



REMOTE
LEARNING

Wayfinder

September 2020

8 Tips to Help Your Child Focus and Stay Engaged During Distance Learning

As schools are faced with the challenge of providing learning opportunities for all students at a distance, parents are called on to be more involved than ever before, particularly for their younger learners and those with learning challenges and disabilities. Maintaining high levels of engagement can be challenging even for savvy adult learners.

Here are eight tips to help your child maintain focus and stay engaged during this time of distance learning.

1. Understand the expectation for distance learning.

How much time should students spend online for learning purposes? There are screen time considerations for all students, and older students can handle longer amounts of time than younger students. Your child's teacher or school should provide some guidance for what is reasonable. For young children, interaction and play are valuable for learning.

2. Determine what type of activities work best for your child.

Are there certain types of distance learning activities that your child prefers over others? For example, does your child work better with synchronous activities where they respond to a live instructor, or in person sitting one-on-one with you? What learning platforms seems to engage your child more than others? The answers to these questions can be valuable for you and your child's teacher to help plan for learning experiences that work best for your child.

Con't on pg. 2



this issue

8 Tips to Help Your Child Focus and Stay Engaged During Distance Learning	P.1
Remote Learning with DCS – We're in This Together	P.1
Making Room for Well-Being	P.1
8 Tips to Help Your Child Focus (con't)	P.2
How to Set Up a Virtual or Homeschool Learning	P.2
How to Set Up a Virtual or Homeschool Learning	P.3
Local Resources for Home Learning	P.3
Space Materials/Supplies	P.3
8 Tips to Help Your Child Focus (con't)	P.4
Food for Thought: Learning Styles	P.4
Newsletter Sources	P.4

Remote Learning with DCS – We're in This Together

Everyone is anxious. Teachers worry that they won't be able to connect with their students in an online setting. Parents are struggling to figure out how to help their child learn remotely while working full-time. Concerned administrators are working around the clock to meet the needs of all students equitably while providing quality education. Students miss their friends and the normalcy of a regular school year.

But take a deep breath and know that you're not alone. Dexter Community Schools is just that – a community. As part of this community, you have access to the support and resources you need to help your student succeed during this unusual school year. Reach out to DCS at any time with questions, suggestions or feedback. We are here to support all our students. Educate, Develop, Inspire – they're not just words, they're our mission.

MAKING ROOM FOR WELL-BEING

Be a good friend to yourself.

- If your kid gets caught up saying negative things about themselves, encourage self-kindness by asking them what they would say to a friend in the same situation.
- The same goes for you: We often beat ourselves up as parents, but what would a good friend say to you? What would you say to your friend?
- Try creating a gratitude list together to give you a fresh perspective and focus.

Get help when you need it.

- You won't always know how to help your kid. Think about who could help fill in the gaps -- look to family, friends, teachers, and others for help. Sometimes having another adult take over removes the tricky parent/kid homework battle dynamic and lets you go back to just being a parent.
- Communicate with the school about how things are going, leading with positives first. Everyone's doing their best, AND it's important for teachers to know what's working and not working for your kid so they can get the help they need.

Use movement and humor.

- Sometimes we just need to move our bodies. Physical activity can lift our spirits and get our minds refreshed for learning. Try a lunchtime block walk or a 5-minute dance party to help everyone reset and bring new energy to the day.
- Finding the funny right now is helpful on every front, including learning and well-being. Be silly, make wacky connections, come up with crazy answers so your kids correct you -- whatever works!

8 Tips to Help Your Child Focus and Stay Engaged During Distance Learning

(continued from pg. 1)

3. Encourage movement.

Kids need to move their bodies frequently throughout the day. Allow time for exercise before your child is expected to focus on a distance learning task. Some children are able to better focus on tasks when standing. Consider having your computer or tablet be on a raised surface so that your child can stand.

4. Reduce distractions.

Where possible, reduce distractions when your child is completing schoolwork. This includes noise as well as visual noise or clutter. A designated workspace that is comfortable for your child will be helpful.

