

Learning from home

Dear Parents and Carers,

First, let me say I hope you and your family are safe and healthy as you read this. Thank you so much for your patience and understanding as we have been adjusting, like you, to the drastic changes in life during the last few weeks. I am extremely appreciative of our students, parents, teachers and support staff for their positivity, flexibility and resilience during these trying times. A huge debt of gratitude also goes to all of our doctors, nurses, hospital employees, first responders, and our state leaders for all they are doing to keep us safe and healthy.

We are now into week 2 of MWPS Learning at Home. Our goal is to provide continuous educational opportunities and practice for students while schools are closed but also to eliminate as much stress as feasibly possible for students, parents, and teachers. We are working to get it right – the workload, the expectations for learning, and a balance of work time, down time, play time, and family time. While it is our responsibility to continue to educate our children, we also want to compassionately take into consideration the variety of difficulties that our families and employees are enduring during this time.

You can help your child to learn from home by working with us and supporting your child as they undertake the tasks provided. When you start to think about helping your child to learn from home, remember that no one expects you to be an expert or a teacher. The most important thing you can do is to continue to provide comfort, support and encouragement to your child.

You can support your child by:

- having a routine and setting expectations
- making sure your child has a space to work in
- providing a level of supervision suitable to your child's stage of development and individual needs
- monitoring communications from teachers
- checking in with your child often to help them manage and pace their work
- monitoring how much time your child is spending online.

Every home is different but it's important to provide a quiet and comfortable space in which to learn. Where possible, extended learning should take place in a space your family shares. For example, a lounge room or dining room. These spaces are preferable over a bedroom, where your child can feel isolated and supervision can be more challenging.

You know your child best. As parents and carers you are already very skilled in understanding, supporting and caring for your child. Your child has a range of strengths and abilities that they bring to their learning. Always consider your child's needs, and the needs of your family when deciding on:

- when to undertake certain learning activities
- how long your child may be expected to spend on a task
- appropriate amounts of time to spend on specific tasks
- use of charts to record progress against the day's learning activities.

Routine and familiarity helps children and young people feel safe and secure. Some children find changes in routine very upsetting. If your child feels this way they will need your help to establish new routines to support their day.

Remember play and everyday activities also provide excellent opportunities to support your child's learning and development. Play encourages children to explore, discover, negotiate, take risks, and problem-solve which supports the development of cognitive, social, emotional and physical skills.

Finally, take care of yourself and your family and remember, wash your hands, wash your hands, wash your hands. It protects you and everyone around you. It only takes 20 seconds.

Kind regards

Jennifer O'Connor

Assistant Principal Prep-2 Learning Community

Getting it right in English!

Discussing News and Current Events

This year, there have been a lot of big events affecting our country. This can sometimes be quite daunting for children, but also may be for parents/carers in explaining things in a way they will understand. As children get older, they become more aware of news and current events. Being aware, enriches your child's understanding of the world around them.

In addition, discussing topics of interest about the world, such as countries, natural disasters, animals and scientific/technological discoveries will support your child to build their background knowledge. This assists children in understanding what they are reading, providing content for writing and providing knowledge to support opinions during discussions with others.

Below are some tips/questions and some websites that contain child-friendly news related information. Questions encourage your child to think critically about news and current events and help foster empathy. Questions also help your child to develop oral fluency when discussing social issues.

Questions you might ask when discussing a news story or current event include:

- What do you think caused the event?
- How do you think this will affect people?
- Is it fair?
- Why do you think people think that/do that?
- What do you think will happen next?
- What could fix the problem?



Some other activities to develop your discussion (mostly upper primary):

- Read several articles, or watch some short news stories on the same issue to get different opinions. Then discuss the different opinions.
- Have a debate on a topic, with you and your child taking different sides of the issue.
- Download and listen to podcasts on an issue, and discuss.
- Discuss different "What if?" scenarios. This will help develop your child's problem solving and imagination.

Some great websites to access student-friendly news articles, videos and other resources (most are Australian websites):

- News Time (pre-schoolers)- <https://www.abc.net.au/kidslisten/news-time/>
- Kids News- <https://www.kidsnews.com.au/news>
- Behind the News (BTN)- <https://www.abc.net.au/btn/>
- Media Literacy (spotting misinformation)- <https://www.abc.net.au/education/media-literacy/>
- National Geographic- <https://www.nationalgeographic.com.au/>
- National Geographic Kids- <https://www.natgeokids.com/au/>

Sarah Mills

Leading Teacher- Literacy

Helping your child with – *addition, subtraction, multiplication and division*

Through everyday activities and play situations children will naturally use numbers. Young children are very capable of sharing out things such as lollies so that each person has a fair share or adding a friends' collection to his or her own and finding the total.

