

Raise

RAISE THE CHILD CHANGE THE WORLD



INSIDE

4

Transitioning Back to
School during COVID-19

6

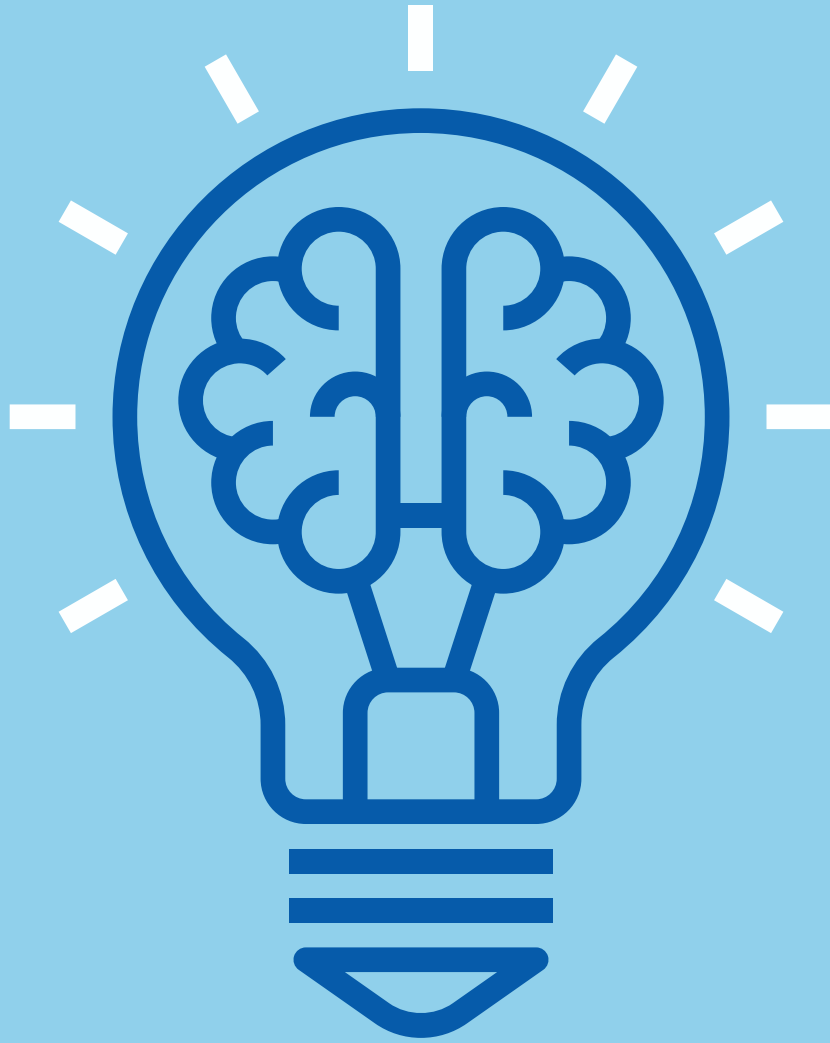
Learnings from a Crisis

11

Keeping Our
Kids Safe

14

Spirited Schools



“There is nothing
more powerful than an idea
whose time has come.”

| VICTOR HUGO

Index

Over the past five weeks we have produced a weekly, digital coronavirus special edition of *Raise* magazine, to provide support to families during this time of learning from home.

As students make the transition back to school-based learning, we offer a final coronavirus special edition of *Raise*, to assist Far North families with advice as we make this transition together.

In this issue you'll find tips from a teacher for the transition back to school, the lessons we've learnt from home-based learning, insights from the home-based learning experience from the perspective of two local teachers, health and safety tips as restrictions lift and much more.

Follow Cairns Catholic Education on [Facebook](#) or check our [website](#) for future print and digital issues of *Raise* as we continue to raise the child, change the world!

For your chance to win one of five \$100 vouchers of your choice of *Woolworths*, *Coles* or *IGA*, fill out our [Raise feedback survey](#).



4 | Transitioning Back to School During COVID-19

Local teacher Michelle Reynolds shares advice for Far North families as we make the transition back to school-based learning.

6

Learnings from a Crisis

Cairns Catholic Education Executive Director Bill Dixon reflects on the top 10 learnings so far during the COVID-19 crisis.



8 | Celebrating Family

International Day of Families is a wonderful reminder to celebrate what it means to be part of a family – no matter what that looks like for you.



11

Keeping Our Kids Safe

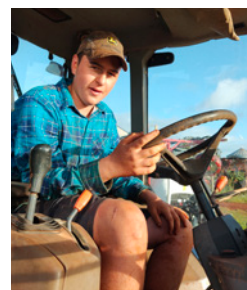
Work Health and Safety expert David Kemp shares advice for keeping kids safe as they transition back to school-based learning.



12

Teacher Talk

Local teachers Maree Helm and Amanda Speziali share what it was like preparing for learning from home and the future benefits they've discovered – as well as the challenges they faced along the way.



