

Supporting Learning at Home: a Guide for Parents and Other Providers of Care

During the pandemic, teaching and learning in Oakland County school districts has been happening in a mix of at-home and in-school settings. When school is remote or hybrid, parents and caregivers have been wrestling with how to foster their children's well-being, nurture skills for school and life, and engage in academics with their children. The resources in this guide provide three high leverage practices for supporting learning at home.

Fostering Well Being

**Nurturing Skills for School
and Life**

Engaging in Academics

Fostering Well Being

After months of navigating a global pandemic, parents and caregivers are yearning for [Ideas that Support Well-Being at Home](#). More than anything, we want our children to be safe, happy, and healthy. This feels even more burdensome during times of great stress and difficulty.

From videos and toolkits, to ideas and activities, you will find a vast collection of resources for parents and caregivers to support the well-being of children in pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade. Resources are focused in the following areas:

- [General Well-Being](#): Individual well-being consists of physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual needs that all humans rely upon. Support your child with knowledge and activity that nurtures these areas affecting overall well-being.
- [COVID-19 Specific Resources](#): These are unique circumstances and many organizations have developed resources specific to the well-being challenges and needs that children and families face during the pandemic.
- [Social and Emotional](#): Nurturing social relationships and emotional connections is critical given the physically distant restrictions we are currently managing. Support social and emotional learning at home in a manner consistent to what your child experiences at school.
- [Meditation and Mindfulness](#): Being aware of your own body and feelings give us important information with which to best support ourselves and each other. Explore practices and activities to help your children become more self-aware.
- [Mental Health](#): Specific to your psychological and emotional well-being, mental health reflects our children's ability to think and act as well as our capacity to respond to stress. Find resources to help you recognize when your child might need additional help outside the household and learn how to connect with community mental health services.

- [Physical Activity and Nutrition](#): Our psychological and emotional well-being is directly tied to our physical well-being. Find activities to get your children physically active and information to support proper nutrition.
- [Sex Education](#): Access age-appropriate information related to sex education with which to share and discuss with your child.
- [Safety \(Accidental injury and Interpersonal Violence Prevention\)](#): Help keep your children safe from accidental injury while spending so much time in and around the home.
- [Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Prevention](#): Support healthy choices when it comes to avoiding substance use. Explore resources to inform conversation with your child and to identify warning signs of substance use.

Nurturing Skills for School and Life

Learning in changing environments brings new challenges for learners and those who support them. The good news is that, while the learning environments may change and vary, the skills and tools we can use to strengthen our learners remain the same: positive tools for **motivation** and **organization** are two of the best areas to focus on as we support our learners at home.

Motivation

- [Keeping Kids Motivated for Online Learning](#) Helpful tips and techniques to encourage and motivate your kids during virtual lessons.
- [Tools to Help Kids Stay Focused During Distance Learning](#) This article takes up different obstacles to learning (for example, a kid says “I just need a quick break to check Instagram...”) and poses different strategies and tools to support a solution to the problem.
- [Helping Students with Anxiety, Stress, Feeling Overwhelmed](#) Seth Perler, [Executive Functioning](#) coach, offers specific strategies for parents to help their child interrupt and redirect unhelpful patterns of thinking.
- [Executive Functioning Worksheet for Parents](#) A collection of strategies for parents to use to help their child stay motivated, focused, and organized.

Organization

- [Parent Tips and Tricks for Distance Learning | Common Sense Education](#) This article provides a number of quick and easy tips and tricks for caregivers to support their learners at home. Also includes a link to free templates to help your family stay organized and on track.
- The [Get Ready, Do, Done](#) strategy is incredibly effective for helping students plan and be effective when working independently and on their own.
- [Family Guide to Online Learning](#) Tips from a Special Education perspective that are applicable to any families having difficulty with home based learning.
- [5 Tips to Help Kids Stick To a Schedule or Routine](#) 5 tips to help your child make and stick to a routine.
- [Homework Strategies for Parents to Tame Virtual Schooling](#): A video that demonstrates how to support students as they navigate online learning.

Finally, when having conversations with the school or your child's teacher, we have found that this resource can be particularly helpful:

- [Parent-Teacher Planning Tool](#) Given new hybrid learning models, parent-teacher partnerships have never mattered more. Share what you've noticed about your child's learning and ask what's most important to help at home. By having a shared understanding of how your child is progressing at the beginning of the year you can partner to meet your child's social, emotional, and academic needs.

Engaging in Academics

Click below to access more information on a specific content area:

[English Language Arts \(ELA\)](#)

[Mathematics](#)

[Science](#)

[Social Studies](#)

[English Language Arts \(ELA\)](#)

Raising children is tricky during the best of times, and doing so during a global pandemic with interrupted schooling definitely makes it more so. Families with teenagers may feel additional worry or pressure as their child enters high school--the last frontier before college and career. Families with younger children may be concerned about developmental literacy skills. During this time, families may feel the need to hire tutors, check their children's school work, or even supplement their learning at home. However, these approaches cost money and time, and families often realize that children are less than keen on participating. When it comes to English Language Arts, there are three free or low-cost things that all families can do to keep their child's skills sharp: [Keep your child reading](#), [build in time for talk](#), and [engage in writing](#).

