

Raise

RAISE THE CHILD CHANGE THE WORLD



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PRAYER FOR A PANDEMIC

May we who are merely inconvenienced
remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors
remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home
remember those who must choose between
preserving their health or making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children
when their schools close
remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips
remember those that have no place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money
in the tumult of the economic market
remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home
remember those who have no home.

During this time when we cannot
physically wrap our arms around each other,
let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbours.

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In this uncertain time in the world, we have produced a weekly, digital special edition of Raise magazine, which aims to support families during this time of learning from home.

In each issue, we will cover topics such as tips for learning at home, caring for your mental health, where to turn for further support, ideas to entertain the family, talking to your kids about natural disasters and feel-good pieces to inspire and motivate.

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Tips from a Teacher

As families and teachers settle into continuous home learning in Term 2, we speak to local teacher Michelle Reynolds about tips to help families adjust.

MICHELLE REYNOLDS

These are such crazy times. For most of us, we're having to postpone regularly-scheduled life until further notice. It also means that many parents will be responsible for overseeing their child's continuous learning for the foreseeable future.

If you've ever tried to help your child with their reading, spelling or perhaps a project and it was hard work, you may be legitimately terrified by the idea of days on end of continuous learning from home. But here's the deal—you can do it. You really can! And maybe, just maybe, you will enjoy some of it, too.

Here are a few quick tips we think might help families make the most of their at-home learning experiences.

1. FOLLOW THE TIMETABLE... WHERE YOU CAN

Your school will have likely provided a timetable for families, but it is the DREAM. Even if all you do is set aside a few hours a day within which schoolwork needs to be completed, it gives your child the context for the rhythm of the day and also gives them a finish line to work toward.



2. SET UP YOUR CLASSROOM

You don't need a new desk or to buy a whiteboard, but designating a chair in the dining room, or a special table and space in the family-room for all schoolwork will give everyone accountability and structure. Before the day begins, set up and stock the designated learning spot with the essentials—pencils, chromebook, iPad (if applicable), exercise books, iPad charger, paper and a drink bottle. The fewer excuses they have to get up to “look for their special eraser”, the less distracted they might be.



3. USE YOUR CHILD'S CURRENCY

Motivation is key. At school, the risks and rewards of whether or not your child completes work are made clear from day one. The same should be true for your new at-home routine. Keep it positive first (resort to bribery later if necessary). Can they earn extra screen time? Can they earn mum and dad time? Can they earn a FaceTime chat with one of their friends? Find out what makes your child tick and leverage it to keep them on-task.

4. CONSIDER HOW YOUR CHILD LEARNS BEST

You may be a naturally quiet person who learns best by themselves, yet your child is an outgoing extrovert who learns best in groups—if you try to teach them the way you learn best, you're both going to end up feeling frustrated. Keep in mind that every child does learn differently, and your first approach may not be your last. If you find yourself having trouble engaging your child, try different methods of helping them connect with the curriculum we are offering. For example, maybe try reading aloud as they follow along versus having them read lengthy texts on their own that are a bit tricky. Can you plan a study buddy with a friend online?



5. DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE BAD DAYS

If your child has not settled into their learning and it all gets too hard or the day is not working out the way you hoped, try something new. Be open with your child what the challenges are and let them chime in on what they want the day to look like. Be on the same page about the overall end-goal (like getting some learning into the day),

but be open to changing your approach in how you get there. Remember, we have provided activities for your child's learning and suggested some optional online resources for you to try out as well, BUT everything is OPTIONAL.



SOME FINAL TIPS FOR HOME LEARNING:

- establish some routines and expectations – respect, engagement and personal best.
- designate and set up a space for your child to work at every day.
- monitor communications from teachers.
- begin and end each day with a check-in.
- take an active role in helping your children process their learning.
- encourage physical activity and/or exercise – all children need movement breaks.
- check in with your child regularly to help them manage any stress or anxiety – these are not normal times and the new normal will take a bit of getting used to.
- monitor how much time your child spends online playing and web surfing.
- set rules around their social media interactions – staying in touch with friends will be really important, but it needs to be at the appropriate time and in monitored ways.

6. BE THERE FOR YOUR KIDS

What your child really needs most right now is you. Your presence. Your steadiness.

And your love. Oh, and one “Continuous Home Learning” silver-lining? You get to stay in your pajamas all day if you want and we will all be jealous. Some parents want their children up early, dressed ready for school and they follow the timetable to the minute. Do what works for you and for your family. This is not a competition – it is survival.



