

Ways to Support Your Child's Teacher During Online Learning

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With many schools beginning the 2020-2021 school year online or utilizing some combination of face to face and distance learning, teachers, parents, and students are adapting to an entirely new form of school this fall. While the general public may at first glance think that teaching online is easier for educators, that couldn't be farther from the truth! In the past month, teachers across the country have had to pivot and turn to unfamiliar teaching tools, all while transform teaching practices and lesson plans into something that can be presented through a screen. All considered, it can be a tough transition for both families and educators.

As we get settled into this new school year, parents may be reevaluating their own roles when it comes to their kids' education. Let's take a look at 10 ways to help your child's teacher as we think more deeply about the importance of parental support in teaching!

Encourage your kids to communicate with teachers directly versus doing it yourself

As many educators are parents themselves, they understand completely; sometimes it's just easier and quicker to reach out to a child's teacher directly! However, children must learn at some point to approach their teachers and ask questions to clear up confusion or to seek clarification. Instead of going straight to your email app, take the time to ask your child if they asked about what to do on that confusing assignment. Encourage children from a young age to reach out to instructors during class, or to attend office hours or available tutorials. If as a parent you have a question that cannot be asked by children, by all means reach out to the teacher for help.



Avoid negative talk about school or teachers while in earshot of children

It probably goes without saying that everyone is a little frustrated with online learning and classes this fall. Between technological difficulties and varying district expectations and plans for virtual learning, both teachers and parents may be frustrated by the decisions that come from the top. However, it's crucial to remember that our kids should not bear any of that frustration. In fact, children should know that school staff are doing

everything in their power to make this school year successful and fun, even if at times things go wrong.

Avoid talking negatively about your child's district, school, or teachers in front of them so that they don't internalize complex frustrations that they are too young to understand. Instead, focus only on helping kids connect with instructors and classes in a positive way so they remain encouraged and motivated to do their best!

Set the standard for safety precautions

Perhaps your local school district is returning face to face, or is in some phase of returning to class, whether full time or on a hybrid basis. Eventually, the goal is to get all kids back into the classroom, so the return is only inevitable. When classes resume in person, districts will all have their own standards for health and safety that may include masks, hand sanitizer, and social distancing.

That's what makes it so important for parents to model proper safety precautions, regardless of political affiliations or personal beliefs. For a quicker and smoother transition back to the classroom, read up on your district's phase-in plans, and set the standard for taking the proper precautions by modeling this behavior or having a talk with children about what is to come.

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Set a morning and evening routine and stick to it

Think about your family's routine back before the pandemic began. More than likely, the kids had a routine in the morning upon waking, and before bedtime, too. Even though your child may be learning from home, it's important to give children the structure of the usual school day. With that said, set a routine, just as you might for when school is in session outside of the home. Wake up early enough to eat a healthy breakfast, and based on the daily school schedule, check for morning assignments, office hours, or tutoring sessions.

Likewise, in the evening, determine a healthy bedtime structure and routine. Turn down the lights or remove the screens as your family sees fit. Regardless of individual choices, make it as close as possible to how it might be if school was in session under normal conditions.

Be honest with teachers and offer constructive feedback

Teachers know that for younger children, parents often must listen in to support the littlest of learners through their classes. In addition, educators are also struggling to reinvent lesson plans and present them virtually, and they are also learning something completely new. Be honest with instructors about what is and is not working for your child. Offer constructive feedback and ask questions politely to help support your student. Avoid making complaints or venting to educators who are also struggling to adapt to something new.



Remember that teachers and parents are on the same side

It's only natural as humans, that sometimes our own opinions and beliefs are colored by our own personal experiences. And for some of us, school wasn't always a pleasant experience. However, education has come a long way over the years, and teachers are undoubtedly on the parent's side, now more than ever before! Educators are always looking for ways to connect with students and to help them forge a love of learning that will last a lifetime. Don't forget that teachers are on your side and want kids to learn.

Reach out when you feel the need, and let instructors know about circumstances that affect their learning as they arise.

Ensure, if possible, that kids are working on schoolwork during the school day

Districts are all over the place when it comes to their synchronous and asynchronous work requirements. Regardless of where your school's policies land on the map, ensure that students have a safe space to complete work during the normal school day. This is important because class resources, as well as teachers are ordinarily only available during the business day. In many cases, tech support or specific apps may only work during school hours. Lastly, it helps set the standard that the school day is for learning and keeps children in a reliable routine. While some work may be due in the evening, have kids complete it during the day, if at all possible.

Make social and emotional health a priority

Have your kids been upset that they haven't been able to get out and play with their friends? While recess doesn't seem like the most important school subject, it certainly is a must for children to socialize and play. As a result of the pandemic, kids have been struggling with social and emotional issues since schools were shuttered in March. If your child is having trouble with motivation or keeping up with academic work, be sure to check on their emotional wellbeing, and give them the support they need.



Check in on technology to make sure that it is working properly

If your family is like most, there's a good chance that your children have encountered technological glitches at some point since school began! Whether it's trouble getting connected to the district network, or being kicked out of Zoom or Microsoft Teams, there have been many problems with the rollout of new class policies and apps. For that reason, it's always a good idea to check in with your children's' devices, be it their own laptop, or a school-owned Chromebook. Make sure that it still reliably connects to the internet properly, and that it has installed all necessary updates to keep it in tiptop shape.

Help keep kids organized

In school, children learn to use folders, binders, notebooks, and planners to keep assignments organized. But with everything online, it could be tough for little learners to stay organized. To keep things in line, create a checklist or chart of weekly assignments, and teach kids to organize photos, videos, and files on a laptop or iPad. As your child's first teacher, give them the tools to organize their space and learning to help prepare them for success!

Whether your kid's classes are in-person, online, or somewhere in between, as a parent it's important to help support teachers during this new and very unique school year. Follow the tips above to help make this year a smooth one as your child navigates new learning methods with their teachers!

