



30th May 2023

Dear Parents,

COVID-19 Lockdown – Lessons Learnt

Once again, may I commence this newsletter by expressing my appreciation for all the support from teachers, parents and students.



I have recently engaged with many present and future parents in various meetings. As a Principal, these meetings have been invaluable in that they concretize the aims of the school. Current parents have expressed appreciation for the learning experience that their children are receiving, and the parents enrolling their children for next year have shared their excitement with me on how much their children are looking forward to joining our school.

In this newsletter, I am holding up a mirror and looking back at the challenging COVID lockdown period and the lessons learnt that can be applied now.

One aspect that stood out was that in most schools, students were willing to be diligent and adapt to different teaching experiences. I have no doubt that while COVID-19 was a huge challenge on many fronts, it has allowed us all to develop our ability to be adaptable and to cope with uncertainty and adversity. It has also provided some time to reflect on what is important.

I happened to read an interesting article by Melanie Verwoerd, and it struck a chord that prompted me to share these thoughts with you on how they relate to The Bay Academy.



Melanie Verwoerd, at the end of COVID lockdown, wrote the following:

“So as we start exiting lockdown, it seems important that we ask what brought us to this point and how we can avoid it in future. Reflecting on these questions, there are two concepts that have really occupied my thinking. The first one is kindness. A few nights ago, I came across a speech that the New Zealand Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, gave in 2018 at the United Nations. Towards the end of her speech she said the following: “Perhaps it is time to step back from the chaos and ask what we want. It is in that space that we find simplicity ... If I can distil it down to one concept ... it is simple and it is this: ‘Kindness’. In the face of isolationism, protectionism, racism, the simple concept of looking outward and

beyond ourselves, of kindness and collectivism might just be as good a starting point as any."

COVID-19 has shown the importance of humanity. While a virus does cause isolation, we do not lose the connectivity and empathy for others that make us human. The Bay Academy is a caring school. Before any decision is made, the school always asks, what is in the best interest of the child? This approach supports the care that is taken to support each child and their families. The concept of humanity is entrenched in our school and we must protect this special attribute.

The second concept that Melanie Verwoerd expands on is the concept of what is "essential":

"Having been forced to only do and buy what is essential during lockdown, it seems to me that the Covid epidemic is encouraging us to continue to ask: "What is truly essential in my life?" This is an uncomfortable question to ask and not something that has been encouraged in the consumerist, growth-driven economic model that the post-World War II generation has grown up in. Let me immediately acknowledge that for the majority of people in our country and world, such a question never arises since their meagre income allows only essentials and often not even that. What this epidemic has highlighted is that the manner in which one third of our planet live, is unsustainable. If we do not change our lifestyles, we will repeatedly arrive at some similar crisis point, until we pass the point of no return.

If we don't change dramatically how we eat, how we drive, what and how much we buy, how we generate and use energy and what we dispose of, we will face a much bigger crisis than the one we are experiencing now. What this Covid-19 epidemic has taught us is that when we really have to we can almost overnight make dramatic changes

globally. The question now remains: will we? As the world is slowly starting to return back to work - have we learned anything? Will we individually and collectively change our lives and if so, how? As we have found during lockdown, we might discover that we need very little in terms of possessions. What really matters are the people that we share our lives and planet with."



If there are 2 lessons I have learnt from COVID-19 that I could apply to The Bay Academy community, and Melanie Verwoerd echoes this, it is kindness and essentialness.

In the High School, I have always propagated to the students the concept of 3 gates before you do or say anything: Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it kind?

Perhaps we need to add a 4th: is it essential? There is a concept termed, "teenage affluenza". This is a trend that teenagers always want the latest devices, fashion items and other "stuff".

They desire these even if their current devices are more than sufficient. Keeping up with trends to be popular with others is usually one of the driving forces.

However, since COVID, with the concept of essentialism now more important than ever, I do question the need for this consumerism and the negative impact on the environment. While attending an international conference, I was privileged to listen to Dame Ellen MacArthur.

At the time, Ellen had set a new sailing record for solo circumnavigation around the world.

One point that stood out for me was her explanation of how she had to plan her resources to ensure she had enough food and other “essentials” for the long journey.

Each day she noted her dwindling resources. She then extrapolated her experience to see her yacht and finite resources as a mirror of our planet. Once she completed the race successfully, she went on to start her own drive to accelerate the concept of a circular economy where resources are used over and over to preserve what we have on Earth.



At The Bay Academy, we have perhaps not been as mindful of the environment as we should be. To this end we will look at measures we can take to identify what is “essential”. Concurrently, the school will continue to stress to the students the need to be mindful of resources and the need to be sensitive to what is essential in a country where socio-economics differences are so vastly different and our environment is at risk.

Kind regards

John Alexander

Principal