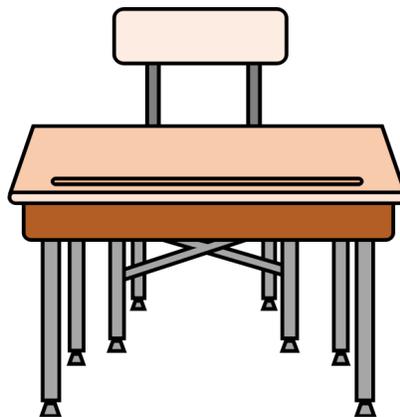


Resource Guide

Tips and Tools:

Strategies for Successful

Distance Learning for Young Students



Compiled by:
Jenny Michaelson, Ph.D.
Marieka Schotland, Ph.D.
Piera Willner, M.S., CCC-SLP

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INTRODUCTION

Distance learning is tough. It is hard on kids, parents and teachers. Everyone is working hard to make the best of this unprecedented and difficult situation. We gathered a group of parents to find out about their most pressing issues around distance learning. This resource guide summarizes the ideas shared during our Parent Workshop: *Tips and Tools: Strategies for Successful Distance Learning for Young Students* on Tuesday, September 15, 2020. The event was presented by the Contra Costa Jewish Day School Parent Association and was targeted towards parents of Kindergarten through 3rd graders. Please feel free to share this resource.

Below you will find 6 categories of tips and tools that will help you support your young learners with distance learning. ***Repetition and consistency in all these practices is key to success.***

SECTIONS

1. **Increasing Focus**
2. **Fostering Independence**
3. **Managing Screen Time**
4. **Promoting Social Interaction**
5. **Increasing Communication, Community and Growth Mindset**
6. **Additional Resources**

1. Increasing Focus

- Seating/positioning
 - Provide appropriate seating choices
 - Use pillows to make a big chair work better/fit
 - Allow stretches or standing during video calls
 - Allow opportunities for your child to lie on their belly to complete work
 - Provide the right distance to the screen your child is accessing
 - Make sure your child can reach easily to mute and unmute during Zoom calls

- Brain breaks and Zoom fatigue
 - Encourage your child to switch activities when they are overwhelmed
 - Teach your child to stop and try again later
 - Teach breathing techniques like 4-7-8 breathing (breathe in through nose for 4 counts, hold for 7, release through mouth for 8)
 - Do something active - tape an obstacle course to the floor, do timed running, go outside and find plants in the colors of the rainbow
 - Have a cool down/take a break spot with pillows, blankets and stuffed animals
 - Give a break when THEY need it not necessarily only when it is scheduled
 - Know their signs
 - They may say: "I'm bored/I'm tired"
 - They may get super wiggly
 - They may be completely off task
 - Offer quick movement choices
 - Running in place
 - Stretches - touch toes then reach to the sky
 - Give yourself a hug
 - Have snacks and water accessible

- Reduce distractions
 - Visual considerations:
 - Make it a part of your day and your child's day to prep their workspace
 - Clear away toys and materials that will not be needed.
 - Place supplies in reach, but off the tabletop ([ie. Wall Organizer](#))
 - Face your child toward a wall, facing away from parents/siblings/windows/other distractions
 - Auditory considerations:
 - Reduce the amount of background noise as much as possible
 - Offer noise-canceling headphones

2. Fostering Independence

- Visuals
 - To organize your child's time
 - Use visual representations such as photos/drawings/icons/designated colors on schedules and include your child in selecting them
 - Keep visual consistent, such as a big blue Z for Zoom calls
 - To signify when you are available and when you're not
 - Take time to teach your child that a certain photo/drawing/icon/designated color indicates your availability to help them
 - Make a sign to hang on your door, tape to your computer, or even to wear around your neck that indicates that you are working or with another child; over time you can teach them that when that sign or visual indicator is up, they need to wait until you are free

- **Workspace**

- Provide a space for your child that is nearby you but not right next to you
 - If you have multiple young learners, having them all in the same room or close by may help them feel supported (through your proximity)
- Have your child wear headphones so that you can't hear what's happening, thus reducing the temptation to swoop in at the first sign of distress