7. IF YOU CAN, HAVE FUN

Build a fort. Have an indoor picnic. Take a walk. Make a cake. Create playlists. Have a dance party in the kitchen. Go camping in the backyard. Try to find a rhythm or a time when you can get the most work done and maximise this.



“We really understand that these are uncertain times — even more uncertain than “normal”. So, do what you can, when you can, and how you can. We will be here if you need us.”



The Role of the Parent

Families are being thrust into the world of home-based schooling, but what does this mean for the role of the parent?

ANDREW MCKENZIE

Late last year a group of school leaders, teachers and parents from schools in Cairns met to discuss how to better promote parent engagement in learning.

For everyone at that workshop the evidence was compelling – parent engagement in student learning at home makes a huge difference to student achievement and wellbeing. But how to make it happen consistently across all families at our schools?

Little did anyone know at the time, but less than six months later we were all about to be launched into the biggest exercise in home-based schooling the modern world has ever seen, all caused by a tiny virus invisible to the naked eye.

“We are all trying to make sense of this the best way we can. As in Charles Dickens opening lines in *A Tale of Two Cities*: ‘It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...’”

The worst of times because this is a very serious health pandemic sweeping the world without a proven form of treatment and with a vaccine at least a year away. In the only response we have – shutting down our normal lives – many jobs have been lost and many households and businesses have lost their source of income, literally overnight, and with little certainty about when ‘normal life’ will return. The familiar social engagements of day to day life have gone.

The best of times, and for some this may be a stretch, because it offers an opportunity to re-assess and recalibrate what is really important in our lives, and the answer is obvious as we bunker down in our homes in the company of loved ones. As more than one observer has noted, when we return to “normal life” we have a choice as to what sort of normal we want to return to.

And now, in the cascading effect of this microscopic COVID-19 bug, families are being thrust into the world of home-based schooling. But not to be teachers.

Our teachers are still doing what they do, albeit at a physical distance and having the benefit of digital technologies that would have been unimaginable even five years ago. Parent engagement in children’s learning at home is also not about doing their homework either, however much your children might try to persuade you otherwise.

Your teachers and schools are not going to have unrealistic expectations of parents at this difficult time, and nor should parents have unrealistic expectations of themselves. There is much stress and uncertainty in the community, many are now juggling working from home with other obligations, even the weekly shopping for the basic necessities can be a challenge. Having just one child, let alone more, engaged in home-based schooling is a significant undertaking for any family at any time. Even harder when the children are in the early years of school and routine is still a word with too many letters.

So the first message about home-based learning is to be kind to yourselves – do what you can, when you can, however you can.

The key message to our children is that school continues, but in a different way. Try and establish a workable routine and a place where children can do their schoolwork. Talk to your children about the importance your family places on education and why it is important. Celebrate with them when they have stuck to their tasks.

“And remember when your day may be going pear-shaped that just talking to your children and answering their questions is education, letting them help you make a meal or undertake a task in the garden or workshop is education, being together as a family is education.”

Andrew is the Cairns Catholic Education Manager – Governance and Engagement

The Kindness Pandemic

As we all bunker down during this pandemic, it is important to remember physical isolation does not mean emotional isolation and human connection is more important than ever - and that is becoming more apparent than ever as this crisis unfolds.



While the world retreats to the safety of their homes, the internet is connecting people in new and innovative ways. Countless celebrities are reading books for children online in an initiative started by actresses



Jennifer Garner and Amy Adams called #savewithstories, younger members of society are offering to do groceries for older and more vulnerable members in the community and kids are writing letters of thanks to frontline staff in our hospitals. We've seen messages of hope scribed in chalk on driveways and footpaths and people connecting through new ways online. While the world is defending itself from this fast-spreading virus, kindness is proving itself just as contagious and is spreading through our streets and wider community, one small act at a time.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

A Facebook group, [‘The Kindness Pandemic’](#), was set up by Dr Catherine Barrett to set off a chain reaction of kindness after scenes of violence and panic buying in supermarkets had people craving kindness and connection in their community. The Facebook group shares acts of kindness posted by the group's rapidly growing number of members and inspires others to share these random acts within their communities as well. There are stories of strangers leaving notes for supermarket workers thanking them for their hard work during these sometimes-desperate times, cash donations to bookshops to allow local kids to purchase books that they may otherwise not be able to afford, paying for coffee for the next person in line and creating care packages for those in need – the group is flooded daily with messages of hope, kindness and compassion.