14

Spirited Schools

Disclaimer: No part of this magazine, including the advertisements within it may be reproduced, in part or in whole without the expressed permission of the publisher. Whilst the greatest of care is taken to ensure that the information in the magazine is correct at the time of going to press, we cannot accept responsibility for errors, inaccuracies or omissions. The ideas expressed within *Raise* are not necessarily the views of the publishers, but those of individual writers.

This publication was proudly produced by

MARKETING TO families www.m2f.com.au



Transitioning Back to School during COVID-19

Students are returning to the classroom, but some may feel anxiety or uncertainty while others are excited to get back. Local teacher Michelle Reynolds offers advice to families for the transition back to school-based learning.

MICHELLE REYNOLDS

4

As our students in Cairns head back to school, we need to acknowledge the super human effort of our parents, teachers and especially the students themselves. Children usually experience a mix of emotions when it comes to going back to school after a long break (think summer holidays). Our lives have been disrupted and pushed into a new normal for at least the last six weeks. Whether children have been remote learning at home with family or at school learning online while supervised by school staff, getting back into some sort of school time routine is just another mammoth effort in the long list of challenges these crazy COVID-19 times have delivered for us all.

Emotions involved in returning to school after enduring the changes COVID-19 restrictions placed on our community will likely range from feeling really excited and eager to concern, fear or anxiety. Getting butterflies or general worry about going back to school is very normal. But, add in this strange COVID-19 context where people are supposed

to keep their distance and it feels like a lifetime since seeing our friends and in some case family, our students (and adults!) can and may feel in an emotional and volatile whirlwind right now.

Usually when returning to school, some of the biggest worries of our young students are feeling left out, feeling unsure about what to do or saying goodbye to their caregiver at drop off. Waving goodbye at the gate or school fence during COVID-19 will require some pre-work from families to ready their children to understand this is now the way things are done and everyone must do this, not just them. When our older students return on May 25, their concerns are more likely to be about their school work and assessment, maybe they enjoyed remote learning or maybe they are worried because they didn't engage in the remote learning very much at all. Some students may feel lonely and isolated and the effort to re-connect may feel too daunting. Overcoming challenges and regulating our emotions is resilience building!

Supporting parents, children and young people with back-to-school challenges caused by COVID-19 can help reduce the worries, the butterflies, the stress and anxiety.

The following might help:

1 Set up a back-to-school routine as fast as possible

Create structure about going back with a school morning routine, especially the waking up, getting dressed, getting organised and packing their own bag ready for the day. Be guided by your knowledge and history of what best supports your child during times of change and transition.

Many families make a visual "Getting Ready" list.

You could include:

- what needs to be done each day for school like getting up, eating breakfast, dressing themselves
- what help does your child need from you to get ready?
- what they can do on their own? Establish these together.

The first week back can cause disruption as once again, normal life changes to the new normal. Don't forget healthy habits for a good, long night's sleep, lots of play and running/exercise time after school and shop well for the school lunchbox so there are no unnecessary stresses about providing healthy food at school! Having a consistent bed time and wake up time helps too.

2 Talk positively about going back to school

Most children deal with some level of stress or anxiety about school. They have insight into their school experiences, so find out what worries them by asking them directly.

You can offer support by normalising experiences of worry and nerves. Everyone is still getting used to the new COVID-19 norms so reassure your child they are not alone in their worry, and they will overcome this once they have transitioned back and settled into school again. Worries and courage can actually go together.

Depending on your child's age, you can also try the following to help:

- Early years/pre-school – write a social story or get them to draw pictures of what school will look like now they will be back with their friends and waving goodbye to parents at the school gate
- Primary years – maybe students can plan to arrive at school together and walk in with a buddy. They could have some

news and ideas ready to share in class about their time spent in remote learning

3 Help create a sense of school belonging

A sense of belonging at school has a significant effect on academic success and student wellbeing. Parents can facilitate positive attitudes about transitioning back to school by setting an encouraging tone when talking about it and showing real interest in their child's school life and school work. Talk about the video conferencing with their teachers, or the activities they enjoyed completing the most while learning remotely. Younger students may have been fortunate to have a school pack delivered to their home by their teacher. These memories and connections to school build community – our students will fondly remember the day their teacher 'zoomed' them online or possibly visited their house!

4 Look out for signs of stress

COVID-19 has caused stress for most families in some form or another. Sometimes it is easy to miss the signs of stress and sometimes the signs can be obvious!

Parents can spot stress if their child (depending on age):

- is more clingy than usual and struggles to say goodbye
- appears restless or cries, and has difficulty explaining why or regulating their emotions
- shows an increased desire to avoid activities through negotiations and deal-making

- tries to get out of going back to school and may start feeling 'sick'
- retreats to thumb sucking, baby language or increased attachment to favourite soft toys (for younger students).

Talking to your classroom teacher or school engagement team about what is happening means that together we can work on a strategy of support.

5 Encourage questions

Encourage questions children and teens may have about returning to school physically and if their remote learning experiences will have changed anything about school. What will be the same? What will be different? Most importantly, let your child know nothing is off limits to talk about. Set up a regular chat time; in the car after pick up, family dinner time, or perhaps the bedtime reading chat. Talking about the challenges and changes, the similarities and the differences, is an important discussion which can help with the transitioning back-to-school during COVID-19 nerves.