When first learning to use numbers, children will need to have the objects with them in order to add, subtract, multiply or share equally (divide). They will go through a process of needing to see and count each thing, one at a time.

What can you do at home?

- Play board games such as *Snakes and Ladders* with two dice and encourage your child to add the two numbers rolled. Show them how to count on from the larger number.
- Play card games such as *21 or bust*. In this game, two cards are dealt to each player who adds the numbers together. Each player may ask for more cards from the "kitty" with the aim of being the person with the highest score that does not go over 21.
- Count the number of eggs in a carton, and again after some have been removed. Ask your child, "*How many were taken away?*"
- Read a book to your child that has a contents page. Look for a story or chapter on a certain page and work out how many pages until the next story.
- Sing songs that include numbers.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7D4K9oi7oBM> (count to 20)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvTcpfSnOMQ> (count by 2s)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZSTL39XmdA&vl=en> (count to 100 by 1s)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZPgFfo0l3k> (count to 100 by 5s)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-gmEe0-ex8> (count to 100 by 10s)
Count the number of things in a collection such as shells in a bag or a large jar of buttons. Ask your child if there is a quick and easy way of counting, say counting by fives.
- Have your child help share out food to the family. *How many slices will I need to cut the pizza into so that everyone has two slices?*
- Ask your child to share out items fairly with others.

Jennifer O'Connor

Assistant Principal Prep-2 Learning Community

Taken from Count Me In too Curriculum K-12 Directorate, NSW Department of Education and Training



Flu vaccination more important than ever during the month of April

With the 2020 flu season not far away, all Australians especially those in vulnerable groups or age brackets should arrange vaccination against seasonal influenza during the month of April. Australians should speak to their GP or pharmacist to arrange a flu vaccination over the coming weeks. Expert medical advice is that everyone aged six months and over should be vaccinated against influenza this year, and every year, to protect themselves and others in the community. Receiving a vaccination from April provides optimal protection in the peak period of influenza circulation, usually from June to September in most parts of Australia. Vaccinated people of all ages are less likely to get the flu and if they do, are less likely to have a severe case. Fewer cases and fewer severe cases of flu will result in less demand on our health care system. From 1 May 2020, all aged care workers and visitors must have been vaccinated against seasonal influenza to enter an aged care facility.

This year it is even more important to be vigilant about the flu because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst flu vaccination does not prevent against COVID-19, a flu vaccination is critical to protecting the general health of Australians from influenza, which can take between 100 to 1,000 lives per year depending on the severity. While there is not yet a vaccine or effective treatment for COVID-19, vaccination provides an effective defence against the flu. Vaccinating against the flu will reduce the risk of a very dangerous double-up of flu and coronavirus in which both diseases affect the respiratory system. Fortunately, most cases of COVID-19 in Australia so far have been mild, with only around 10 per cent of infected people requiring hospitalisation. This could change if people already made vulnerable by the flu also contract COVID-19.

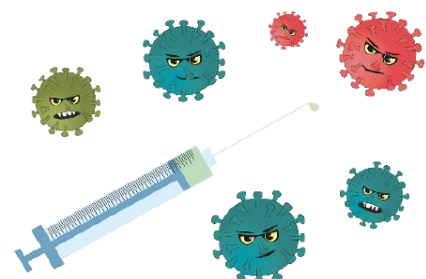
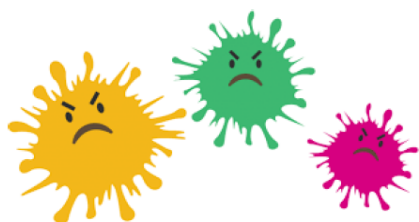
Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, there are strong national requirements for all Australians to stay home unless they are undertaking essential activities, however it is permissible to leave home for medical or other health care needs, including attending an appointment to get a flu vaccine.

- People in mandatory self-isolation due to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID -19 should remain in isolation and should not leave their home to go and get a flu vaccination.
- People who do not have COVID-19, or who are not a suspected case of COVID-19, are allowed to leave their home for a flu vaccination, but it is recommended they should only do so if they have phoned ahead, made sure their health care professional has vaccine available, and made an appointment with their healthcare professional.