ON A SMALLER SCALE

If grand gestures or anonymous acts aren't for you, keep your kindness

on a smaller scale. Mother Teresa is famously quoted for saying, **“if you want to change the world, go home and love your family.”**

You could leave a note or positive affirmation on your child's lunch, create a chalk art rainbow or message of hope on your driveway with your kids or make a family favourite meal and eat it under the stars as a special picnic dinner. Small acts of love can be just as powerful as large acts of kindness.

GETTING THE FAMILY INVOLVED

Here are some simple ideas to get the family involved and start a ripple of kindness in your own community:

- Create artwork for grandparents or friends to let them know you're thinking of them
- Order a pizza for an isolated family member or loved one and share a virtual pizza night
- Record you and your child reading their favourite book and send it to their friends, encouraging them to do the same and share story time
- Encourage older kids to start a virtual book club or movie night
- Check in with an elderly neighbour and offer to drop off groceries or supplies
- Write thank you letters for essential workers to help brighten their day
- Create chalk rainbows and positive affirmations on the driveway to bring a smile to your neighbours' faces
- Organise an online exercise class or challenge with your child's friends to encourage some feel-good fun and endorphins

HELPFUL TECH TIPS FOR LEARNING ONLINE

It's now week two of learning from home and teachers, parents and students are adjusting to this new method of learning. As it's a new concept for most kids, we've shared some useful tech tips for smoother sailing during this time.

TEST THE TECH

Make sure your child is confident using the technology required to access classes, calls and material in advance and they are using the same device each week, if possible. Also have a plan on who can help if things aren't working. Do you know how to troubleshoot or who to contact? If your internet is slow or your child is having trouble hearing the teacher, make sure they know how to alert the teacher or yourself.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT CHAIR

Avoid swivelling chairs or encourage your child to try to stay still during video calls to avoid distracting others on the call. Ensuring your child is comfortable and has the correct posture is important to avoid injuries.

MUTE THE MIC

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To avoid an echo or distracting noises, muting the mic during video calls can help audio clarity. Ensuring your child has a space free from household noise, if possible, is important too. They could also use headphones to block out household noise.

DITCH DISTRACTIONS

Make sure your child has closed other windows, pop ups or social media sites while they're learning and on video calls. This is also good practice when sharing screens on video calls to avoid distractions.

TAKE A BREAK

To avoid eye strain, it's important to encourage your kids to look away from their computer screen and at a distant object every 20 minutes. It's also important to stand up to stretch or take a quick walk to avoid extended periods sitting in front of a screen.

HERE TO HELP

If your child is struggling with learning online, let them know you are here to help and they are not alone. Show your support and reach out to your child's teacher to discuss any issues your child may be facing.

CYBER SAFETY IN THE HOME

Schools use firewalls, cyber security measures and filters to protect their students online, but you may not have the same strict security at home. We share some cyber safety tips to help keep your family safe.

ANTI-VIRUS PROTECTION

Cyber threats can come from different sources including emails, websites, downloads, links and social media. With more kids at home on devices, it's more important than ever to help protect your family by using a reputable anti-virus program on your home computers. Look for anti-virus software that provides protection from malware, adware and spyware.

TAKE CONTROL

While you can't solely rely on [parental controls](#), they can help protect your child by blocking access to specific websites and apps and are available on most devices. You can also use them to set time limits on screen time.

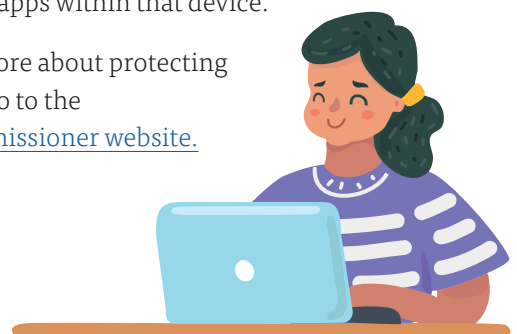
TALK TO YOUR KIDS

It's never too early to start educating your kids about safe online behaviour. Older kids in particular will be on social media apps to connect with their mates, but it's important to protect them by checking their privacy settings and encouraging them not to share photos, videos or information, which reveals their home address or other confidential information. Have steps in place for your child to follow if they see something online that they are not comfortable with.

POWERFUL PASSWORDS

It's easy to use the same password for every application or to use something obvious like the family name or pet's name, but experts warn against this. Use a mix of characters, numbers and cases, use different passwords for different logins and change passwords regularly. You should also use logins or passcodes to access all devices as well as the apps within that device.

To find out more about protecting your family, go to the [eSafety Commissioner website](#).