Transitioning back to school will be easy for some and a lot harder for others. Love, time, understanding and potentially a lot of reassurance will be needed. Keep the talk positive, and keep the talk open. And let your child's teacher know if you have any concerns. COVID-19 has shown us as long as we work in partnership, we can do anything!

Michelle Reynolds is the Deputy Principal at MacKillop Catholic College, Mount Peter

Learnings from a Crisis

Living with the effects and changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic will likely continue for quite some time, but in the midst of this crisis we are finding some positive outcomes and learning new things.

BILL DIXON

Who would have thought just a few months ago that our office and 29 schools would be hosting 2500 Zoom video conference meetings a week over the last five weeks? That's a deep dive into the digital learning space.

Our learnings are still unfolding but here are 10 thoughts from our experiences to date:

1. AGILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

How ready we are to face change and how quickly we adapt to it are early markers for how we manage major disruptions. How quickly we change from a mindset of 'What if this or that happens' to 'Our way of doing things is likely to change quite soon and this is how we are going to manage it'. Both mindsets exist in all workplaces – the way forward belongs to those who grasp the challenge. Our teachers and students have been exceptional – showing great resilience and a willingness to adapt to a new concept of school.

2. ICT IS A GREAT INVESTMENT

Over recent years we have invested heavily in Information and Communication Technologies – connectivity, programs, licences and storage. We built in capacity to ramp it up if needed. It's been hugely tested these past weeks – it works and is a great investment.

3. INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Doomsdayers have said these new digital platforms will replace teachers. Our experience has shown we need our teachers more than ever. It's just that some of the ways that teachers teach will change. We will be attaching a big priority to further developing our schools' skills to work in the digital world.

4. EQUITY AND ACCESS

These issues rise to the surface in a crisis. We became more aware of students who do not have devices at home or whose homes have low connectivity. Issues when numerous members of a family are schooling or working from home and sharing a limited number of devices. We are looking at implementing 1:1 devices for all our students and addressing how we tackle home connectivity issues.

5. DIFFERENT STUDENTS HAD DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES

We heard lots of stories about how well some students adapted and how others found it a struggle. And some interesting stories about how some students with additional needs revelled in the digital space. We're going to explore this a bit more.

6. PARENTS AS PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

The research shows students achieve more when their parents are actively engaged in their learning. The last month has shown just how true that is. Our families have been fantastic in rising to the challenge, often surprising themselves in the process. We're going to keep talking to our families about how we can further enhance this partnership.

6



7. REPURPOSING PLATFORMS

New words appeared in our landscape – Canvas, Seesaw, Google Classroom, Zoom – and some of these platforms found use in ways their designers might never have intended. Expect these platforms to evolve further and new platforms to appear as we further develop our imagination for digital learning.

8. SHARING RESOURCES

In recent years we have encouraged the development of learning communities where teachers share ideas and resources within and across schools. That has gone into overdrive in the last month. Expect to see some real dividends from this cooperative space.

9. RELATIONSHIPS ARE IMPORTANT

This educational response was depicted as entering an impersonal digital world, but we think this is not so. The feedback we received was that the children loved seeing their teacher and classmates on the screen.

In days of home lockdowns the video linkups were among the daily highlights. And for the teachers who backed this up with driveway visits to their younger students – thank you. Our schools will continue to place the highest value on relationships within their communities.

10. WE WILL STAY IN THIS SPACE

We all hope the COVID-19 threat has largely passed but if we do have to go into another community shutdown, we are ready. We are certainly looking at how we further develop our digital learning capacity for its educational value alone, but if we have to use it in response to another crisis, we will be ready.

No doubt there is still much more we can learn from our recent experiences and that has the capacity to greatly enhance how we think about schools of the future. This conversation has a long way to run.

Bill is the Cairns Catholic Education Executive Director





Celebrating Family

May 15 was International Day of Families and a wonderful reminder to celebrate what it means to be part of a family – no matter what that looks like for you.

RACHEL MCLEAN

8

I like days that are set aside in our year that celebrate significant people, achievements, hopes and milestones: Mother's Day, Father's Day, ANZAC Day, International Day of the Girl Child, Remembrance Day. Each day has its own way of being celebrated through flowers, socks, wreaths, hashtags and poppies. The International Day of Families was initiated in 1993 by the United Nations to provide an "opportunity to promote awareness of issues relating to families as well as to promote appropriate action". The day did not call for ribbons, public holidays or gifts, rather it called for awareness. The day encourages us to consider the challenges that society sometimes places on families and what we can do to reduce these challenges.

International Day of Families is an opportunity to also celebrate what it means to be part of a family. The United Nations didn't define family; rather we are invited to consider all the relationships and ways of being that make us and our communities who and what we are. For some, a family might be a mum, dad, sister and dog. For others, it might be dad and a daughter. And for others it could be a mum, dad, nine brothers and sisters, eight aunts, eight uncles, one nanna, two

grandparents, one great aunty, 23 cousins and 10 nieces and nephews. Well, that's my family! The great, glorious, and loud community that makes me who I am. These are the people who make me happy, they celebrate my successes and lift me up when I fall down.

