

Digital devices out of classrooms?; France's famous painting heist; Bird flu conspiracy debunked; and bandicoots and bilbies bounce back.

Hello and welcome to Squiz Kids Today ... your fresh take on what's happening in the world around you.

I'm Bryce Corbett -

It's Thursday, September 10 -

In Squiz Kids today ... Digital devices out of classrooms?; France's famous painting heist; Bird flu conspiracy debunked; and bandicoots and bilbies bounce back.

That's what's making news, kids' style ...

THE LOWDOWN

A major international report released yesterday about the state of Aussie schools has led to calls for a rethink on digital devices in classrooms - meaning the age of laptop and tablet learning may be limited.

Every three years a major study called PISA - the Programme for International Student Assessment - is released, comparing how school kids in Australia are learning compared to school kids in other comparable countries.

And one of the major findings from this year's survey - released yesterday - is that classrooms in Australia are more disruptive than classrooms in other Western countries - and part of the reason for that could be the use of digital devices.

The PISA survey found that 39 percent of Aussie school students report being distracted by digital resources in the classroom compared to the world average of 28 percent.

Is that maybe you? If you use a tablet or laptop in the classroom, are you tempted to go off task and maybe flick onto other apps or web pages? And does that make you more distracted than you would be if you were just using old-fashioned pen and paper?

It's a question that the people who run Australia's schools will now ponder, with the Aussie Education Minister Jason Clare yesterday saying while there was definitely a place for digital devices in classrooms - and an obvious need for kids to know how to navigate a digital world and appropriately and safely use tools like AI – there needed to be a balance.

The country of Sweden - in Scandinavia - was one of the first in the world to introduce laptops and tablets in primary schools, but has recently scaled back their use. The neighbouring country of Norway has also recently introduced a near total ban on the use of AI in classrooms.

Have tablets and laptops made learning better - or more complicated? Now there's an interesting question ... what do you think?

SPIN THE GLOBE

Each day we give the world globe a spin and find a news story from wherever it stops .. and today we've landed in France - where famous paintings have been stolen from a museum - in a robbery with echoes of the great Louvre museum heist of last year ..

Thieves cut their way through a wire fence to enter the Renoir Museum in the south of France early on Tuesday morning. They stole four paintings - but dropped two in the garden as police arrived and they made their hasty escape.

The paintings are by a famous French artist called Pierre Auguste Renoir .. he belonged to a group of painters from Paris who painted in the early 19th century and changed the way art was created – using rapid dabs and strokes of paint to create an effect of colour and light - rather than deliberate strokes and defined lines.

The theft of the Renoir paintings comes just under a year since thieves staged a daring raid on the most famous museum in France, the Louvre - making off with over \$100 million worth of royal jewellery ...

ANIMAL KINGDOM

And it's off to the Aussie outback we go with some excellent news as a new program to save endangered species is showing early signs of success.

Bandicoots, quolls, bilbies and betongs are all Aussie animals whose numbers in the wild have been severely impacted by feral cats.

A feral cat is nothing like the moggy you may have at home ... a feral cat is a cat that has gone wild and hunts native animals to survive.

And in Australia alone, there's estimated to be anywhere between 2 million to 5 million feral cats living in the bush. And get this: the government estimates those feral cats kill more than 1.5 billion native animals every year.

But now, thanks to a clever program which has seen huge fences erected around massive sections of the Aussie outback - the native animals are starting to bounce back.

Rangers build the fences to keep cats out, then they move through the fenced-in area and clear out any rabbits or other pests that might be inside - giving the native animals a chance to live undisturbed by these introduced species.

And already - even though the experiment is only relatively new - scientists are seeing a big increase in the numbers of bandicoots, bilbies, betongs and quolls in the outback.

Winning!

And if you want to learn more about invasive species, like feral cats - and the threat they pose to Australian wildlife - check out the Squiz Kids Shortcut to Invasive Species ... either search for it on the squiz kids website or listen via the link in today's episode notes.

NEWSHOUNDS

Every Thursday, Squiz-E the Newshound sticks his snout into Squiz Kids HQ to report back on fishy things he's sniffed out on the internet - and this week his nose is twitching after the emergence on social media of conspiracy theories around bird flu.

What's a conspiracy theory? It's when people claim a secret plot is being carried out by a small and powerful group for their own evil purposes ... ah ah ahah ... oops, sorry, not sure where that evil genius laugh came from ..

Anyway: conspiracy theories pop up a lot on the internet - with people claiming, for instance, that astronauts didn't *really* land on the moon back in 1969 and that instead the whole thing was faked by the government of the day .. despite there being plenty of scientific evidence to prove that the moon landings did happen.

Vaccines are another area where conspiracy theories thrive - including, at the moment, conspiracy theories doing the rounds of social media claiming Australia has had no cases of bird flu - and that government programs to vaccinate birds is all part of some great government-led vaccine conspiracy.

Bird flu does it exist. And we know that because many clever scientists - much smarter than you or I or some random dude on Facebook - have said so.

It's another reminder to do as Squiz-E tells is in the very excellent, very free media literacy program NEWSHOUNDS - and that is to STOP, THINK and CHECK when we're online - to think about who is making a piece or content and whether that person has any qualifications to make the claims they're making - because more often than not, they don't.

Follow the science, people. It's not that hard.

And if you're a teacher keen to learn how your students can become critical thinkers - join the 5,000 plus other educators around Australia who have already signed up to Newshounds - available via the Squiz Kids website.

THE S'QUIZ

This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening ...

1. Name the invasive species responsible for killing more than 1.5 billion native Australian animals every year?
2. Name the country in Scandinavia, starting with 'S' that has started to phase out tablets and laptops in the classroom?
3. Starting with 'i' what is the name given to the group of artists from 19th century France who pioneered a new style of painting?

SHOUT OUTS

It's Thursday, September 10 – today is R U OK? Day ... an important day to be a good friend, a good son or daughter, a good grandchild - and ask a person in your life if they're doing alright ... because, as we always say, kind is about the best thing a kid can be ..

It's also a special day for these Squiz Kids, celebrating a birthday today... Everleigh from Exeter, Baylee from Shoalhaven Heads, Ethan from Throsby, and Remy from Brisbane.

Belated birthday shoutouts go to...

Classroom shoutouts go to ... Class 3 Blue and their teachers, Ms Gauci and Ms Underwood at St Patrick's Catholic Primary School in Kilmore, Class 6 Neptune and their teacher Mr Diaz at Chester Hill Public School, and Year 2 Wombats and their teacher Frau Browman at Deutsche Schule Melbourne

And finally, a special shout out to Aarav and his sister Aashi in Sydney - as well as their mum, Deeptha - who are die-hard Squiz Kids listeners ... it's great to have you on board!

The S'Quiz Answers:

1. Feral cats
2. Sweden
3. Impressionists

Don't forget .. if you've got a birthday coming up and you'd like a shoutout, or if you want a classroom shoutout, or parents, if you'd like to shout out a class or a wonderful teacher... drop us a line at squizkids@thesquiz.com.au or fill out the form on our website.

Well - that's all we have time for. Thanks for listening to Squiz Kids Today - we'll be back again tomorrow with the Kids v Adults Weekly News S'Quiz ...

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In the meantime ... get out there and have a most excellent day ... over and out.