te ao Māori are examples of skill sets we have found helpful in the past). Please consider joining our Board! I'd like to say that it's a fairly simple role. I do the aspects of managing the school finances, property, learning and teaching as the Principal, the Board governs - working with me to set priorities and targets, developing policies for the safety of our people and consulting with the community to ensure that decisions being made align with what our community want. It always helps to have independent thinkers, who look at the big picture but if you'd like to know more, we are going to arrange times that our current Board members are available at the Coffee Cove to chat and answer any questions.

Meet the Teacher Picnic

A poster has been sent out with the information you need to know. It's this Thursday, between 5pm - 6pm on the field. Sausage sizzle and frozen treats are available to buy, or bring your own homemade picnic and a blanket. The bike track will be open for business. Come and network with us and other TAPS families. These are the main messages that may affect you in the immediate future. The next, official newsletter will be out in Week 3. Any other announcements will go out via Hero and Facebook in the meantime.

See you around school soon,

Sharon Griffiths

