



**OUR SCHOOL VALUES: RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, HONESTY & TRUST,
CARE & COMPASSION, PERSONAL BEST AND TEAM WORK**

Hello to our Mill Park Heights Community.

We have all been faced with a few challenges in the last few weeks and the launching of our remote and flexible learning program has certainly provided some character building attitudes and approaches towards change. We have been overwhelmed by support and gratitude from families and we thank you all for your active participation in the Government mandated change. We understand this is difficult for many people and we understand that most of you are also working remotely and often don't feel confident in supporting the student learning. We understand you have families and relatives that you care for and again we understand that you have homes to manage and people to keep safe.

Amongst all this, I ask you to also understand that the staff are in the same boat. Many of our staff are also parents caring for their children or extended families and they too are working from home to provide your children with learning tasks as they care for their loved ones. They have remote work requirements as Teachers or Education Support staff, and are answerable to the Department of Education in ensuring programs are developed, communication occurs and assessment of student work is completed. They have taken great pride in their preparation and organisation and have spent countless hours planning and considering all of their students. We also have a number of staff who have opted to be part of a small Skeleton support team putting themselves at risk, even though they have had the opportunity to work offsite. All of our staff have gone over and above in making this work as best as we can. Every supportive Facebook post, every grateful email and every positive interaction is taken to heart and is truly appreciated. Please keep in mind the words you use and the behaviours you show have an impact.

We have been mindful of not overwhelming you all with information as there is so much out in the media at this stage. People take on board the information they wish and then disregard other comments or updates. At Mill Park Heights Primary School we will be posting important updates on Compass and will ensure key learning information is posted out to relevant year levels. If you are not confident in using Compass, now is the time to really familiarize yourself with this platform as this is our main point of communication. The staff will help you through this if you are having difficulty however we ask you to be patient with return calls at the moment as I am sure you can imagine we have been swamped with requests. I would ask you not to compare what we are doing in regards to communication and remote learning to your friends schools as everyone has taken a slightly different approach to suit their own school and community needs. You have chosen to be a member of our community, so its important to value that and trust in the decisions we have made to move forward for Term 2.

We received an email briefing from the DET after our first day of remote and flexible learning. I thought it might be nice to share this with you as members of our community.

I hope I can assure you that things will get better. I was asked

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for the outstanding work today, as we launched our first day of remote and flexible learning across the state. The overwhelming feedback is that today went as well as could possibly be expected.

The vast majority of our students were engaged in remote and flexible learning when just three weeks ago they were all on-site in classrooms. It's an extraordinary achievement that was only possible because of all the work that's gone on over the past few weeks. While things went well overall, I know not everything was perfect, and that there were IT platform issues experienced by some schools. We expect these to be resolved.

Thank you particularly for your work in communicating with parents about the Victorian Government's directive that all students who can learn from home must learn from home. The reason for this was reiterated today by Victoria's Chief Health Officer, Dr Brett Sutton, who stated:

"My advice to the Victorian Government was and continues to be that to slow the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), schools should undertake remote learning for term two. This is because having around a million children and their parents in closer contact with teachers and other support staff has the potential to increase cases of coronavirus not just in schools but across the community. By having remote learning, it can contribute to Physical distancing and therefore supports efforts to drive transmission down."

The transition into Term 2 has not been easy work for anyone, but we should be reassured – there is a very good reason to be taking this significant step.

Thank you for the huge role you have played in making this happen.

recently about whether I was looking at this situation with a glass half full or empty approach. I simply answered, "I am looking at this situation as a person who is lucky to be holding a glass." We have a wonderful opportunity to create unique memories with our families right now. Cook together, create a garden, play a game or go for a walk. Use this time to reconnect and bond. I urge you to take away the stress of thinking you must run a "school classroom" from 9-3.00 each day. The joy of remote and flexible learning means you have a range of hours available that you can access that suits you and your family. It makes no difference whether your child reads at 9am or 6pm. Please create the opportunities that work for you. Take away the pressure on yourself and find a solution that is positive.

You will find this term our Pindari will comprise of an email update for the week and an article that may interest you. We hope that this gives you a sense of connection to the school and community and we wish you another wonderful week.

Cheers Chris





Why Learning at Home Should Be More Self-Directed—and Less Structured

By [Simone Kern](#)

With students at home because of the coronavirus threat, social media feeds filled up with color-coded learning schedules from well-meaning parents. But they've struggled to implement those schedules—partly because the tightly structured, time-in-seat approach of traditional schools often has more to do with crowd control than optimizing learning.

The sudden shift to work-from-home might provide a good kind of disruption, opening up a golden opportunity for students to engage in authentic, deep learning that is more self-directed, more playful, more aligned with young students' development—and much easier for parents to manage than stacks of worksheets.

Giving students some choice over their learning builds [intrinsic motivation](#), independence, and creativity. They can investigate real-world problems that interest them, research solutions, or build models or write reports that empower them. While it can be difficult in a traditional classroom of 20–30 students, at home parents can allow their children much more flexibility to choose topics to study, books to read, and ways to use their time.

