

## Parent Training TK-8th FAQ

### “Beginning Your Journey”

#### *How do I structure my day and set up my home learning environment?*

To begin with, you will want to have a conversation with your entire family about what independent study will look like and the roles that each of them will have to support this endeavor. Depending upon the age of your student, you will want them to know that during the school day, you are now the teacher and their role is to be a student. Discuss how other family members can support this by allowing quiet time for the student to focus and learn with minimal distractions. It is VERY important to develop a structure to your day and stick to it. It is also important to give the student some choices in the matter, such as do you want to start with reading or math? You may also want to discuss the following items:

- *Where will their learning space be?*
  - Some families prefer to set up at the kitchen, at the table, or at their desk in the room. Much of this depends on your child's age and maturity, as well as the conditions of each space. Some children need more quiet while others need to be close to a parent.
- *How will you/they arrange and organize their learning space?*
  - Consider where school books and supplies will be stored and ensure that your child can easily access all necessary materials and supplies.
  - Allow for movement. Will they learn better by sitting on the floor, on a yoga mat, with movement and music incorporated into their learning?
- *Do you need to minimize the clutter and visual distractions in their workspace?*
  - Some students are easily distracted and need to be seated away from a window.
  - Consider using a tri-folded carrel made out of cardboard to break up a space.
- *What type of weekly schedule will you use?*
  - Consider the range of activities and commitments you have each week that take you outside of your home.
  - Work to cluster outings so that you still have large chunks of time at home for study time. There are so many exciting activities available to homeschooling families that it is easy to get overbooked.

- For most children, it works best to do the bulk of the academics in the morning when they are more focused. Many families also consolidate their “book work” time into 3-5 mornings sessions per week, depending on the age of their child.
- *How will you organize and plan for the timely completion of assignments?*
  - Younger children will need a parent by their side guiding them during a majority of their learning time.
  - As students mature and gain skills, they can complete more work on their own after the parent has introduced the lesson and modeled examples.
  - Families use a variety of systems to plan the specific tasks/projects/assignments to be completed each day. A few examples are: wall calendars, whiteboards with charts and lists, student planners, and sentence strips that a student can sort and put in the order in which they want to complete tasks. Try a few ways to see what works best for you and your child.
- *How will you start your day?*
  - Integrate daily self-care activities and chores into your schedule and plan.
  - Some students need to be eased into their day, and some are ready and full of energy. It’s important to acclimate your student to independent study, understanding that it is still school, just in a different environment.
  - It’s easier to loosen the rules than tighten them, so find a structure that works and be consistent.
- *How long will your breaks be and how often?*
  - Be consistent with the duration of your breaks so it doesn’t become a negotiable thing and stick to it.
  - Use a timer so your student gets used to the routine.
  - Incorporate a walk or movement into an activity, such as looking at leaves or bugs for a science activity.
  - Students in home-based learning environments often forget what 5 minutes feels like since they do not have to follow a bell schedule. Consider doing fun timed activities such as quick math facts with a timer and see if they can beat their own speed. You can use a graph to show progress. This will help them develop a sense of time.
- *Plan for some fun field trips or adventures.*
  - This is one of the great perks of home-based learning: you get to create your learning experience.
  - Our current Pathways Field Trip Coordinator is Julie Carter. Check the website for field trips being offered this year, or check in with your IST if you need help finding the information.

- Look online for local homeschool support groups- they have a wealth of activities.
- *How will your child socialize or spend time with friends or peers?*
  - It is important to create social activities for your students. Perhaps they do all of their school work during the day to have the afternoons to play with their friends or participate in community-based classes or activities
  - Pathways offers lots of vendor opportunities and regional learning center classes for you to explore which you can find on our website.
  - Check out the Pathways Facebook page and group to connect with other parents.

### ***How do I complete the paperwork?***

Once you have gotten through the organization of your home classroom and the roles and responsibilities of everyone, you will move on to the other component of learning from home, creating lessons and documentation through paperwork. Some of you are experienced and know how your child learns best, so you already have an idea of the curriculum you want to choose. Others are very new to this and will need help with assigning and choosing a curriculum. Your IST is very experienced and will help you with any curriculum choices or guide you with appropriate assignments.