5. Adjust your schedule as needed.

If your child is frustrated — or alternately, if your child is very engaged in learning — make a change in your schedule to allow for a break (and revisit at a later day or time) or to spend time delving deeper into the topic. Some learning activities will be easier to move through than others. Consider working with your child on those activities or subjects that are more difficult during the times of day when your child is most alert and engaged. Learning material that is easier for a child, and therefore moved through more quickly, can be completed at a different time (such as in the afternoon or even another day).

6. Use a checklist for focus.

For some children who struggle with focus, a basic visual checklist of tasks needed for a particular activity will be helpful. For example, if the child is asked to watch a lesson, read a prompt, and then provide a written response to the prompt, the checklist would have keywords for each of these required activities: watch, read, write. The child would check off each task as it is completed, and receive some positive praise when finished.

Con't on pg. 4



How to Set Up a Virtual or Homeschool Learning Space for Kids

Boost learning at home by setting up a brand-new space for your child that will help them feel focused and comfortable.

The first day of school is just around the corner and the upcoming academic year brings with it the possibility of extended virtual learning.

The best way to prep for it? Upgrade your home-learning environment. We talked with experts to get their best tips for creating a comfortable, functional workstation for your child.



LINE THEM UP

With a free wall and mounted shelves, you can organize a single homework zone that does the job for several kids. *Give each child a designated shelf so there's no confusion about which items belong to whom.*

SET UP SHOP

Empower your child by giving them a say, says Karen Aronian, Ed.D., of Aronian Educational Design LLC, a firm that designs learning spaces. While some more-distractable kids may prefer a desk in their room, most preschoolers and elementary-age children want to be where the action is, Aronian says. Bonus: They'll be closer to you, so you can field questions and help them stay on task. Consider converting a little-used dining room into a learning area. *"Having a separate space helps kids get into a different mindset so they can show up ready to focus,"* says Julie Morgenstern, a professional organizer and author of *Time to Parent*. Don't have a spare room? Not a problem, experts say. Add a small table in the family room, designate a corner of the kitchen, or repurpose a nook under the stairs.

SORT IT OUT

We all know how quickly any kids' area can get lost under worksheets, arts and crafts, or tubs of slime. *But the more cluttered the desktop, the harder it will be for your child to focus.* Store papers and art supplies in bins in a nearby cabinet or on a shelf. Use labels or clear containers so kids can keep up the sorting system. Let them grab high-use items like pencils from a desktop organizer or buckets hanging from a rail above the desk. "They don't want to take off a lid or open a drawer," says Kathy Jenkins, owner of the company Come to Order and a Certified Professional Organizer who helps prep homes and students. A corkboard provides a place for reminders and a calendar.

SIZE ACCORDINGLY

Your child may seem comfy sprawled on their bed, but an ergonomic setup is crucial for posture to instill good habits and to support writing skills, says Sari Ockner, a pediatric occupational therapist in Los Angeles. *"If they don't have proper body position when they're writing, they have to work harder, and it's more likely you're going to see messy handwriting."* When your child is sitting, the desk should be at or slightly below resting elbow height, says Ola Sinelnikova, an ergonomist and kinesiologist for Humanscale, an ergonomic office furniture company. Their feet should be firmly planted on the floor. Adjustable or kid-size tables and chairs are great, but you can hack adult ones, Sinelnikova says. First, place a pillow on the seat of the chair and another one behind the child's back to push them forward until their knees extend about 2 inches in front of the chair. Then set a box on the floor to support their feet so that their thighs are almost parallel to the ground.