Freed from the strict curricular requirements of most schools—which focus far too much on testing and standards—parents can allow time for deep exploration, building [critical thinking skills and at least as critically a real desire to learn](#) that will transfer to related topics of study.

EXPLORING SCIENCE

For young kids, [play is scientific discovery](#). Throwing toys, squeezing a sponge, or spinning in circles teaches physics lessons. Promote free play with open-ended toys like blocks, scarves, blanket forts, and cardboard boxes. [Set up a science experiment](#) with household objects. Older students can take the lead on executing the experiment and then writing up their findings in a lab report.

Nature is a pathway to scientific exploration. Students can spend time in a backyard or park and talk about what they see: water cycles, ecosystems, and food chains. Collect wildflowers and research their names. Start a birdwatching journal or a garden.

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL STUDIES

Find books about history or cultures your kids want to research. Many local libraries have made digital catalogues free during the crisis. After kids complete the reading, challenge them to create a puppet show, poster, or picture book summarizing what they've learned.

The technique can also be used for movies or shows. Model inquiry and even skepticism, which are crucial to developing critical thinking skills. Watch historical or international movies with your kids and talk while you watch. Ask what they think about what's going on, point out historical inaccuracies or biases, and notice similarities and differences between the culture in the film and your own.

MASTERING MATHS

In math, like other subjects, keep it simple. Young children can practice counting or age-appropriate math facts with real objects like buttons or coins. Cooking is another great way to teach real-world math. Internalizing what one and a half cups of flour looks like lays the foundation for learning fractions. Practice multiplication and division by halving or doubling a recipe. Board games offer another opportunity to practice math by counting money or moving a particular number of spaces.

LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Encourage kids to read by allowing them to choose their books. Making reading social is [more effective](#) than mandating a particular quantity of reading, so consider holding some time sacred to read as a family and then talk about what you've read. Simply talking to your kids—about anything— is beneficial. It is how we're [hardwired to learn language](#).

Consolidating learning—the act of reviewing information to reinforce concepts so that they stick for the long term—doesn't need to be complex. Discussing what you do each day can help reinforce new knowledge.

If your child is at least 3 years old, try some early reading instruction with [Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons](#). Everything the teacher needs to say or do is written out in this scripted curriculum of 15-minute daily lessons, so it's perfect for busy parents.

Writing is another basic technique for improving English comprehension. Challenge older kids to write their own picture book or short stories. The National Novel Writing Month's [Camp for Young Writers](#) in April sets benchmarks for students to write their own novel. [Teaching handwriting](#) in different media keeps young kids engaged—try using markers, crayons, or paint, or tracing letters in trays of sand or rice.

EMBRACING THE ARTS

Visual arts enhance brain function and well-being, and music [improves memory and verbal intelligence](#). All the arts promote motor skill development, creativity, and problem-solving. Encourage kids to paint, draw, sculpt with [homemade play dough](#), or do fiber crafts like making friendship bracelets. The materials don't need to be complex—basics like glue sticks, paper, scissors, and cardboard boxes can be enough.

Music is another key area for exploring the arts at home. Kids can learn new songs or make up their own, or turn a household object like an old can into a musical instrument. Share your favorite albums for a music history lesson. For kids who play instruments, print out [sheet music](#) for favorite pop songs, video games, and animes, or offer choice by letting them pick a classical piece to learn from [more than 150,000 pieces in the public domain](#). If you have a dusty, old instrument in a closet, start a family band. Ask kids to explore the dramatic arts by planning and performing a puppet show, play, or dance.

FINDING TIME FOR PLAY AND MOVEMENT

As long as screens are off, very young kids will be active, but older children who are used to “sit and get” schooling might need some encouragement. Try a morning family workout to kick-start your metabolism and get those happy brain chemicals flowing. Children can meet up with friends to work out together through video conferencing. Provide choice by letting each family member pick from [free workouts online](#) in yoga, dance, or martial arts. Eventually, let kids lead the family in their own workout routine.

LEARNING LIFE SKILLS

With people in the home more, there's more cooking and cleaning to be done. Doing chores develops problem-solving skills, gross and fine motor skills, and work ethic. Make chores fun for little ones by imaginative storytelling. “We're pirates and these toys are treasures—who can get the most treasure back in the treasure chest?” or “A giant is coming who hates dirty floors. If we don't mop this up before he gets here, he'll eat us up!” Older kids are often motivated to do chores if you involve them in the process. Hold a family meeting to list out all the chores that must be done daily and brainstorm how you'll tackle them together.

SEE THE OPPORTUNITIES

Don't feel compelled to do every subject every day. Kids may spend a whole day doing one or two activities. Authentic learning takes place within real-world, meaningful contexts. As long as kids are moving, creating, or playing, they're learning. Let curiosity and fun be your guides.