1. Keep your child reading.

Traditional ways of defining reading are changing with the times. As parents, we need to expand our understanding of reading to include audiobooks, podcasts, graphic novels, blogs, song lyrics, and informative videos. We know that as kids get older, they report that they are reading less, so it's essential that we help them find a format that works for them during this time. In fact, during times of stress, we may also find ourselves in a reading slump, so trying one of these formats with your child could provide a meaningful connection between you *and* get you back into reading again!

Elementary Resources	Secondary Resources
Learn more about developmental literacy skills: Ways Kindergarteners Can Read At Home	With your child, read and discuss the news: https://www.freep.com/ https://www.tweentribune.com/category/teen/
With your child, read and discuss: Storyjumper Open Library	With your child, read and discuss magazine articles: https://www.teenink.com/magazine https://www.sciencenewsforstudents.org/
With your child, view and discuss:	

Sankofa Read Alouds St. Lucie Reads Netflix Bookmarks Use the resources available through your public library to access free ebooks: https://libbyapp.com/welcome https://www.hoopladigital.com/	With your child, read and discuss short stories: https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/fish-cheeks https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/home-1 https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/the-leap With your child, listen to and discuss podcasts: https://www.brainson.org/podcast/ https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/podcasts https://themoth.org/podcast https://www.iheart.com/podcast/stuff-you-missed-in-history-cl-21124503/ Use the resources available through your public library to access free ebooks: https://libbyapp.com/welcome https://www.hoopladigital.com/
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2. Talk it up!

Even though it's hard to summon the energy at the end of a long, stressful day, it's essential to get your child talking! Sometimes it works best to talk while engaging in an activity--maybe going on a walk outside or doing the dishes. Start with some easy topics, such as a podcast or book you might be listening to or reading together. Move into other topics next, such as, "What's making the most sense to you among all your classes?" or "What strengths are you learning about yourself during this time?" Try (as much as possible) to be a supportive listener. The goal here is to get (and keep) your child talking, as discussion is one of the best ways to support student learning.

Helpful responses to keep the conversation flowing include the following:

- Say more about...
- Why do you think that?
- How did you figure that out?
- What do other people think?

3. Writing is thinking. Write together!

No matter what your child is learning during this school year, their learning will be strengthened and solidified through the process of writing about the topics. This writing doesn't have to be long and involved, nor does it need to go through the entire process of drafting and revising. You can support your child by starting a notebook or journal. Each day, ask your child to write something about their learning during school that day. Select a place to keep the notebook. In the evening, read through your child's entry. Resist the urge to edit or proofread, as hard as it may be. Instead, get curious. Ask some good questions about whatever was written. Think back to passing notes in junior high--keep it short and light. The talk stems from #2 above could be helpful here as well!

To get this parent-child journal started, here are some additional entry points:

- If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you travel to?
- Who is your best friend?
- What would your perfect day consist of?

- What is your favorite memory of us?
- If you could meet anyone, dead or alive, who would you meet?
- What is your dream job?
- If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?
- What was your favorite book when you were little?
- What is your earliest memory?
- What is the first thing on your bucket list?

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Mathematics

The following suggestions and ideas are shared by the [Solving Together project from NRIC and the University of Cambridge](#). The Solving Together project from NRIC and the University of Cambridge is filled with [tips for parents](#) on how to work together with children on mathematical games and activities. The [featured activities](#), organized by age group, will help learners practice what they've learned in school and deepen their mathematical understanding.

1. You don't need to be an expert to talk about mathematics with your child.

A sports coach doesn't need to be better than the person they're coaching. In the same way, you can talk about mathematics with your child even if you are not a confident mathematician yourself.

If your child asks a question and you're not sure of the answer, you can explore and try to find the answer together. In mathematics the process is as important as the answer. Listening to your child's questions and ideas is a really good way of helping them.

2. Asking rather than telling.

When your child finds something difficult, it can be really tempting to tell them the answer. However in the long run, it's much more helpful to discuss a problem and help them to work out the answer for themselves.

You can encourage your child by praising them for working hard and not giving up. The most important message you can give your child is that making mistakes is a natural part of learning.

Asking your child questions as you work together can really help them.

Here are some examples:

Do you notice anything interesting?

Can we predict what will happen next?

Which moves might be good moves to make? And...

Are there any patterns?

If you think of other helpful questions, don't be afraid to ask them.

3. Strategy games are not (just) about winning and losing.

Many of the activities in this project are based on mathematical games.

Try starting off by playing a few games without worrying about who wins or who loses. The idea is to work with your child, and as you figure things out you can develop and test strategies together.