"Family is also the community that holds you, and often others, together when things are not so good. During this time of COVID-19, we are needing to rely on our families even more. They are the ones we are living with in close quarters, they are seeing our fears and our excitement."

This year, as we celebrate the International Day of Families, I draw on the wisdom of Fr Andrew Hamilton sj: "family day is a time to celebrate the generosity and goodness displayed in families, and the resilience that finds life in the most unfavourable circumstances."

This year is indeed a time to celebrate the wide variety of families we have in our community; let us continue to be hope-filled and resilient family members for each other and the world.

Rachel is the Cairns Catholic Education Leader Formation



"Sometimes we only experience a virtual form of communication with one another. Instead, we should discover a new closeness. More concrete relationships made of attention and patience... We must rediscover the concreteness of little things, small gestures of attention we can offer those close to us, our family, our friends. We must understand that in small things lies our treasure."

| POPE FRANCIS



Keeping Our Kids Safe

With the phased return of Queensland students to schools, many parents and caregivers are wondering about the risks this may pose for their child, or even for themselves and their family. Whilst it is understandable to have some anxiety about this, there are some reassuring facts becoming known about COVID-19 when it comes to our children and schools.

DAVID KEMP

Studies on COVID-19 have shown markedly low infection rates for children, and even lower transmissibility within schools. In an early study in the *Journal of Microbiology, Immunology and Infection* on the first 45,000 cases in China, it was found that only 0.9% of infections were from children aged 0-10 years, and 1.2% were children aged 11-19 years old. This low rate of infection has also been noted in many other developed countries, including the United States, Taiwan and South Korea. Australia appears to be no different, with only 2.4% of confirmed cases being children aged between 5 and 18, according to the [Australian Health Protection Principal Committee](#).

This is confirmed by epidemiologist Dr Kathryn Snow, from the University of Melbourne's Centre for International Child Health, stating in a recent [article](#) that "the evidence shows that although primary school-aged children can catch COVID-19, they usually only experience a mild illness. Interestingly, although primary school aged children can definitely catch it, it seems that they almost never pass the virus on to anybody else".

Dr Snow's comments echo a report commissioned by NSW Health from the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, where it was found that of the 18 cases in NSW schools there were 735 students and 128 staff identified as close contacts, but there were no confirmed instances of transmission to these 863 contacts.

Despite the low risk profile for children, it is still important to ensure strong hygiene principles are in place to reduce the risk even further. Many parents are aware of the many measures that are in place at schools, but a question I have had from parents is often around

what part they can play in reducing the risk further. The answers are simple, and they lie in adhering to the many epidemiological concepts that we are all familiar with right now.

- **Regular handwashing and sanitising** - this is the gold standard, and having a hand sanitiser in the car so your child can clean their hands before leaving the vehicle and when they get in can only help
- **Ensure your child's name is on their lunchbox and drink bottle** to reduce the chance of transmission through sharing of lunches and drinks
- **Practice physical distancing during pickups and drop offs.** Although this is often a great time to catch up with other parents, this could also promote transmissibility amongst the school community were someone to be infected. Ideally parents and carers would only exit their vehicles to assist their child with their seat belts for example, but this is something that will need to work in with the drop-off and pick-up procedures for your particular school.
- Perhaps one of the most important ones is **keeping your child home when they are sick**, including when they have the sniffles or other flu-like symptoms.

The overwhelming majority of cases where children have contracted COVID-19 have been from home-based transmission, so ensuring that all family members follow the federal and state government advice on social distancing and hygiene is particularly important to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe.

David is the Cairns Catholic Education Manager Work Health and Safety

Teacher Talk: Maree Helm and Amanda Speziali

It's meant long days, negotiating new platforms and reinventing delivery methods, but local teachers Maree and Amanda agree that learning from home has helped schools harness the potential of digital learning for the 21st century.

How did you prepare for the transition to learning from home?

Maree: The first week of preparations were full on and it was a massive learning curve. We did not stop from the moment we got to school. We were learning to negotiate new platforms, and how to voice everything so that no students were disadvantaged by online learning. We were also learning how to merge content on a single platform – for example voice, text and drawing.

During the preparation week, our staff were amazing, and all had something to offer. For example, Amanda has extensive knowledge around how to manipulate various software and coached our staff through it. It was exciting and inspiring to be able to share our knowledge with one another. Remote learning has enabled us to learn more about digital technology-based teaching.

Amanda: During our preparation week, we planned how to effectively facilitate remote learning across the school to ensure ease of access for all families. We looked at how we could be consistent as a school in what we were delivering so families with children across different year levels could use the same platforms, streamlining the process for them.

What is a standard day for you now?

Amanda: There are significant hours being put in behind the scenes for everything to go 'live' for the day. We have been working hard on converting our current hard copy resources to digitally engaging resources, which is a time-consuming process.

