



Lockdown Newsletter: End of 2021

Dear Families,

Term 3 is coming to a close and it feels longer than any before. I hope you will all have holidays away from screens and out in this beautiful Spring weather.

When this term began, we had hoped we would be back, face to face, before then end of the term. Now it is obvious schools will not be returning Week 1 of Term 4 so there will be perhaps at least another ½ of term (4) online.

Enriched Learning Australia is a predominantly face-to-face service which relies on students and teachers being able to interact together with materials for English and Maths. These skills are very specific and different to the skills we use to interact online. While we have endeavoured to make the most of online resources and interacted successfully (mostly) using the Zoom platform this has been tiring and laborious for all involved and required more commitment from parents than we would usually expect. *We'd like to thank you all for your commitment to your child's learning.*

In view of this huge effort, we are taking the decision to not run Enriched Learning lessons during Term 4 this year. **We will be back (Face-to-face) Term 1 2021, and, as I am fully vaccinated, I will not be expecting masks in lessons;** I believe this limits students' learning from facial expressions and creates vocal distortions (important in spelling and hearing the correct words). 2021 will also bring new learning pathways. We intend to initialise at least one term of work on **Strategies for Academic Success**; a program for identifying strengths and weaknesses in students' studying methods, then addressing them specifically using direct instruction for note-taking; exam strategies; listening; reading comprehension; research and time management. These skills are aimed at students from year 5 to year 12. Students entering secondary school with an established commitment to organising their work have proven to be more successful. We can complete a pre-test and post-test to establish growth in learning with a SMALSI survey usually used for identifying underachieving gifted students. Sometimes, even if you are gifted, you may lack the skills, nobody taught you, which are vital to reaching your potential. I believe ALL students are entitled to learn study skills which can help them reach their potential, gifted or not.

If you have make-up lessons owing from term 3: No refunds will be made this term. There is an extra lesson next week, Saturday the 18th, and no lessons during this school holidays. After Saturday 18th I will offer the other lessons on the Saturdays during Term 4, however, after October there will be no more Saturday lessons.

It is really important we close 2021 and have a break from the intensive planning involved in remote learning – I can't just pull-out alternate activities or use spontaneous activities; assessment is very difficult; technical difficulties make us lose the rhythm of our lesson; and correcting written work is much trickier.

I work full-time in Zoom rooms with students but managed an extra-curricula activity too: I am the facilitator of a successful Tournament of Minds team this term, so we are going to the State finals. *Tournament of Minds* is a national competition for lateral/creative thinkers to compete in teams. They are given a problem to find a solution to, so it's appealing to gifted students but not restricted to them. If you think your child thinks outside the box, try to keep an eye on when your school is recruiting for this competition. They have different 'areas' to compete in; Arts; STEM; Social Science (my team is in this area); Language and Literature. It's a fantastic extra-curricula activity to have experience in because it builds vital team skills.

So, ***in our final lessons***, we are currently checking spelling from the Spelling Bee errors and completing our stories after some instruction on tightening the tension and ending well. Once I have ***received, by email, everyone's stories*** I can type them up and send everyone a copy of each other's stories about the missing silverware (all different!) and submit them to the State Library in the hopes they might publish some, or all, on their website as a way of rewarding the hard work. There are some great competitions for kids out there – have a search. I know my youngest won one of the first iPod's for entering an art competition she thought she had no chance in and my artistic son learned an important lesson in "you have to be in it to win it"!! While many students are exhausted with lockdown and winding down for the Summer your Energizer bunny child might like a bit of a challenge (also to keep them busy while you work from home!). Excite them with the competition prizes on offer even if it's just publication because, as Jasper knows, publication is an exciting thing which you will have forever!

As for my family, my youngest is finishing year 12 and everyone is working which is a blessing at this time. Our church will hopefully be able to be in-person for Advent and Christmas so there will be a lot of work for us to do in bringing people together safely. I will be praying for each of you to have a safe, healthy and enjoyable Summer break and a blessed Christmas time together as family. Please keep in touch. I look forward to reconnecting about lessons in early January.

Warm regards,

Veronica Schwedes