In some games, there's an option to play against the computer. So you could start by playing a few games against your child in two-player mode, and then you could team up together to beat the computer.

[DREME](#) (Development and Research in Early Mathematics Education) is a beautiful website specifically designed to support identifying, creating, and sharing positive math experiences for *young* children in mathematics. The activity directory shares ideas related to cooking, reading together, daily routines, and games and play, and is searchable by age and topic.

The [Youcubed at Home](#) section of the [YouCubed](#) website provides both tasks well known to and used by teachers but modified to be more home-friendly, as well as some new explorations designed for learners at home. The YouCubed CEO, Jo Boaler, also wrote [Twelve Steps to Increase Your Child's Math Achievement and Make Math Fun](#). This is a productive list of ideas that set a positive tone for mathematics content, learning, and learners' dispositions.

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Science

Home-based learning is unique and should not try to recreate school. Trying to support school-like learning in a home setting may frustrate teachers, students, and families without leading to real and lasting learning. Instead, work with your child to have meaningful science learning experiences that connect to your home lives, interests, and identities. Some everyday activities that can promote meaningful science learning could include cooking, baking, cleaning, reading together, building, painting and drawing, and taking a walk outside.

Use technology in smart ways. Meaningful science learning can happen with or without devices or access to the internet. If you do have access to technology to help your child, use technology to enhance learning. People learn best when they can figure things out together. Consider using devices and internet access to help learners find information they can use to figure something out; to make connections with others to build ideas and get feedback; and to share their thinking (learn more at: [How can families support student science learning at home?](#))

- [Phenomena for families](#). Phenomena are observable events that cause us to wonder and ask questions. Use the information in this tool to keep the curiosity alive and wonderment of the world around you.
- [Science notebooks at home](#). Explore and investigate the world around you, while capturing your observations in a science notebook to record your progress toward sense-making.
- [Talk moves to support science](#). Guides and scaffolds to facilitate conversations at home; encouraging exploration and figuring-out.
- [Wonder-Filled K-5 Science Activities for kids and their families](#). These activities were designed so that children in grades K-5 could investigate together. Think of these activities as times to connect, learn, grow, laugh, and play together as a family. And, as you explore together, you and your children will observe, wonder, and discover how and why things work the way that they do in our everyday lives. Most importantly, have fun!

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Social Studies

We all want our children to become active and engaged citizens in their community and there are things we can do at home to support this. No matter if our children are engaged with US History, Economics, or are learning about their local community in school, we can support them at home by having rich discussions about topics they are interested in. Using an inquiry approach, we can help our children connect to content in a meaningful and authentic way. This involves making observations, asking lots of questions, and using high quality sources of information as we pursue an investigation. Here we will share with you some resources that you might use to support your child as they ask questions about the world around them as well as a few thinking routines to help you frame a discussion with your child.

Resource Description	Resource Site
Time for Kids Access free articles about current events, K-6.	https://www.timeforkids.com/
Library of Congress Digital Collection Find primary sources for students to explore, all levels.	https://www.loc.gov/collections/
Ken Burns in the Classroom Historical documentaries, 6-12.	https://dptv.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/kenburns/classroom/home/
Smithsonian Learning Lab Curated resources from all of the Smithsonian Museums, all levels, create a free account.	https://learninglab.si.edu/#sll-discover

[Thinking routines](#) are a short and easy way we can help our children talk about what they are learning. Here are a few you might try as you explore Social Studies with your child.

Thinking Routine Description	Steps
See, Think, Wonder Helps students to make observations and interpretations.	Answer the questions: 1. What do you see? 2. What do you think about that? 3. What does that make you wonder?
Think, Puzzle Explore Helps students think about what they already know and generate new ideas.	Answer the questions: 1. What do you think you know about this topic? 2. What questions or puzzles do you have? 3. What does this topic make you want to explore?
What Makes You Say That? Helps students describe what they see or already know and then begin to build an explanation.	Answer the questions: 1. What's going on? 2. What do you see or notice that makes you say that?

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Additional High-Quality, Comprehensive Resources to Support Learning at Home

[The National Parent Teachers Association](#) offers a variety of resources, including parent advocacy tools related to COVID. Additionally, the NPTA gives a [summary of the important content](#) in both mathematics and English Language Arts for each grade level. This summary document also includes activities to supplement learning at home and focus topics for families to discuss with teachers regarding students' academic progress.

[PBS for parents](#) provides tips and activities for parents and students to play and learn at home.

The [United States Department of Education](#) (USDOE) provides resources for parents and families. On the USDOE website, materials are categorized by content including:

- practical tips and resources to support ongoing learning (across content and contexts),
- reading, writing, and mathematics, and
- dealing with the pandemic.

[Wide Open School](#) offers free high-quality resources and activities for students across all grade levels and subject areas as well as support for parents.

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