Maree: Our day starts early to ensure we have the day's content ready to upload to Google Classroom. The day's work, including voiced lessons and digitally adapted resources, needs to be sitting in draft form ready to be pushed out by 8.30am each day. The day then

consists of working on the following day/week's lessons, connecting with students via Google Meet, answering student/parent enquiries and responding to student work that has been uploaded throughout the day.

What has been the biggest challenge for you?

Maree: It's getting what's in your brain and putting it into an engaging online version because we normally adlib so much in our lessons based on feedback from students.

Amanda: It has been hard differentiating for different groups of learners online. In the classroom, you're reactive to learners, but when you're delivering via video you need to pre-empt difficulties or misconceptions the students might have and include explanations of these in your lesson.

What has been most challenging for your students?

Maree: The challenge for the students is not having us immediately to call upon if they want to go through a concept or have a question. Even if this has been explained in a video we put online, often the students just like the personal contact of one-to-one delivery.

Amanda: Remote learning has proved that our job as teachers is more than just delivering content, it is about nurturing and having a relationship with each student and I think this connection is hard to maintain via an online forum. No matter how hard we try to inject our personalities into our online content, there is a lack of personal touch and connection compared to what we are able to achieve in the classroom.

What have been the benefits of learning from home?

Maree: By producing content for remote learning, we can see some students have benefited from being able to view and re-view concepts or lessons. Students have



less distraction and more time to complete their work at their own pace. In terms of improving the outcomes for students, if the school had to close in the future for whatever reason, they know how to access learning online and I am confident there will be minimal disruption to their learning.

Amanda: I think one of the benefits of learning from home is that students are being put in a position where they have to engage with digital technology in a productive way. They actually have to develop digital literacy skills which will assist them immeasurably in the future.

What changes will you make when we return to school-based learning?

Maree: We will be making much more content available for students to access online. We will utilise the schools existing digital platforms to their full potential. We also feel that we have developed a greater capacity

to communicate and interact digitally with parents about student progress.

Amanda: We will be more purposeful and directed in our use of technology as well as harnessing the full potential digital technologies can have on our students' learning.

Overall, how was the experience?

Maree: I would say challenging, interesting and inspiring.

Amanda: Also seeing that your job is dynamic and seeing teaching delivered in a whole different way. You're looking at teaching through fresh eyes and re-evaluating what you're trying to put out to the students. It's been challenging, fun and motivating.

Maree and Amanda are Year 6 teachers at Good Counsel Primary School, Innisfail

Spirited Schools



Holy Spirit College

Providing Hope for Students in Hope Vale

Holy Spirit College is not one to shy away from a challenge – offering second chances to young people who have found mainstream schooling unsuitable. When the staff at Holy Spirit College learned that there were students in need just 40 minutes down the road from them, they certainly didn't hesitate to help.

At the end of last term, many boarders from across Australia were urged to return to their homes due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Young students in remote communities have been especially impacted from not being able to return to school, including those from Holy Spirit College's Cooktown campus.

"Young people attending Holy Spirit College do not necessarily have reliable or consistent access to the technology required to participate in online learning," says Holy Spirit College Principal, Erica Prosser. "Back to the future ways of enabling them to learn have been developed and provided for them."

Knowing the impact this change would have on their young people, the teaching staff at HSC Cooktown campus planned to travel to Hope Vale, a community 40 minutes away, for two days a week to work with their students.

Upon their arrival, they received an overwhelming amount of support from the Hope Vale community which allowed them to expand their operation. They put up flyers around the community to inform young people of the help available to them, even extending their invitation to any boarding students who had returned home.

Initially the learning sessions were held in a yard space which had been kindly offered by the local Lutheran Pastor. As the interest grew, the PCYC offered to assist and even set up their hall as a large classroom with internet access for those needing the service.

Elders in the community heard about this set up, and teamed up with the PCYC workers to remind young people in Hope Vale that school was on and available to them for the



Holy Spirit teachers have provided support for local Hope Vale students during the COVID-19 crisis.

days the HSC staff were in town. Furthermore, the elders attended some of the learning sessions to both encourage young family members to engage, as well as to offer their support to the teachers.

Word spread and soon the student demographic expanded to students who don't regularly attend HSC. The HSC staff willingly began to work with these students too, even going as far as to contact their teachers for any extra work that should be encompassed in their teaching. Their small group of HSC students quickly grew to 10 extra young people from other schools who have now gone on to attend each day the staff are there.

This story really highlights how schools and communities are rallying together to provide support for all of our students in times of need. We thank the staff at Holy Spirit College Cooktown and everyone from the Hope Vale community who has made this opportunity for the students possible.

LEFT: The local PCYC offered their hall as a makeshift classroom for the Hope Vale students.



Catholic Education
Diocese of Cairns

Learning with Faith and Vision

Remodelling Remote Learning

St Stephen's has taken an innovative approach to students undertaking their learning from home, incorporating 'real life' experiences into their learning to broaden their opportunities.

St Stephen's Catholic College, Mareeba found that the key to supporting their students through this once in a lifetime COVID-19 crisis was to come together as a community and implement a 'homebased' style of learning. Encouraging students to harness a 'curious learners' mindset, they recognised this situation as one where students could work with their families and engage in real-life skills such as cooking and gardening.

