



Reflections from St Patrick's College Ballarat.

Julia Petrov - Director of Studies

The core focus over the first few weeks has been to connect with the students and set remote learning class expectations for the rest of the term. This has involved a great deal of learning for both teachers and students. With every lesson presented remotely, we have all had to adapt to a new way of working together often using new technology which of course involves mistakes, trial and error. Patience, persistence and practice has brought us a long way, but the highlight has been the participation of the boys. They show how to do things, share their screens and their stories. Although we are doing this remotely, we are reconnecting as a class.

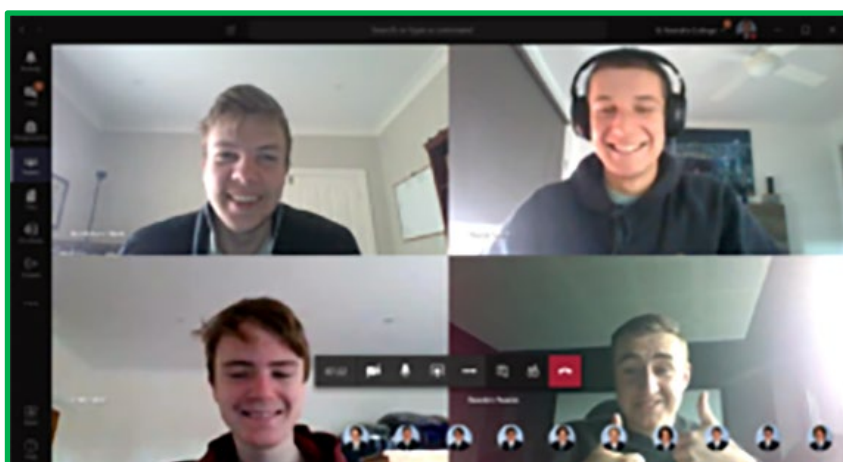
In preparing for this term teachers have allowed for a degree of flexibility so that we can adjust our courses as our understanding of what works best in a remote learning environment evolves. Over the last two weeks we have attended regular virtual Open Forums where we discuss our successes and challenges in order to adapt our practices. We have come to a shared understanding of some key concepts in remote learning.

We are offering our students two modes of remote learning – synchronous and asynchronous. We provide synchronous learning through chat and videoconferencing during our timetabled classes. This kind of learning tool is real-time. We create a virtual classroom that allows students to ask, and teachers to answer questions instantly, through instant messaging, calls and video which is why it is called synchronous. Students can easily interact with fellow students and their teachers during the timetabled session through MS Teams. We provide asynchronous learning for students who can't attend our timetabled classes due to internet access issues. We also want to provide students some agency and reduce the need for them to sit in front of the screen for the duration of every timetabled session. All subjects have set weekly Class Tasks for students to have the ability to access and satisfy these requirements within a flexible time frame. Teachers are available to provide support for students for the duration of every timetabled class. Direct instruction with class discussion is synchronous learning but when we record this aspect of our lessons in MS Teams, we allow students who can't access the session to still have the opportunity to learn our content at another time. By setting questions after the lesson in the chat, students who missed the live session are still able to participate in the discussion. Providing remote learning experiences is both rewarding and challenging. We are still developing our approach and over the next few weeks we will continue to adjust our Weekly Tasks to better suit our classes.

Ian Fernée - 1:1 eLearning Coordinator

On any usual school morning you see waves of SPC boys in blue suitcoats travelling on buses, bikes and by foot to the College grounds. Recently, this swell of movement has been replaced by taps of keyboards and swiping of screens as students who are scattered around the region, state and country log onto their device and enter our digital campus to begin their school day.

As classes connect via the provided digital platforms, students are greeted by the



familiar faces of teachers and classmates on the other end of the line before the learning begins in its usual fashion. A remote digital lesson is however slightly different to that of a classroom that consists of twenty-five or so students and it presents many opportunities and challenges for all involved. Ultimately the end objective is exactly the same, that being, facilitating students' building coursework knowledge and skills and helping them to grow as young men.

Whilst a digital lesson can consist of a plethora of enabling technology such as SIMON, Microsoft Teams, Campion, OneNote, Microsoft Whiteboard, FlipGrid, Sway, Google Classroom and Adobe Spark, it always contains a teacher with a passion for their discipline and a desire to assist students in learning. I would like to thank all teachers in their efforts over the last few weeks in preparing for learning remotely.

