



## **Advice for Principals and Teachers**

### **4. Longer term, however that might look**

- Children look to trusted adults to know how to respond and how to construct their personal narrative of events. Acting in a calm but empathetic manner models that we can still choose how to talk and behave despite all we have been through.
- Opportunities for students' longer term processing also need to be calm and authentic. These could be guided conversations with trusted adults or peers, or allowing students to express their experiences creatively through writing, poetry, drawing, painting, making things with their hands, moving to or creating music, singing, dancing, drama, photography, collage or video making.
- Over time, as students are making sense of the events, using the curriculum as a base to select relevant activities is a useful to deepen understanding. Find activities relevant to students' level and readiness. Writing letters of thanks to the many people who worked in response and recovery, discussing what we learned about the type of event, mapping the places affected, interpreting graphs, understanding the changes to our lives, such as travel and tourism, and positive impacts, such as social connectedness or environmental improvements are only some ways that we can use the event as a curriculum springboard.
- Eventually, schools will settle into a routine of "new normal" in which students become a little more used to their changed and continually changing world but they might still experience emotional or behavioural wobbles.
- Observe the behaviours of students. Children and young people might display unusual behaviours in the short term but most will adjust over time. Some, however, will continue to act of character or have prolonged symptoms and will need professional help. Mental health issues are still apparent in disaster zones many years later and one lesson we have learned is that they need to be taken seriously.



*Helping teachers work with children when they first return to school following major traumatic or life-changing events*

- Keep in touch with whānau – what is happening at home? Keep each other informed and, if necessary, agree on strategies that will support the student at home and school.
- Post-disaster, schools often became the place where a community narrative of the event was constructed. Some schools recorded the community’s story in book form or a video documentary. Such projects have therapeutic as well as historic value and might be worth considering.

Finally, it will be long, it will be hard, you will have ups and downs but through all this we learn to value what is precious and to face the future with renewed hope. Best wishes to you all. Your work is deeply appreciated.