"We were looking to create a climate of growth – a time where we are all, adults and children alike, inspired with the excitement of learning, and an understanding that it takes many different forms," said St Stephen's Principal Kerry Manders.

This home-based learning model acknowledges core components of maintaining routine to their school community whilst assisting students to manage change and engage in effective learning. "We understand for students to be successful in life, learning is life long and life wide, and while this pandemic is tragic it has opened opportunities to see learning in a different way," says Kerry.

Soon after the school shutdown, the leadership team had the idea of students having real-life work projects which would keep them engaged in a learner's mindset whilst still giving them the opportunity to grow in the Australian Curriculum general capabilities. Whilst all students were offered this wonderful opportunity, most didn't have access to a suitable workplace or a sustainable project given the lack of notice. However, after close discussion between the school and student Jake Flynn and his family about Jake doing work on a farm, it became clear the skills he would gain and the curriculum capabilities he would tick off from this project.

Working with employees from around the world was providing intercultural understanding, and the application of critical thinking skills was a key component of each day. It built Jake's engagement towards an optimistic learning future and developed a desire for learning opportunities in the future. Each day in his work he was building efficacy, confidence, adaptability and providing a context in

which to apply his academic learning. Jake developed his own reflective processes to record his learning and is excited to prepare the report for his project. He also dabbled in HR work, directing a group of backpackers and helping them better understand their tasks.

Kerry added that the project fits their Catholic approach to the world – from John 10:10, Jesus said "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" and for Kerry, these projects allow her students to engage in their life and learning abundantly.

Farm owner Bruno Cuda was really taken by Jake's work ethic and gave Jake his own project of looking after 2400 newly grafted avocado trees. The project included planting and grafting the trees, checking and soiling them, which turned out to be a lot harder than Jake originally imagined.

"A lot of adults want to knock the youth of today, but you only get back what you put in. You can really see Jake's confidence building as he masters new tasks," says Bruno.

Jake acknowledged that the time will come when he has to return to school full time. "I am missing my mates. Hopefully, I can apply the resilience, independence and valuable life skills I've learnt to my schooling, but I will be back on the farm as soon as holidays start again."

Kerry believes the success of this trial is the spark to identify innovative opportunities to engage learning in ways that ignites students' fire to learn. Well done to the team and students at St Stephen's for effectively adapting and innovating to this unique world event.



Left: Jake Flynn has incorporated 'real-life experiences' into his home-based learning.

Above: Farm owner Bruno Cuda was impressed with Jake's work ethic.



Spreading Love Through Letters

What was originally meant to be a lesson on handwriting and mailing, soon turned into an act of kindness from the students and staff of St Joseph's School, Cairns.

Year 3 teachers at St Joseph's recently completed a Zoom lesson with their students which focussed on practising their handwriting and taking the steps to mailing it out, including addressing the envelope, stamping it and posting. Cairns Catholic Education Executive Director, Bill Dixon, with St Joseph's teacher Sandra Stephens, had the idea of students writing letters to people who needed cheering up during COVID-19.

After one staff email was sent with the idea, a list was quickly compiled of different members of the community, both local and interstate. Some of the receivers were newly turned 18-year-olds celebrating birthdays in isolation, elderly recovering from surgeries, dementia patients and grandparents who weren't able to see their families during COVID-19. The students' letters included the likes of their hobbies and also some questions for the receiver in hopes to foster some great relationships.

One lucky letter receiver was 105-year-old Eileen Tayler in Mercy Care Home, Woree. We spoke to Kathryn McDonnell, daughter of Eileen, who was touched by the gesture.

"My mother recently received her letters and to see the sheer delight and gratitude on her face was wonderful," says Kathryn.

"I think that for Sandra to have the depth of understanding and empathy to encourage the children to write to my mother was just wonderful."

Eileen received some fantastic questions from the students such as "can you give me some tips to live for a long time?" and "what does it feel like to be 105 years old?". One student also noted that she must have



Mercy Care Home resident Eileen Tayler was delighted to receive handwritten letters from local St Joseph's School students.

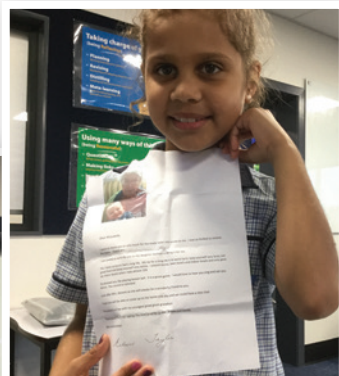
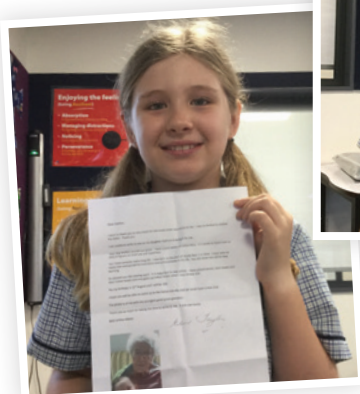
some really cool stories to tell throughout her life. Eileen and Kathryn have been working together to draft up responses to all the letters she received, and wished the students and teachers could have seen the smile on her face as she read through her letters. She hopes that she will be able to chat to the students in person one day.

