

# Coping with Changes

*Brought by COVID-19*



## Managing Learning at Home for Elementary and Middle School-Aged Kids

With little preparation or warning, parents have been thrust into roles of managing their kids' learning while balancing their own work and household responsibilities. School districts vary widely in their approach to supporting learning at home. Some have sent home materials and directions while others are offering access to asynchronous (not live) or synchronous (live) educational resources. Parents are finding that even if districts offer digital resources, the systems are overloaded and not always reliable. Patience is critical. As you navigate this new terrain, a few recommendations:

1. Set realistic expectations for yourself as well as your kids. These are not snow days nor are you going to cover the same material in the same way that your child's teacher would in the classroom. A guideline – for elementary children, don't expect more than 2 hours/day of online learning. For middle school, up to 3 hours/day is reasonable. You know your child best as to whether this is too little or too much time.
2. If your school has provided a full, daily schedule, encourage your child to use break times to get up and move around - maybe even do a chore or two.
3. Make a schedule that works for your family. It might work best to carve out a few hours to support your child's learning that is not at the same time that you are maximally engaged in your own work.
4. School-based learning varies greatly. As a start, review the materials in advance of giving them to your child. Check to see if there are videos that explain the resources. Your child may already be familiar with format and structure of the resources sent home!
5. After completing any school-based curriculum, a great idea is to engage your child in Choice Boards. See: <https://sites.google.com/view/rtwdistancelearning/choice-boards?authuser=0>

Educators Kristin Ziemke and Katie Muhtar have created a terrific website for educators that parents will find incredibly helpful. They feature choice boards in English or Spanish. Using these boards, kids can have fun drawing, take a virtual field trip, make a song, listen to a book being read by a favorite author, or observe an animal or place. At the bottom of the home page of the website is a long list of websites and apps for digital articles and books.

6. Don't forget to have fun with your kids away from a screen. After the "formal" school day ends, pull out a board game or a puzzle and gather the whole family together.
7. Schedule time to be with nature! Nature is good for us - it soothes and heals, and can help relieve anger, fear and stress. Even when it is not possible to be outdoors in nature, there are many benefits to connecting to the natural world in other, creative ways. Explore the Children & Nature Network website for resources and ideas.
8. Helping your child understand what is happening with Covid-19 is important. Listen for questions. If they are not asking any, ask them if they understand what is happening and if they have questions. Tailor your responses to match what they are capable of understanding and avoid over-sharing. Focus on whatever concern your child has at the moment. If they are asking about groceries, why they can't see their grandparents or why you are working at home, answer the question(s) that have been asked. Reinforce that your role as a parent is to keep your child safe and that as a family, you are going to follow the rules.
9. As stressful as these times are, celebrate the time you have to be together and find ways to creatively learn together.