



Adele Meren with some of her current Grade 2 Elwood Primary School students. Picture: Norm Oorloff

Veteran teacher celebrates massive milestone

Jordy Atkinson, Port Phillip Leader
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Adele Meren has taught thousands of children at eight different schools during a career in education spanning 50 years.

But the Elwood Primary School Grade 2 teacher says despite the shifting sands of the industry, one thing has held true — “children are the same everywhere”.

“I’ve taught kids from all different demographics but despite their backgrounds, they’re ultimately the same,” Ms Meren said.

“They appreciate whatever you do for them and they love to know why and to question everything, which is brilliant because if they don’t question they’re going to be (like zombies) just accepting everything.”

Ms Meren started her career teaching Grade 5 at Brunswick Primary School in 1968.

The school was “so packed” the entire year level had to be bussed to Brunswick South West Primary every day.

“We had no association with our home school so, on Fridays, the principal insisted that all the teachers go to the pub and he shouted everyone a drink so we could get to know our colleagues,” she said.

From there, she moved to Brighton Primary School where she recalls watching the 1969 moon landing in the classroom on portable black and white television sets.

“The principal told the kids ‘if you’ve got your own little TV, bring it in because we can’t have everyone crowded around one 17” screen’,” she said.

“Well, because it was Brighton, probably half my class brought in a TV.”

After all her years educating future generations — including stints at Elsternwick, Ripponlea, Jells Park, Hughesdale, St Kilda and Elwood primary schools — one thing still holds true for the trained teacher librarian.

“Books are everything,” she said.

“I’ve taught children from all walks of life, including some with shocking backgrounds, but those children can escape whatever background they’ve had using books.

“I said to them ‘if you learn to read you can be in prison or wherever and still read — it’s the one thing you can do that nobody can take away from you and it opens up the world for you’.”



Ms Meren with Elwood Primary Year 2 students Saffron and Baxter.

Ms Meren said her favourite book to read to the class was *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein, admitting it brought tears to her eyes each time she gets to the last page where just a stump of the tree remains.

“I cry because that to me signified what a mother is — she’ll give everything including her trunk for her child,” she said.

“I say to my kids, ‘no matter what you do, your mother will support you, she will love you and if she needed to give you her heart she would’.”

The teaching stalwart also has a strict lesson for parents whose children want to watch TV or play with iPads before school — “do not let them do it”.

“Tell them to read or play with Lego or get a blanket and cover the table and pretend it’s a cubbyhouse,” she said.



Ms Meren says “children are the same everywhere”. Picture: Norm Oorloff
“Because the moment they use something electronic, their brain is concentrating so hard that they get to school and they’re zonked out.

“I can walk into a room and instantly tell who’s been using electronics because they’re the ones sitting there exhausted at 9am.

“I’m not against technology and I use it a lot when I teach, but not for a child before school.”

Ms Meren, who has two daughters and one grandson of her own, said she had no plans to retire anytime soon.

“Not unless my brain stops or my body stops somehow,” she said.

Ms Meren’s service to public education was recognised by the Department of Education at a ceremony at the Grand Hyatt on July 21.