Year 3 student Eamon was able to write to his best friend from school, Dallas, who recently moved back to Thursday Island with his family. His friend was thrilled to receive the letter, and it's believed this will be the students' new method of keeping in touch.

Sandra noted that although this was supposed to be a lesson, the students were more than happy to oblige.

"It was no trouble to get them to write. The kids didn't really see it as a lesson – they just wrote letters from the heart. The teachers were really supportive and I think it will have a really positive impact on the kids, especially when they start to receive some letters back."

The caring and compassion from the students and teachers in the project is truly inspiring, now more than ever. We thank all that were involved in this project and hope you all feel proud of the positive impact you've had on so many people.



ABOVE: Kryselle Jean Sellin and, LEFT: Kaitlyn Otto, from St Joseph's School, display their letters from Eileen Tayler.



Supporting Students in a Time of Need

Students Australia-wide have had their regular schooling routine interrupted as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak – with some remote boarding students unable to attend their regular schools.

St Joseph's School, Weipa and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Thursday Island (OLSH) have opened their schools with welcoming arms to students from both the Catholic Diocese and independent schools in this time of need. The students range from Year 7 to 12 from schools around Cairns and as far south as Brisbane, with no shortage of support offered to these students.

St Joseph's and OLSH have been working with these schools to organise ongoing assistance and support for students in the TI and Weipa regions. This includes having a supervised, safe space for them to work, assistance from teachers, providing a device if needed and allowing them access to a reliable internet connection.

"Coming to OLSH, I was nervous and afraid of what was going to come. But shortly after I arrived, I was able to fit right in and be comfortable within the classroom," says student Hayley.

"I have met some lovely people and still get to see some of my fellow boarders. The staff have been really helpful and considerate, considering the circumstances. OLSH provides a fun and exciting aspect of online schooling, like the dance parties." She also added that whilst online schooling has been a big change for everyone, they are all supporting each other.

OLSH Principal Majella Lynch-Harlow said students had adapted well to the change and the school was very willing to help neighbouring schools in the region.

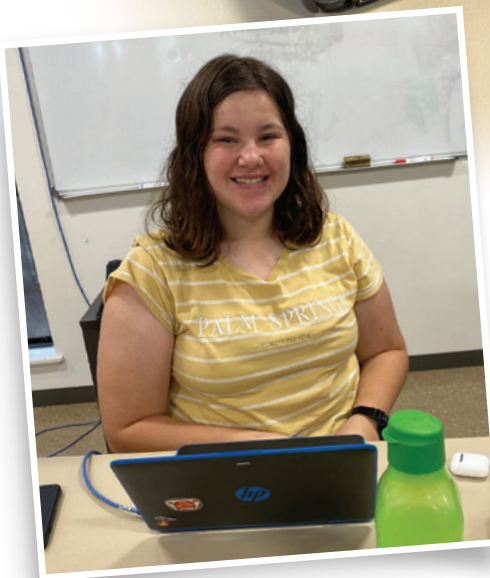
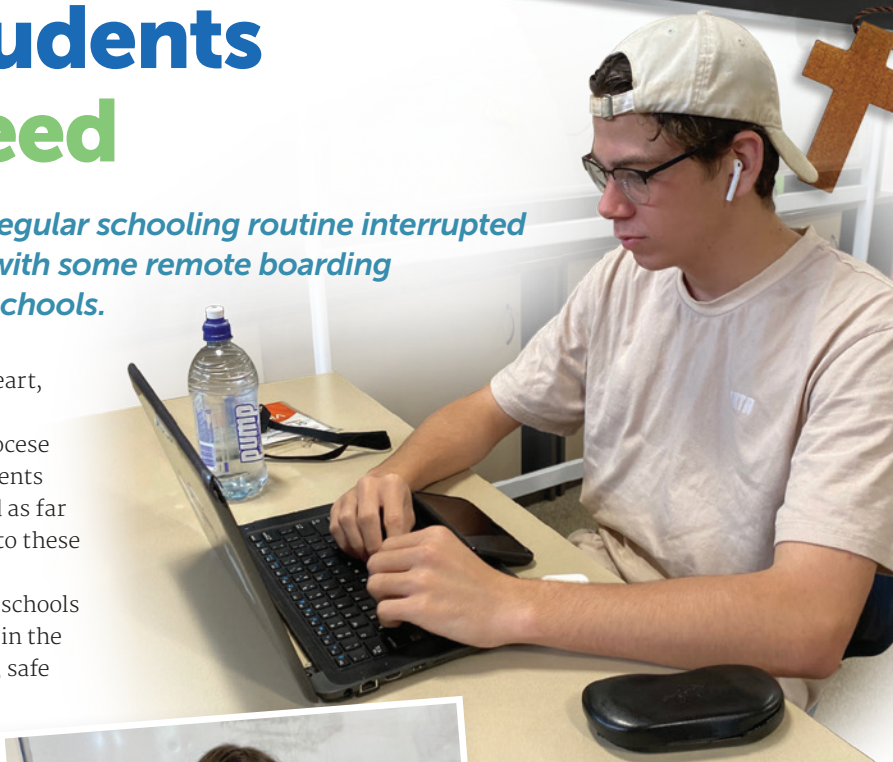
"We're really happy to help out other schools in the region. With the current information we have, we expect the situation to continue on for some time and we'd like to clarify that the support will be ongoing," says Majella, who added she is willing to accept more students who need this service and necessary arrangements will be made to accommodate them.