“And then the whole world
walked inside and shut their doors
and said ‘we will stop it all’.
Everything.
To protect our weaker ones.
Our sicker ones. Our older ones.
And nothing.
Nothing in the history
of humankind ever
felt more like love
than this.”

| CHELSIE DIANE



Supporting Your Child Through COVID-19

Cairns Catholic Education's School Counselling and Psychology Team has created a list of resources to help support all families and their children through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Learning from Home: How to Keep Your Child Engaged

As most of us have moved into a learning from home model because of COVID-19, many parents are feeling overwhelmed with the reality of schooling at home. To support learning from home, you're not required to be an expert or an educator. Your role is to be a parent and to partner with your child's school to support your child learning from home. It is important to recognise that this will be a journey and there is no expectation for it to be perfect. [Click here for some tips to help you in supporting your child learning from home.](#)

which can be challenging and stressful. In times like this, it is more important than ever that parents prioritise taking care of their mental health and wellbeing. In taking care of their own mental health and wellbeing, parents are better able to support their child. There are many great resources that have been developed to help adults and children stay mentally and physically well during COVID-19. [Click here for a summary of these resources for both adults and children.](#)

It's important to remember, however, that there are some positive steps you can take to help your child make their learning less stressful and more productive. Also, a reminder that you are not required to be your child's teacher or counsellor during this time, but rather to help them to engage optimally with the new learning platform. You can help your child with ADHD engage with their learning through keeping contact with their teacher, and by using some of the suggestions [here](#).

Supporting Your Child with Depression Throughout COVID-19

As schools continue to remain open only to the children of essential workers to help stop the spread of COVID-19, most children are spending an increasing amount of time at home. Throughout this time, it's normal for people to experience a wide range of thoughts, feelings and reactions which can compound one's already low mood, sadness, and feelings of isolation or helplessness. [This tip sheet has strategies to assist your child with diagnosed depression to successfully study from home.](#)

Supporting Your Child with Anxiety Throughout COVID-19

During times like this it is normal that people are feeling afraid, worried, anxious and overwhelmed. Spending more time working and studying from home while physical distancing continues may present some additional challenges for children with a diagnosed anxiety disorder. It's important to remember, however, that there are some positive steps you can take to help your child make their learning less stressful and more productive at home. It is helpful to know that when a child is anxious, the part of their brain required for learning is essentially offline. Help them to switch this part back on by doing some relaxation exercises, by maintaining your own calm, and by not expecting them to be able to work optimally (or maybe even at all), until they are calm again. [Click here for tips on how to support your child with anxiety.](#)

Supporting Your Child with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Throughout COVID-19

While physical distancing continues, students are spending more time working and studying from home. This may present some additional challenges for children who have a diagnosis of ADHD.


Mental Health and Wellbeing: Information for Parents

The current COVID-19 crisis is changing the way we live and work,



For Further Support

It is common for people to experience a range of emotions and have varied support needs during difficult times. Remember, your child's teacher will be available to provide support and guidance along the way, so keep in contact with them. For further support agencies, check out our [Support Services list](#).



Students, parents and staff are settling into remote learning with a smoother start than expected in Catholic schools.

We acknowledge how difficult this is for staff and parents, particularly those who are working from home, are self-employed, have very young children, or those with special needs. We encourage employers to be understanding of parents' needs as we all continue to follow the directives of state and national governments.

A reminder that parents are not expected to be teachers and learning from home is very different to home schooling! If things aren't working out on any one day, relax and just do the best that you can. That is all anyone can ask. **#bekindtoyourself**
#allinthistogether

Parents will find information and resources that may be helpful in assisting with remote learning from home on the Continuity of Learning page on our website. Please do not hesitate to contact your school for further assistance.



www.cns.catholic.edu.au/continuity-of-learning



COVID-19

With the coronavirus **COVID-19** situation continually changing, it is vital to rely only on professional advice from State and Commonwealth health authorities. Uninformed opinion and speculation can be a dangerous and misleading thing! What you can do to help is to make an informed decision by visiting the government site at www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covidsafe-app and downloading the Australian Government's contact tracing app, **COVIDSafe**. The [FAQs](#) will help to answer any questions you may have.



Cairns Catholic Education is strongly recommending that all staff, students, parents and caregivers download the app to assist the health authorities in controlling COVID-19.

Cairns Catholic Education's website has a **central hub** with links to updates, official sites and resources around student wellbeing on our website, for all parents.

These resources include advice for parents in supporting children, tips for coping with coronavirus anxiety and ways of reducing your risk.



www.cns.catholic.edu.au/coronavirus

To help keep informed, visit the Cairns Catholic Education Emergency Communications **Facebook page**.



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confidence.



Confidence
breeds hope.



Hope breeds peace.

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