



26<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Dear Parents,

## **Why are children different these days?**



Welcome back to school and the start of 2024. I trust that the holidays were a special time to spend with family and recharge before commencing the academic year.

It was wonderful to welcome 20 new students at the Student Orientation Day and to see all the High School parents once again at the Meet the Tutor Evening.

The students on the first day of school were excited to return to school and to catch up with all their friends. The teachers, as always, lost no teaching time in class and students even had some homework on their first day!

As always, in these newsletters, I will focus from time to time on broad educational matters. These thoughts will support parenting and in turn, I trust, will enhance your child's learning and school experience.

I came across an article that after I had finished reading, I just knew that the next step would be to share the sentiments expressed.



The article was published by Victoria Prooday, an Occupational Therapist and entitled, "Why our children are less patient, more lonely and more entitled than generations before?"

In this article, the author comments in her introduction that she had observed that:

*"Children today aren't prepared for life the way that they used to be. Now they are expecting more but doing less. They are coming to school but struggling to learn and stay focused. They want to do more, but have less focus."*

The full article can be found at: <https://yourot.com/parenting-club/2016/5/16/why-our-children-are-so-bored-at-school-cant-wait-and-get-so-easily-frustrated>

So what dilemmas have led in the author's opinion to this concerning state of affairs?

While many points are elaborated on, I will only focus on 3.

### **1. The increasing amount of screen time:**

That technology is often used as a “baby sitting” service. Playing computer games and surfing the Internet will keep the child occupied. Unfortunately this approach has a detrimental impact. As the author so clearly describes:

*“We play with our kids’ nervous systems, with their attention, and with their ability for delayed gratification.”*

Compared to virtual reality, everyday life is boring. After hours of virtual reality, processing information in a classroom becomes increasingly challenging for our students because their brains are accustomed to the high levels of stimulation that video games provide. The inability to process lower levels of stimulation leaves students vulnerable to academic challenges. Technology may also disconnect us emotionally.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> The instant gratification syndrome:**

This instant gratification is one of the eroding factors in building resilience. Again as the author so clearly outlines:

*“The ability to delay gratification is one of the key factors for future success. We have the best intentions -- to make our children happy -- but unfortunately, we make them happy at the moment but miserable in the long term. To be able to delay gratification means to be able to function under stress. Our children are gradually becoming less equipped to deal with even minor stressors, which eventually become huge obstacles to their success in life.*

*The inability to delay gratification is often seen in classrooms, malls, restaurants, and toy stores the moment the child hears “No” because parents have taught their child’s brain to get what it wants right away.”*



### **3<sup>rd</sup> The need for fun all the time:**

*“We have created an artificial fun world for our children. There are no dull moments. The moment it becomes quiet, we run to entertain them again, because otherwise, we feel that we are not doing our parenting duty. We live in two separate worlds. They have their “fun“ world, and we have our “work“ world. Why aren’t children helping us in the kitchen or with laundry? Why don’t they tidy up their toys? This is basic monotonous work that trains the brain to be workable and function under “boredom,” which is the same “muscle” that is required to be eventually teachable at school. When they come to school and it is time for handwriting their answer is “I can’t. It is too hard. Too boring.” Why? Because the workable “muscle” is not getting trained through endless fun. It gets trained through work.”*

In my opinion, when children are bored it is then that they are creative. That is the time when the mind has time to fire up the imagination, to be inquisitive and to daydream.

I have no doubt that being a parent is challenging and parents all try to do their best.

So after reading the article cited above and the 3 highlighted points, what pragmatic advice can be considered?

1. Spend more time with your children but with no screens. Talk to them.
2. Let them be bored. Make them wait for what they want.
3. Replace extrinsic rewards with intrinsic. That it is important to just be told, thank you for emptying the dish washer, cutting the grass or doing school work well. We have started a culture and expectation that it would be abnormal for someone not to be awarded a prize or certificate, even if they achieved nothing significant. Give responsibilities and ask children to do important but monotonous work. This builds resilience and awareness that all activities are not fun and that not all come with rewards.

4. Set boundaries. When do we have family time? When are all electronic media switched off? Have consistent bed and meal times.

As mentioned, I would highly recommend visiting and reading the full article at the link provided at the outset of the article.

I wish you all the very best for 2024. As always I appreciate your support and if there is anything I can do to assist you, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Kind regards

John Alexander

Principal