TRANSFORM A CORNER

You don't need a killer view and elegant drapes to pull it off, either. Just fluff up some floor pillows to make it comfy enough to curl up with an iPad or book. If there's no natural light from a window, add a sconce or even a stick-on, battery-powered tap light. (cont. on pg. 3)





How to Set Up a Virtual or Homeschool Learning Space for Kids

(continued from pg. 2)

BLOCK DISTRACTIONS

Your house is full of them, starting with your student's little siblings. If siblings are having trouble sharing a space, separate their desks with a tall bookshelf. If they're seated at the same table, prop up tri-fold boards, tabletop screens you can buy or DIY out of a cardboard box. If the sibling is a wandering toddler, it may be best to keep them behind a baby gate. As for an older sibling's ear-crushing Minecraft playing, a white-noise machine or a fan will drown out background sound. Noise-canceling headphones are effective, especially since some kids enjoy studying to music, Aronian says. Stick to instrumental because research shows that songs with lyrics negatively affect concentration. For a child with attention difficulties, orient their workspace so that they face a wall rather than into a room or out a window. Ockner recommends having your child sit on an inflatable wiggle seat or an exercise ball if they have trouble staying still and focused.

Another expert idea to steal: Fill a bowl with fidget toys your child can grab when he's feeling restless. Add things like a smooth stone, gummy erasers, a stress ball, or a few LEGO pieces.

MAX WHAT YOU'VE GOT

Live in tight quarters? A side table in a hallway can make a nice little desk. Wall-mounted desks save space. Even the floor (with a wall acting as back support) is an option, Aronian says. Use a tray table with legs to give your child a writing surface. (Ergonomics experts say the floor is actually a better option than the couch!) If your kitchen table or counter will be pulling double duty, pack a caddy or a rolling cart with supplies and store it in a kitchen cabinet.

CONSIDER MULTIPLE WORK ZONES

Many experts recommend having different spots for learning in your home—a desk for focused work, the dining table for projects, and a quiet nook for reading. Like adults, kids fare better if they take breaks, switch positions, and have a change of scenery now and then. Studies show that learning in various locations enhances a student's ability to take in and remember information. *"Bodies shouldn't be static,"* Aronian says. *"Kids can learn anywhere."*

Another expert idea to steal: Add a task lamp with an LED bulb to reduce eyestrain. Place it on the opposite side of your child's dominant hand. (If they're a righty, the lamp goes on the left side.)

HACK OUT A NOOK

Turn an awkward alcove or even a little-used closet into a homework hideout. "Take those winter coats out of the closet, put them in a clear box under the bed, add a little desk, and—whammo!—you have a great study spot," Aronian says. Another option is to mount a few floating shelves: one as a work surface and the others for storage.

Another expert idea to steal: Is your kid using a laptop for a Zoom meeting? Place it on a stack of books. "If the laptop monitor is positioned too low relative to the seated eye, your child will end up hunched over," Sinelnikova says. *"Over time, that can strain neck muscles."*

AMP UP STORAGE

If desktop space is limited, go vertical. Install a floating shelf, a rail, or a trendy pegboard next to or above the desk, recommends Jenkins. This keeps everything visible while freeing the work surface from clutter.

Local Resources for Home Learning Space Materials/Supplies

If your go-to stores like Ikea and Target are sold out of home office furnishings, check out these local and low-cost alternatives for second-hand desks, chairs, lamps, storage bins, cork/white boards, etc.:

- A2 PTO Thrift Shop
2280 S Industrial Hwy, A2
- 'Buy it or sell it in Dexter' Facebook group
- 'Buy, trade or sell in AA, Dexter & Chelsea, MI' Facebook group
- Facebook Marketplace
- Habitat for Humanity Restore
6241 Jackson Rd, A2
- Kiwanis Thrift Sale
(reopens 9/19/20)
100 N Staebler Rd, A2
- Salvation Army
1621 S State St, A2
- Share House
5161 Jackson Rd, A2

For art and craft supplies:

- SCRAP Creative Reuse
4567 Washtenaw Ave, A2





8 Tips to Help Your Child Focus and Stay Engaged During Distance Learning

(continued from pg. 2)

7. Give your child (and yourself) a break.

Your teacher does not want your child to be frustrated with or miserable about learning. In fact, teachers spend time trying to make lessons interesting, and tailor instruction to provide the right level of challenge for their students. If something is too challenging, or your child has hit a frustration level, it's okay to stop the activity and give them a break. It's also okay to slow down the pace, which means giving your child time to think and process information. It also means participating in segments of learning one at a time rather than trying to tackle a whole lesson in one sitting.

