

OfficeMax helps schools reintegrate students after the COVID-19 Lockdown

The New Zealand school system faces an unprecedented challenge to reintegrate the young people returning to school after the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

As students begin to trickle back to the classroom, and additional fundraising revenue dwindles, schools will need more support than ever to reintegrate children and address any fallout from the history making lock down period.

New Zealand Principal's Federation (NZPF) National President Perry Rush said children will all have experienced lockdown differently and we will be mindful of the health and wellbeing of our young people as they return to school.

"Our young people will need a different approach as they return to school, so they can appreciate the COVID-19 context we share with the rest of the globe and adapt to a new normal at school," he said.

"Parents have done a great job holding the fort and supporting home learning, but now is the time to address the challenges of reintegration.

"It's crucial this pandemic doesn't trigger unnecessary anxiety or stress for children's ongoing learning which is why careful reintegration programmes are so important."

OfficeMax funding to schools through its School Rewards programme has reached \$880,000 this year amid unprecedented challenges in the wake of COVID-19.

Mr Rush said there were new challenges ahead.

"Soon we face a return to school at COVID Alert Level 2. OfficeMax recognises that the transition back to school will bring new challenges for us, including some additional unbudgeted expenses," he said.

"This is not just a generous gesture. It is completely consistent with the principles and ethics that underpin all OfficeMax operations. That is why we are so proud to call ourselves partners."

Mr Rush said that NZPF shared the same values and passion as OfficeMax "to give every Kiwi kid the very best learning opportunities and support that we can."

"That is why so many schools hold accounts with OfficeMax. They are nimble in their business operations and always ready to rise to a challenge," he said.

Managing Director Kevin Obern said the funds would help to cover the costs of re-opening schools, meeting new health and safety requirements, and purchasing additional resources to help kids transition back into school life.

"We are very proud of our long-standing relationship with schools and know that now is the time when they need us the most," he said.

“While this donation would be taking place regardless of COVID, it possibly couldn’t have come at a better time.”

OfficeMax runs three programmes to assist schools and students, including OfficeMax School Rewards and Max-e Grants.

School Rewards has pumped \$6.72 million into the education system since inception in 2005, thanks to parents shopping online or in-store for back-to-school and home office supplies.

Mr Obern said the grants and rewards could be tailored by schools to provide extra support to students returning to school after lockdown, through items like teaching resources and technology.

OfficeMax New Zealand also supports children’s helpline 0800 What’s Up - run by Barnardos NZ - which has recorded a 50 per cent spike in calls during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Mr Obern said it was clear schools would need to consider increasing supports to students in a range of different ways.

“The extra funding provided through our programmes can make a world of difference in students’ lives and enrich the overall school experience.”

He said the Max e-Grants initiative - which provides financial support and essential education-related items to children in need, aged four to 18 - had been left open so no one missed out on the application dates. To date the programme has given away over \$1 million.

Schools, kindergartens and day care centres can nominate disadvantaged kids for grants of up to \$5,000.

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About OfficeMax New Zealand

OfficeMax is a leader in office supplies and stationery, stocking everything from pencils to cleaning products. We’ve been a part of New Zealand workplaces and homes for more than 140 years.

We’ve had our roots in New Zealand for a long time, beginning with the establishment of stationery business Coulls Somerville Wilkie in 1871, and publishing company Whitcombe and Tombs in 1888.

Today, OfficeMax is one of New Zealand’s leading office products resellers, offering not only tens of thousands of products, but also giving jobs to more than 600 Kiwis locally across our head office, sales offices, distribution centres and 14 retail stores.