Over the coming weeks, various forms of learning activities will be undertaken by the students that utilise various pedagogical strategies. These may include but are not limited to approaches like Flipped Learning, Blended Learning or Collaborative methods that embrace a 21st Century Learning Design in their endeavour to make lessons impactful. During this time of remote learning we want students to be cognisant of the role that their 1:1 device plays in facilitating remote learning.

I would like to conclude by sharing some reflections of our boys on the experience of undertaking class from home.

Jack Sheehan (Year 11)

"The remote learning experience has been a very successful one in the first couple of weeks in the new environment. The teachers have all been really good with Microsoft Teams, always readily available and willing to put up with the few technical difficulties that arise and a relatively unfamiliar program. For me, I have been able to keep on top of all the work without difficulty and I have felt no disadvantage from the changed learning environment, and although I cannot speak for everyone, I feel that I could manage in the current set up for as long as we need to, in order to safely see out this pandemic. Overall, I think that the way St Pat's has managed to set up and implement this system has been excellent and that everyone at the school has done a really good job keeping classes running, despite the challenging circumstances."

Jake Leahy (Year 12)

"Online learning's been pretty fun. I already did most of my work on my laptop and so the shift to doing it all online wasn't difficult. The check-ins in the morning and at lunch time keeps me on my toes and not distracted. The Pastoral Care check in is also handy since it wakes me up before class. Being at home and away from friends means I'm getting more work done since there isn't anyone to distract me. Also being able to do homework at lunch and recess means I have more time to relax at night. I am a bit stressed for SACs and exams like most students, especially my ongoing Software Development SAT, but my teachers are supportive and hopefully VCAA changes some things to make it a bit easier at the end of the year."

Ben Mornane (Year 10)

"Returning to school this term has been a big change from the standard classroom as we have moved to online virtual classes, which has positive aspects, challenges and difficulties. Some of the positives that have come from online schooling are being able to stay focused and get the work completed efficiently at our own pace with minimal distractions. So far, using the online platforms has worked well for me, providing a close resemblance to being in a real classroom whilst at home. However, working from home does take away one of the greatest aspects of school being the social aspect and being able to see my mates each day and work alongside them. Completing work at home does feel isolating and at times and can be difficult as there are no classmates around you or a teacher in front of you, just people on a screen. Using Microsoft Teams and other applications has allowed for teaching to continue and although it's not quite the real thing, it is a good alternative and has worked well so far. Being able to join virtual classes and still have our teachers run through topics over video calls as a class has worked well and has allowed learning to continue from home. Though online learning has been very different it has been successful thus far and will allow us to continue our academic studies throughout these tough times."

Max Cosgriff (Year 10)

"I've found remote learning to be surprisingly enjoyable. Although making the change from the traditional classroom format to digital learning has been quite sudden, the change has been fairly seamless as everyone was taught how to

use the required materials. The majority of the information we need to be taught can be conveyed to us in a very similar way to how it is normally presented to us. Talking to friends on social media outside of regular class times has definitely helped me feel more comfortable throughout this new learning process. While issues appear every once in a while, such as problems with internet connectivity, I personally believe we are all doing fairly well in terms of meeting the requirements for education during our current circumstances.”

Owen Pearse (Year 12)

“Online learning has been a big change to our daily lives however teachers and students alike have been working very well together to ensure the success of all students. As a year 12 student the only big change has been the practical side to classes. Teachers are making themselves as available as possible to assist me and my peers in our schoolwork and it feels just like a normal school day, just don’t have all my mates to hang out with at lunch.”

Anakin Bawden (Year 12)

“The Remote learning experience has been an interesting journey so far. With anything, we are presented with challenges that we must overcome, and in this circumstance, we are in uncharted territory. The way the school has implemented an effective solution to the government restrictions has been brilliant and as a year 12 student I appreciate this. We have been given the ability to communicate live to one another through a medium that is well developed and easy to use which makes it easy to access educational content and submit work. Keeping our heads in the game is important in the VCE and we want to maximise our opportunities to realise our future endeavours. Despite the occasional loss of Internet connectivity, we are all in this together and it is important to put in our best shot.”

Paul Nolan - Director of Community Development