Principal of St Joseph's School, Weipa, Megan Pearce, noted how glad they were to be of help to the families in the community.

"The students have been a pleasure to host and we are pleased to be able to support them to continue learning, have a quiet space to study and to attend supervised exams," says Megan.

We spoke to students Kaylee from St Ursula's, Yeppoon and Jaxen from St Augustine's College, Cairns who have thoroughly enjoyed their time at St Joseph's.

"I found learning at St Joseph's even for the short amount



Students from the Cairns Diocese as well as independent schools have been offered a safe space to study and attend supervised exams.

of time I was there for was fantastic. The staff were always happy to help when my school teachers could not because of the long distance," says Kaylee.

"The room was quiet and away from enrolled students so that their work was not disrupted. The room was clean and sanitary and allowed us to practice social distancing with the desks being far apart and clean."

Jaxen added, "the environment set by the staff at St Joseph's has provided those of us that continue online learning with a space that amplifies our learning ability. The welcoming staff have also made the time spent here as safe and friendly as possible, with the added bonus of having teachers around if we need help with a certain subject. The school has provided a quiet and clean space for our online learning, leaving us with little distractions as compared to what one would find at home. I personally am grateful for the opportunity that the St Joseph's staff have given me and have not let it go to waste."

We thank you all for welcoming these students into your schools and wish all students the best of luck with their remote studies.

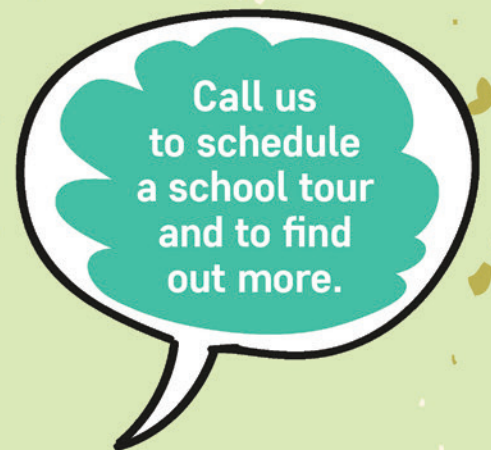
We grow more than minds!

We focus on growing the body, heart, soul, and spirit too.

Don't miss out! Limited vacancies still available at some Catholic schools and colleges for this year and next, apply online now at www.cns.catholic.edu.au/apply-online.



- 29 schools & colleges
(Primary, Secondary, Prep to Year 12)
- No defined catchments
- 2.5 hours of extra school per week[†]
- All faiths and abilities welcome
- Generous discounts and concessions available
- Costs less than Daycare and Kindy*
- Before and After School and Vacation Care available**
- Extra-curricular activities



Invest in a quality education where your child will grow academically, physically, emotionally and spiritually.



4050 9700

web: www.cns.catholic.edu.au/our-schools
email: communications@cns.catholic.edu.au



Catholic Education
Diocese of Cairns

Learning with Faith and Vision

No child denied a Catholic education because of financial difficulty

Catholic schools recognise and value the uniqueness and individuality of students and families, and the human dignity of each person.

All are welcome.

Catholic schools serve the needs of families who will benefit from what they offer. This includes those who value the high standards and Christian values for which Catholic schools are known, those from culturally diverse backgrounds, those from backgrounds of marginalisation and disadvantage including the economically and spiritually poor, and those with a disability.

It has always been Cairns Catholic Education policy that no child will be denied enrolment because of financial hardship. Catholic schools balance the need to charge fees with their outreaching focus.

Generous fee concessions are available for those in genuine need. These concessions have been increased from 70% to 100% of tuition fees during the COVID-19 created financial downturn.

Cairns Catholic Education realises there may well be lingering financial stresses after the pandemic crisis and would not want families to delay a choice for Catholic education for their children because of short-term financial constraints. Fee arrangements will be tailored through concessions and fee relief for families impacted by financial fallout. These arrangements are made sensitively and confidentially; please reach out.



For further information on fee discounts and concessions, visit
www.cns.catholic.edu.au/fees



For other frequently asked questions around eligibility, visit
www.cns.catholic.edu.au/mythbusting-faqs



**Catholic
Education**
Diocese of Cairns

Learning with Faith and Vision

"Children are the world's most valuable resource and its best hope for the future."

JOHN F. KENNEDY



**Catholic
Education**
Diocese of Cairns

Learning with Faith and Vision

Phone: 4050 9700 Email: communications@cns.catholic.edu.au
Web: www.cns.catholic.edu.au