- **Requests for help**

- Support productive struggles
 - Teachers value children learning to problem solve on their own. It can be hard to see our children struggle, but it is part of the learning process and important information for teachers know
 - Teach your child to try and solve any problem they have with schoolwork, rather than you just doing it for them. Teachers need to know what is authentic work, so they can differentiate instruction
 - Set an expectation that they should try first (at least three times) and then ask for help
 - Use popsicle sticks or a checklist to represent each attempt
 - Encourage your children to ask their teachers for help, even if you are right there

- **Prepare materials in advance**

- Help your child read the schedule
 - Find a system that works for you and your child (see above for ideas for visuals)
- Prep snacks ahead of time and have them accessible
- Set up an activity jar of independent activities (pre-selected by your child), so your child can pull one out from the jar when they are done with school or are stuck and needing your attention when you are not available

- Reset school supplies at the end of the day so they are ready for the next day
- Organize work packets from teachers so that each day's work is ready and available ahead of time.
- Provide a stylus for completing activities on tablets or print out assignments on paper that require more fine motor skills
- Provide instruction and mentorship
 - Teach your child how to log into Zoom, independently
 - Set a timer for Zoom calls with 2-3 minutes of transition to allow for the time it takes to run to the bathroom and then log in
 - Teach your children how to share their work through Seesaw or the format their teachers are using
 - Provide practice and initial supervision for them to take pictures of their work
 - At this developmental age, children are often seeking opportunities for independence so providing lots of chances grows that skill

3. Managing Screen Time

- Zoom Fatigue
 - Be intentional about using school breaks to make sure that your child gets away from the screen for the duration each break
 - Print assignments so your child can complete them by hand rather than on the screen, when possible and appropriate
 - Give their eyes a break
 - Have your child look away from the screen at regular intervals
 - Have your child listen rather than look when activities permit

- Take a day off from the screen/school, if needed
- Schedule screen-free periods throughout the day and make them part of the daily routine
 - Provide screen-free time after the school day is over
 - Podcasts and audiobooks are possible screen-free activities
- After the screen-free time is over and your child wants personal screen time, encourage "active" screen activities, like learning a new skill, viewing a read aloud on YouTube, playing an educational game, using the apps shared by their teachers, connecting with family and friends through Facetime/Zoom

4. Promoting Social Interaction

- Set up Facetime/Zoom playdates
 - You may need to oversee these at first, until they get the hang of it
 - Suggested activities include that promote interactions:
 - Dress up
 - Fashion show
 - I Spy
 - Dance party
 - Card and board games that can be adapted if both households have the same game (e.g., Battleship, Out Foxed, UNO)
- Suggested school based options
 - Ask your child's teacher to buddy up kids during learning sessions so they can get to know each other
 - Request some small group learning sessions where students can interact with one another

- Community gatherings, including birthday party ideas:
 - Socially distanced dance party at a park
 - Socially distanced bike rides

- Find one or two kids to be part of a playdate pod
 - Schedule indoor/outdoor playdates within your pod, depending on your comfort level

5. Increasing Communication, Community and Growth Mindset

- Communication
 - Reach out to your child's teachers when you need clarification about work and expectations or when something isn't working for your child
 - Check in daily with your child about school
 - Share what was hard and what went well and brainstorm solutions
 - Provide immediate specific feedback to your child to highlight positive behaviors:
 - "You really stayed focused today in math and I saw that you worked through something challenging."
 - "I am grateful that you were able to get your own snack today while I was working, that was really helpful."
 - Reinforce behaviors that you want to see again and again
 - Express gratitude to your student, their teachers, your community, and you

- Community
 - Make a What's App group with other parents in your class to share tips and tools.
 - It helps to know you aren't alone

- Stay in communication with your child's teachers, as needed
- Use your resources
 - Seek help from your school, your friends, an educational specialist, or parent coach (www.truenorthparentcoaching.com)
- Growth Mindset
 - Model a growth mindset for your child
 - Talk about how mistakes are opportunities for learning
 - Demonstrate examples of how you make mistakes and how you fix them
 - Reinforce that together you can do hard things that you've never done before

6. Additional Resources

- If your child is experiencing ***anxiety*** these resources may help:
 - *Freeing Your Child from Anxiety: Powerful, Practical Solutions to Overcome Your Child's Fears, Worries, and Phobias*, by Tamar Chansky, Ph.D
 - *What to Do When You Worry Too Much*, by Dawn Huebner
 - This is [a great list](#) of books to read with kids about anxiety
- If you'd like more tips for ***seating, positioning and movement***, please check out this helpful resource which includes photographs: [Tips for distance learning](#)