8. Provide immediate positive feedback.

Each time your child completes distance learning instruction, provide immediate and positive feedback! Something as simple as putting a check mark, star, or sticker on the work assignment can go a long way in helping to motivate your child. And don't forget to celebrate yourself, as you are playing such an important role to help your child learn and grow.

Examples of rewards: praise; stickers; choose a movie; a treat; tablet time; choose a family activity; play with a special toy; free choice time; or an extra 15 minutes to play before bedtime.

Schooling from a distance is as new a territory for teachers as it is for parents. Getting feedback from parents about what is working and where they need additional support is essential.

With creative thinking and effort by teachers and families as partners, children will continue to build their knowledge and skills, but also build confidence and a love for learning.

Food for Thought: Learning Styles

The term learning styles is widely used to describe how learners gather, sift through, interpret, organize, come to conclusions about, and "store" information for further use. There are well over 70 different learning styles schemes, most of which are supported by a thriving industry devoted to publishing learning-styles tests and guidebooks and professional development workshops for teachers and educators.



Despite the variation in categories, the fundamental idea behind learning styles is the same: that each of us has a specific learning style (sometimes called a "preference"), and we learn best when information is presented to us in this style.

Below are definitions of seven learning styles that may be helpful when assisting your child with their distance learning.

Visual 	Visual learners do well when they use symbols, boxes, charts, and colors in their notes. If you find that you learn better by reading and looking at pictures, diagrams and graphs etc. the chances are you're a visual learner.
Verbal 	Techniques used by verbal learners are reciting information out loud, writing your own notes and highlighting the key points. Having a passion for words, writing, tongue twisters, rhymes, may indicate that this learning style is for you.
Aural 	Aural learning involves using sound and music. Auditory learners develop understanding and memory by hearing and listening. If you find it easier to understand spoken instructions rather than reading, aural learning will benefit you.
Physical 	Physical learning involves using your body and sense of touch to learn. Physical learners learn by doing, touching, moving, building, and are described as a 'hands-on'. If you find it difficult to sit still for long periods of time, chances are you're a physical learner.
Logical 	Logical learners often learn by asking a lot of questions. Logical learners want to understand the whole picture. They are natural thinkers who learn by classifying, categorizing and thinking abstractly about patterns & relationships etc.
Social 	Social learners prefer to learn in groups rather than on their own, and like generating ideas by brainstorming with others. If you like taking part in group sports and prefer social activities than doing things on your own, you may be a social learner.
Solitary 	Solitary learners tend to be more independent and introspective, spending a lot of time on their own, enjoying their own company. If you enjoy spending time alone, keeping a journal and engaging in self-analysis to gain a deeper understanding of yourself, you may be a solitary learner.

Newsletter Sources

7 Different Types Of Learning Styles Infographic

<https://elearninginfographics.com/7-different-types-of-learning-styles-infographic/>

8 Tips to Help Your Child Focus and Stay Engaged During Distance Learning

Linda Carling, Ed.D., John Hopkins University School of Education Center for Technology in Education

<https://education.jhu.edu/2020/04/8tipsforfocus/>

How to Set Up a Virtual or Homeschool Learning Space for Kids

Michelle Crouch, Parents Magazine

<https://www.parents.com/kids/education/back-to-school/how-to-set-up-a-virtual-learning-space-at-home-for-kids/>

Learning Styles

Nancy Chick, Vanderbilt University, Center for Teaching Assistant Director

<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/learning-styles-preferences/>

Parent Tips and Tricks for Distance Learning

Christina Elgersma, Senior Editor, Parent Education Common Sense Media

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/articles/parent-tips-and-tricks-for-distance-learning>