

Managing Your Child's Online Learning During the Pandemic, Part 1

The toll of the COVID-19 pandemic stretches on as many schools in the Quad Cities and nationwide are going fully online or opting for a hybrid system consisting of both online and in-school learning. Young children are stuck at home, attempting to learn from their laptops and computers, while parents are expected to oversee their education.

No one can be sure exactly when children will return back to the classroom full time, but in the meantime, it is okay to admit that helping with your child's online learning is hard! To help make at-home learning productive and manageable, target the specific challenges you and your child face and consider trying out some of our suggested ideas.

Challenges for kids

Trouble focusing

For young children especially, remaining focused is one of the biggest challenges of online learning. One study by Canvas in April 2020 highlighted the disproportional challenge for parents of young children, reporting that 62% of parents of kindergarteners and 58% of parents of elementary schoolers admitted they struggled with keeping their child focused on learning at home. Here are some suggestions on ways to help your child focus:



- *Create a workspace*

Section out a small space in your home designated solely for your child's learning area. Whether it is a desk or a spot on the floor, make sure your child knows when they are sitting there, it is school time! Keeping their school papers and school supplies there will also help to create a focused learning environment. If you have the room, decorating the space with age-specific learning tools such as maps, the alphabet, grammar reminders, and multiplication charts can help to create a classroom-at-home feeling.

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- *Maintain a schedule*

Routines give children a sense of stability and security. If your child's school has independent learning and, therefore, the responsibility of creating a schedule for learning lies with you, still try to keep your child on a routine similar to their typical school day by maintaining a consistent wake-up time and learning start time. Write down their class schedule on a calendar or poster so they can see their tasks and know what they will be working on at what time.

- *Schedule brain breaks*

Be sure to section out time for breaks during the day. Children are not developmentally ready to sit still and be focused for hours, especially when learning online, so they will need some time to give their brains a rest. During these short breaks, let your child relax by going outside or playing with their toys, allowing them to reset.

- *Limit distractions*

Stay away from any electronic devices that are not necessary for learning. These devices impede their focus and decrease productivity. Make sure the television is turned off, even if only in the background, so there is no temptation to watch. Also, reduce distractions by making sure that there are no toys in their workspace.

Losing Motivation

Without other children or teachers, and because they are cooped up at home, your child might become frustrated or unmotivated to continue learning remotely. Here are some ways to keep them motivated:

- *Incentivize*

Inspire your child to stay focused on their work by giving them something to look forward to. Tell your child if they finish their homework sheet or put in a good effort for the next period, they will have time to play with a special toy, watch an episode of a television show, or pick out their afternoon snack.

- *Give positive feedback*

Don't forget to let your child know when they have done something right or well. Positive reinforcement validates their efforts and shows them that you are proud of their work. Whether you

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verbally praise your child (“excellent job on your homework”), or place stickers or draw smiley faces on quizzes on which they did well, your child will feel encouraged and motivated.

Feeling Isolated

When kids go to school, they get to talk, play, and interact with other children. During this pandemic, being isolated from their friends is difficult, and your child likely will start to feel lonely. Here are some suggestions to help your kid stay connected:

- *Arrange safe playdates*

While the pandemic makes it difficult to safely see others, you can still set up outdoor get-togethers for your child with other kids. Connecting with friends, whether they are riding bicycles, playing on the swings, or having fun with chalk, will likely boost your child’s mood.

- *Video call friends*

FaceTime or Skype video call friends won’t be as physically stimulating as in-person interactions, your child will still appreciate getting to see their friends’ faces. Consistently making sure your child can socialize weekly if not daily, is critical for your young child’s development, as well as their happiness.

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Come back for Part 2, where we will discuss common challenges for parents!

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Originally posted on the Now What? Blog on 10.9.20 The Now What? Blog served for nearly 7 years to

1. Normalize parents seeking support and help as a manner of child abuse prevention
2. Engage community in how they can work to prevent child abuse
3. Work to build resiliency in families through promotion of the 5 protective factors

Maybe you coach a baseball team or you help care for the neighbor kids from time to time. You are investing in the safety and security of the children in our community. Because it truly does take a village to raise our children, we want to offer the tools needed to bring awareness and education to preventing child abuse.

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