



Justin Kyngdon: Now, for Dr. Chalfant's HOT TAKE.

Dr. Anne Chalfant: I've been listening in Australia, and I'm sure this is the same and many other countries of the world, to the Federal government's comments on homeschooling and lots of mixed messages, different states, making different plans around remote learning versus opening schools versus children missing key parts of education. An overall message, federally, including from the prime minister, that children may miss up to six months of schooling if we keep them out of schools and how detrimental that would be for children, which really frankly only fuels anxiety in parents about remote learning and produces fear around whether their children will fall behind, lose skills, drop IQ points, all sorts of ideas come to mind for poor parents when they hear this kind of stuff.

I think as a clinical psychologist really wearing that hat, more so than as a mother of four, what I wanted to say is what a load of bumpkin that is or rubbish, frankly. It is not possible for your children in homeschooling for six months to drop so far behind that they drop IQ points or miss an entire year of school, fail to meet certain grades, lose all of the skills that they once had. That is just an absolute load of rubbish, frankly. All that is doing is producing more anxiety for parents.

Your children will be perfectly fine if they are homeschooled for a week, two weeks, a month, six months, or the rest of the year. We hope it's not going to be the case that it is the rest of the year, but if it is, they will be fine. It is good for parents to feel confident in their abilities to manage a very difficult and trying situation as best they can rather than feeling frightened about what's going to happen to their children. The reasons that I say that are based on actual evidence. We know with children, as they learn in their earlier years of primary school, for example, they are learning foundation skills. They are learning those skills on a daily basis, multiple times a day, all through the day, for hours and hours at a time, and then, often, that's revisited again if children are being set homework.

These are skills that you cannot lose once they are solidified or cemented from kindergarten right through, so to suddenly be homeschooled, where maybe they are getting, yes, less focus from you as a parent because you are working, and God bless, you're trying to multitask through all of this difficult situation, but they are still covering the basics with you, I'm sure, whether that's English, maths, or other subjects. As long as there's some focus on those basics, then those skills are going to remain intact, nothing will happen to them.

It's like any adult who hasn't, for example, ridden a bike for perhaps many, many years since they were a child, and then, suddenly, gets on the bike again, maybe you are wavering a little bit at the start but it comes back to you pretty quickly. It's the exact same analogy. There is no way that a child who has learned some foundation skills in such a repetitive way through education is going to lose them after six months, particularly if you're covering them anyway at home in one way or another. As long as you're covering the basics with your child at home, they will be fine.



The other reason is that teachers who are trained to understand your children's needs and work with your children where they are at on an individual basis will be able to pick up where you have left off. If your children return to school in a week, a month, six months, or at the end of the year or the start of the next year, teachers will be able to see where your children are at, where they're progressing, where they've got some gaps, if they have any, and how to then manage that moving forward and bring them back on to the same page or bring them up to speed, if they even need that. I hardly doubt they will.

Trust your teachers and communicate with them as we said in our recent podcast, and that will ensure that you keep on track. Do not be fearful that your children will lose skills or lose education opportunities if they are being homeschooled because we're trying to protect people and maintain health through this period of social isolation because that is just nonsense. All the very best with homeschooling, but don't add panic into what doesn't need to have any panic. Just remain confident and do the best you can. Aim for one thing, as we've said in the past, and that is the best you can do and that is sufficient for educating your child.

[children cheering]

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