



TERM TWO STARTED

Welcome to term two at Emmanuel College Warrnambool and the start of a term like none that has ever been experienced before. We have just lived the Easter season, and the Easter story is about the triumph of light over dark, of hope over despair and life over death. I don't think there could be a more poignant message with which to begin the term. Through Easter we have been invited to be people of light, life and hope for ourselves and all those who are part of our lives.

We began term two compliant with the Victorian Government's directive: "All students who can learn from home must learn from home". We know we will be operating this way for the duration of term two and I thank staff, students and parents for enabling this to happen.



I acknowledge it is early days, but the early reports indicate our planning for students to learn from home in a virtual school environment is working. We know that challenges will arise. Our strategic intention this term is to solve any problem that is within our power to resolve as quickly as we can and to provide Emmanuel students with the best, albeit different, learning experience possible. In other words, if we can make it happen we will. Already we can see where to make improvements and we are taking steps to make it happen.

I'd like to thank all our parents and carers, whether at home or at work whose efforts have been terrific. I have been really pleased to receive your positive responses to a situation not of our own making. The students too have responded so well. Students already learn in many different ways at Emmanuel and their experience of on-line learning is simply adding another skill to their existing learning skillset.

A colleague recently shared an ABC news article with me about learning during these unusual times. I have shared part of it below because it reassures us that student learning will continue during the current crisis and students will bounce back quickly.

The article quotes Professor John Hattie, a leading educator and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) chairman, who believes learning from home doesn't mean student's learning outcomes will suffer. Professor Hattie was the adviser for the New Zealand Qualifications Authority that oversaw school examinations after the devastating Christchurch earthquakes of 2011. Schools were closed for weeks and most students did not have the opportunity for online learning or discussion with teachers. But results did not suffer and high school students did not drop out. "The students' performance actually went up in the final exams," Professor Hattie said.

He said the difference was teachers focused on "what has to be learned" instead of getting through a lot of curriculum. It was similar after Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005, when students missed up to seven weeks of school. Again, he said students "recovered quickly and actually began to see gains in test scores". This does not mean students should not embrace online opportunities for term two and Professor Hattie said it could be a chance to better outcomes. "You have to be amazed at what teachers have done to turn the whole system around so that kids can work at home doing various things," he said. "But my message is 'let's not get stressed about it'."

"When we get back to the old normal the recovery will be reasonably quick."

Here is a snapshot of the lives of some of our Emmanuel student's homes for their virtual learning.

Bellman Family

Will is a new Year Seven student who arrived at Emmanuel College from Woodford Primary School. He is the eldest of four boys and is handling Virtual learning very well. He even has completed his first music lesson playing the Tuba.



Will's mum, Rachel, is overseeing the boy's education while their dad works during the day. When I spoke with Rachel she was disappointed that at recess she still had to do yard duty. Luckily the boys live on acreage and are able to play cricket and jump on the trampoline with such space.

She was also unaware that she would have to run the school canteen! With 4 boys her canteen is certainly going to get a workout. Thanks to the Bellman family for being one of our first families to feature in our Virtual Homes edition of the newsletter. We wish them continued success in managing four different curriculums in their household.

Mentha Family

The hometime bell has sounded to signal the end of our first day of Remote Learning and our families have managed the day well with the usual bumps that starts any normal term. Today our family had a Year 12, a Year Nine, a Year Seven and one parent working from home with the other parent on a day off. Everyone managed the homeroom sign in this morning with a bit of patience needed in relation to IT issues, zoom sessions went well as did access to Math Pathways, pre-recorded videos from teachers and various other supporting resources.

The day included Maths, Food for Fuel (a clever and timely task of cooking a hot breakfast), English, Religion, VCE Psychology, Humanities and Music. Design Technology with Mrs El-Hage was a highlight for my Year 7 who had collected the materials from school and was able to successfully make a box with a sliding lid with the support of his dad and some excellent videos of Mrs El-Hage completing the task.

And the upside of this strange time we are living in ... a whole term of not having to pack school lunches.

Peter Morgan – Principal

