ONLINE LEARNING: Top 10 tips for parents



LEARNING COMMUNITY

Online learning: Top 10 tips for parents

With in-school classes suspended for the foreseeable future because of COVID-19, many parents, teachers and students in British Columbia are navigating new ways of keeping kids learning while maintaining the provincial and federal governments directives for social distancing.

As a parent, you already have the two key attributes for being great teachers: you love your children and you want them to master real life. Your role is to support your children as they learn. In distributed learning, this presents different opportunities than what are available in traditional, bricks-and-mortar school environments.

Drawing on our 20 years of experience providing successful blended and distance learning to B.C. children that meets the BC Ministry of Education's objectives and goals, we share our expertise with you here. The 10 tips listed below capture the successful strategies, approaches and best practices that our parents rely on to ensure learners are learning, meet Ministry of Education requirements, and are engaged in their own learning.



- Z Recognize that learning happens all the time
- 3 Learn your children's patterns
- Practise skills in areas of strength
- **Get outside and into nature**
- **b** Immerse yourselves in good stories
 - Don't confuse quality with quantity
- 8 Have your children set goals, then make them manageable
- **9** Use computers as tools to expose your child to new ideas and practise skills
- Be gentle with yourself

1

Understand that relationship is important and sets the stage for learning

The relationship between you, your young learner and the teacher is key in distributed learning. Connect with your child about their interests and through shared experiences. Connect with the teacher about the learning taking place. Your input and observations help to shape the path forward and allow the teacher to assess learning. 2

Recognize that learning happens all the time

Cooking, baking, bathtime, family walks, online games and apps, video chats – these are all opportunities for learning and connection.

3

Learn your children's patterns

Know how long your kids can work independently before needing love, reassurance or a break, and use that time to get household chores, your own work, and so on, done. Remember that young people are also affected by self-isolation, and their usual cycle of attachment may vary due to stress, anxiety or change in routine. Be patient and put connection first. Older children and teens can help shape their own routines.

4

Practise skills in areas of strength

What does your child like doing? What is their strongest way to gain information (reading, viewing, being online, learning from books)? How do they prefer to express their understanding (visuals, writing, orally)? Give your young learner ownership and choice; let them choose their topics, when and how long they spend on each topic, how they will engage, how to show

5

Get outside and into nature

Take time to observe deeply. Watch a ground squirrel poke its nose out of the ground, watch a bird chasing a worm, or watch the sun rise. These things can all be done while observing safe social distancing.

6

Immerse yourselves in good stories

Listen to and share good stories, read them, draw them, act them out, and so on. If all you do in a day is read a good book out loud or together with your child, that is enough. Older children and teens may benefit from novels, book series, podcasts or audio books they can listen to independently.

Don't confuse quality with quantity

Sprinkle focused learning time throughout the day, and make sure there are lots of breaks for play or virtually connecting with peers. It is okay to not have something scheduled for every minute of the day. Boredom is a gateway to curiosity – when your kids are bored, they'll seek out ways to engage themselves. And remember that 'play' is learning.

9

Use computers as tools to expose your child to new ideas and practise skills

Balancing learning time with time for learners to integrate and engage with the ideas they've seen online is important. Remember to monitor your child's use of online community spaces and resources – safety is important. Older children can play a more active role in curating resources and developing their media literacy.

8

Have your children set goals, then make them manageable

Chunk the goals down into smaller pieces and work on those. Divide a piece of paper into four and write Body, Heart, Mind, Spirit – then help your kids set an attainable meaningful goal for themselves in each area.

10

Be gentle with yourself

If this is new for you, accept that it takes time to build a sustainable rhythm to your home learning day and that bumps and challenges will happen. That's okay. And don't forget that the teacher is there to support you through the changes to your child's education.



Denus tips for parents

Here are a few additional tips to help you navigate at-home learning.

- Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know. Let's find out!"
- Don't be afraid to ask, "What do you want to learn?"
- Say yes as much as possible in relation to learning This is especially important when your young learner is asking for connection from you.
- Don't feel you must recreate the in-class experience at home Your home is a different environment, with different inputs, influences and opportunities to further support learning.
- ✓ Be curious! Model learning for your kids by learning new things yourself.
- ✓ Pay attention to the questions your children ask Write them down, research them.
- Instead of answering a question, say, "That's a good question. How can we find the answer?"
- Create a question of the day to answer and solve Riddles, science questions, and problems to solve can all be fun ways to engage together.
- Use many ways to make thinking visible You don't have to do a worksheet to show you know something.
 Instead, have a conversation, create a piece of art, write a story, or build a model.

Search Bonus tip for parents of older children and teens

Project-based learning is a great way to allow older children to work independently toward their own goals and interests. Allowing your older child or teen to develop an idea for a project, create a plan, complete the project, and share it with the family and their teacher will give them an empowering sense of ownership and responsibility for their own learning.



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