

Welcome to the Term 4 Senior School video newsletter.

As the school year is moving into its final phase it is traditional to reflect on the year that has been and the memorable achievements that have occurred.

This year has certainly not been traditional and whilst it has had its significant challenges there have also been achievements and milestones reached.

2020 started with expectations of reaching the full growth and completion of the College with the first group of Year 12 students.

We went on the Year 12 study camp in February and enjoyed a fantastic two days of building team work skills, developing study skills, preparing for the English studies that were to come and preparing for the physical and mental challenges that were to come.

Little were we to know that we would not reach the end of Term 1 before school became an online learning platform for everyone.

Term 1 allowed our Year 9 students to attend their first focus camp at Warrandyte and thankfully they were able to use this experience to be able to build relationships with their peers and teachers.

City experiences were able to get underway but sadly the program was cut short as we transitioned to remote learning.

I know how disappointed our Year 9 teachers and students have been that they have not been able to engage with all of the experiential activities that our program has provided in the previous three years.

Remote learning with the use of Google classroom and video conferencing was thrust upon teachers and students and I will acknowledge and commend the speed with which teachers across Senior School learnt new skills for online teaching and made adjustments to the curriculum to enable a program of teaching and learning to get underway.

I understand the challenge that this placed on students and parents as we moved rapidly to learning online.

Some students have loved the flexibility and self directed approach that this often allowed and other students found this incredibly challenging and craved the return to a more traditional and face to face learning model.

Lockdown and remote learning was a challenge for everyone and I would like to praise the overall resilience of our Senior Students who have toughed it out this year but have got the job done.

I would like to thank the parents of senior students for their support as we understand that whilst many students were self directed and motivated many were supported and directed by their parents who were often also challenged by working remotely.

It was with great relief and some excitement that our students across Senior School returned during the first few weeks of Term 4.

Our Yr 12 students returned in week one for the GAT exam that went smoothly, and the VCE and VCAL students made a swift return to face to face teaching in Week 2.

Whilst they are the students who have had the most attendance on site this year we also acknowledge the disruption to VCE students.

However, the students and teachers have understood the work that needed to be done and have just got on with finishing Year 11 and 12 units and preparing for their relevant exams.

Year 9 and 10 students returned back in Week 4 and the focus of their return has been around re-establishing routines, engaging students and undertaking the concept of a "recovery curriculum".

Teachers across all subjects have aimed to involve a lot more practical work and get students engaged in face to face teaching.

Year 9 have undertaken team building type activities that they would have done on focus camps but this was done onsite and the students seemed to enjoy this.

A significant milestone this year for both the College and our students has been the completion of Year 12 and with only a handful of VCE exams to go this is now very close.

Whilst restrictions of gatherings have prevented many events this year we were pleased to be able to celebrate the last day of Year 12 for our students.

Next week our Year 12 students will be able to attend our formal Graduation ceremony to be recognised as successfully completing their final year of school.

We certainly look forward to being able to meet with them in person to celebrate this achievement and milestone.

Across the next few weeks our Year 8, 9, 10 and 11 students will experience an early start day or week where there will be orientation activities and lessons that will introduce them to the Year ahead.

We hope that this will provide some normality with the transition to higher year levels and new subjects that they will study next year.

I wish all students and parents a safe, restful and relaxing Christmas break after what has been a unique and challenging year for all.

I look forward to seeing all of the Senior School students when they return in 2021 for hopefully a more traditional and less disrupted year.