

## Two OIE colleagues give us a rundown on their home-schooling experiences



Since the closing of OIE Headquarters last month, some colleagues now have a few particularly demanding new colleagues to deal with – their children. But these hard taskmasters are also the ones who give us hope in these trying times. Two families of four, living in apartments in Paris and in the suburban town of Rueil Malmaison, each with 7 and 9-year-old boys share their confinement experience.

To face this period of lockdown serenely, families must reinvent a way of living together, sharing the same school/work open space, maintaining teaching continuity for school-aged children, proposing all kinds of creative resources to stimulate their imaginations while ensuring professional continuity too. Let's face it, being wonder parents right about now would be amazing.

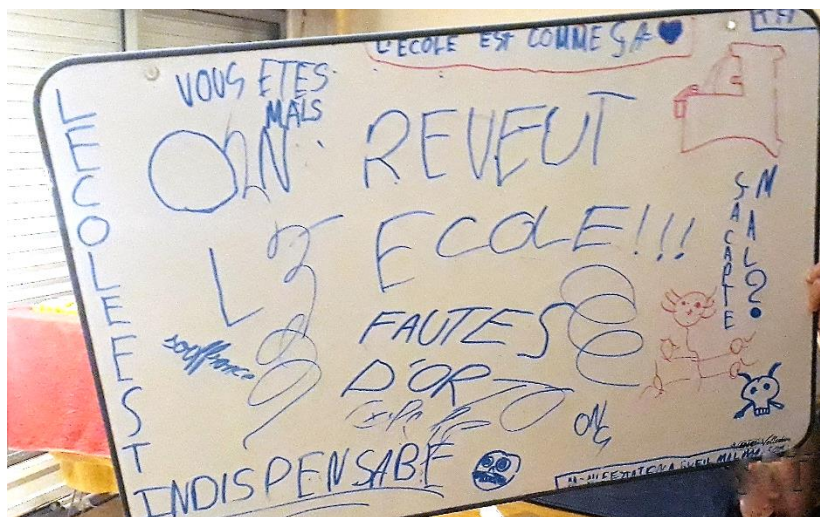


### **How have we survived confinement so far?**

We told the kids that living in lockdown would be like living in a submarine – not a lot of space but with teamwork and discipline it could even be fun. Thus, our family life is organised around schoolwork, professional duties, logistical tasks and recreational activities. And like good submariners, everyone must show goodwill and solidarity.

## What is a typical day like?

We start the day with a short science activity: counting the birds<sup>1</sup> in the garden below us or counting the buds of plants on the balcony. For the rest of the morning, it is school time. Every day we, the parents, put our brand-new teacher's hat on and help our children with their homework sent by e-mail by their real teachers: reading, writing, maths, science, history, geography, etc...



For parents, this teaching exercise requires a lot of patience and it is not always easy. Teaching methods have changed, and it looks like doing a subtraction nowadays is not the same as it was in the 1980s. Nevertheless, knowing that the result is still the same is somewhat reassuring.... It is also difficult for children to cope with these teaching parents who never explain things like their real teachers do, and mutinies have occurred.

Next is lunch time so we have to get organised so we don't miss the next Zoom call, and make sure that the children are fed beforehand to avoid any grumblings from the young crew. Eating well is important as we have young gourmets to satisfy! So far, so good – we have been greeted by a lot of enthusiastic 'It is way better than at the school canteen' comments. Involving children in meal preparation is also an excellent way to open them up to new experiences and, to do mathematics differently, by weighing the ingredients or calculating the cooking time.

In the afternoon, children are allowed to watch a film or play games online (you know, the ones that are supposed to be educational), which is an exceptional event in both families in our normal lives. It is during this period that we take the opportunity to really focus on our own work and to conduct videoconferences with our colleagues. Don't be surprised to see little faces in the background though, because even though we brief them every day about the rules of teleconferencing, it is always during a call that they have a very important question to ask: 'What is the size of a black hole?' or the more pragmatic: 'What are we having for dinner? I am hungry'.

As the afternoon ends, the kids have exhausted all the options for the day, so we suggest that they challenge their friends: maybe build a submarine! It is a good way to do arts and crafts like at school.

After dinner, it's story time and then the children go to bed.... Parents will finally be able to rest ... oh no, wait... we still have some work to do!

*We deeply thank our colleagues, Karen Bucher and Sophie Muset for submitting this article to the OIE News Team.*

■ OIE In-house Times – 9 April 2020

<sup>1</sup> L'observatoire participatif "Oiseaux des Jardins" : [www.oiseauxdesjardins.fr/](http://www.oiseauxdesjardins.fr/)