The actions that we take to slow the spread of COVID-19 can also stop the spread of influenza and other viruses. Every one of us has a responsibility to contribute to this effort by:

- practising good hygiene
- practising social distancing
- following the Government's directions on public gatherings and workplaces, and
- understanding how and when to self-isolate.

More information on the flu is available at <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation/immunisation-services/flu-influenza-immunisation-service>.



It is the mission of Melton West PS to work collaboratively to ensure high levels of learning for all.

INSIGHTS

Leading the way for children during the Coronavirus pandemic



If you're like me, the news of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has your head spinning and your heart pumping. That's only natural as life as we know has taken a seismic shift in recent days.

International travel bans, cancellation of sporting and cultural events, shopping frenzies and talk of school closures continue to dominate the airwaves. Terms such as social distancing, self-isolation and social lockdowns have entered our vocabularies and may soon become part of our daily lives.

Coronavirus is having an unprecedented impact on our daily lives, and will probably do so for some time. While keeping ourselves and children healthy and safe is our main concern, it's also essential to address the anxieties of children and young people during these changing times. Here are some ideas to help inform, reassure and keep children and young people safe.

Build on what your children know

Children and young people have already been exposed to a great deal of information about corona virus through media, digital means and direct social contact. Their understanding will vary depending on their age and also the quality of their information sources so you probably will need to help kids process what they already know.

Casual conversations with teenagers and older children can be useful ways to glean their understanding. You could ask questions like "What are you hearing about Coronavirus? Is there anything you're not sure about?" Younger primary age children may need a more direct approach with parents addressing their specific concerns without giving too much information that can overwhelm them.

Check your own thoughts and feelings

Check your own frame of mind and emotions about COVID-19 before talking to kids. Most children are astute mood detectives and they'll gauge their safety by the way you communicate with them. If you tell a child, "You've got to wash your hands or you'll get infected," you are communicating your own anxieties, making it difficult for them to maintain a healthy state of mind. Have a think about how you can frame your instructions and their importance in a way that doesn't heighten your child's anxieties.

Stay informed

It's difficult to work out fact from fiction, correct from incorrect, information from exaggeration when the news is changing so fast. However you need to educate yourself about the virus itself, including how it's transmitted and how to stay safe. Get information from trustworthy sources such as The Australian Government Health Department website and the current federal government corona virus information media campaign.

parenting*ideas

Answer questions truthfully

It's important that parents and teachers answer children's questions honestly in age-appropriate ways and within context of what is happening at the given time. If their sport or hobby has been temporarily cancelled empathise with their concerns, while helping them maintain a sense of perspective.

Initiate positive action

One way to reduce anxiety and allay children's fears is to involve them in planning and preparation for their personal and group safety. Positive activities such as maintenance of personal hygiene, greeting people with an elbow tap and getting plenty of sleep can help restore a sense of control, that is so important for their wellbeing.

Find refuge in rituals

Regular rituals such as mealtimes, bedtime stories and regular one-on-one time provide both an anchor to normality and a sense of connection for kids at times of change. Consider reconstituting favoured family rituals at this time if they have lapsed due to lack of time, or lifestyle frenzy.

Look outwards

In difficult times there is a tendency to look inwards, which is a natural protective strategy. The alternative is to establish a sense of connection and community spirit by focusing on generosity and togetherness. Help children see past their own needs and look for ways to assist others whether it's shopping for an elderly neighbour, helping a younger sibling occupy themselves, or planning an indoor movie night for the whole family.

The Coronavirus presents many practical challenges to parents and other important adults in the lives of kids. Staying calm, keeping informed, and adjusting our own habits are just some of the challenges we face. However a significant challenge is one of personal leadership. That is, during these difficult times we need to be civil to each other, look out for each other and be mindful of the common good in everything we do. In this, we can all take a significant lead.



Michael Grose

Michael Grose, founder of Parenting Ideas, is one of Australia's leading parenting educators. He's an award-winning speaker and the author of 12 books for parents including *Spoonfed Generation*, and the bestselling *Why First Borns Rule the World and Last Borns Want to Change It*. Michael is a former teacher with 15 years experience, and has 30 years experience in parenting education. He also holds a Master of Educational Studies from Monash University specialising in parenting education.