Use the "Back to School Checklist TK-5" from the menu on the right to think through various aspects of your home-based learning program. Your IST will review some of these items with you during your initial meeting and for others, they may direct you to regional parent training opportunities or other resources. There is no one "right way" to approach curriculum in a home-based learning environment. Pathways allows for tremendous flexibility in the methods used (curriculum) to reach the standards. For some parents this is very exciting because it means that they can design lessons and unit plans specific to the interests and learning styles of their child. However, for other parents this is overwhelming and does not give them enough direction on where to start. NO matter where on that spectrum you fall, discuss various options with your IST and select a place to start. Likely, over the first few months of school, you and your teacher will decide to make some changes to the materials selected or the types of assignments. That is to be expected. A few aspects to consider:

- How does your child learn best? You may want to complete a learning style inventory to see how your student best learns; visually, auditorily or kinesthetically. Most students are a combination. It's important to teach them

their strengths.

[www.sealyisd.com/common/pages/DisplayFile.aspx?itemId=9144782](http://www.sealyisd.com/common/pages/DisplayFile.aspx?itemId=9144782) or *Pinterest has lots of inventories.*

- What educational approach do you want to use?
  - There are a range of approaches, from traditional textbooks and materials, to project based. Some of these approaches are also aligned with educational philosophies such as Waldorf or Classical Education.
- What types of methods of instruction do you want to include?
  - As you learned at the information session, we offer a range of methods to reach the grade level standards including: curriculums/texts, learning center classes, classes in the community with approved vendors, online curriculum, online classes, projects and parent designed units.
- How much guidance do you need as a parent?
  - It is important to consider not only your child's needs, but yours as well. As you step into this role of teacher, how much and what type of support do you need? Some parents want a curriculum that lays out daily lessons while others are more comfortable piecing together various elements from a variety of materials.

Also in the menu to the right, you will find an overview of paperwork guidelines- please review this document as well. This paperwork is not only a huge component of independent study compliance, but also outlines the expectations of your IST and is a tool for communication for the members of the educational team.

### ***How do I know if my student is making progress?***

It is very important to collect some baseline data of where your student is at the beginning of the school year so you can determine where to start and monitor if they are making adequate progress. For students in grade K-2, Pathways offers Early Literacy Assessments for [first graders](#) in the Fall and Spring. Ask your IST to contact the literacy specialist to schedule a time to read with your child. From this assessment you will have established a baseline and also determine strengths and areas to focus your teaching. We also have early math assessments which are given by the IST. For grades 3-5th, Pathways uses the computer-adaptive Renaissance STAR Enterprise Assessments in Reading and Math to provide a consistent check of academic progress. Students are assessed upon enrollment in the program and then twice each year to monitor progress. If deemed appropriate, students in grades K-2 may also access the Renaissance Assessments. The independent study teacher may recommend and the

parent/guardian may request that the Renaissance Assessments be administered more often. A good website to go to. *The following website : <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/> has the standards for each grade level so you can take a look to determine what is expected at each grade level.*

**Consider the following:**

- *Schedule literacy assessment with IST if you have a first grade student or concerns about a second grade student.*
- *Complete and collect weekly writing samples to measure growth. Notice letter formation, number of sentences completed, use of proper punctuation, spacing between words, letter reversals, syntax, spelling, pencil grip.*
- *Have students read daily. If you aren't sure at what level they should be reading, ask your IST or literacy specialist. You want to make sure they aren't reading books which are too hard and frustrating causing them to give up.*
- *How is their fluency? (Are they reading at the rate at which they speak or struggling with vowel sounds, blends, dropping endings?)*
- *Sign up for the parent workshop on literacy or ask the A/C if they can schedule a workshop.*
- *Use graph paper for math with large squares to help with alignment.*
- *Notice number reversals. If this is happening, use magnetic letters as models for the students or teach them or have them use their hands ( the right hand makes a /d/ and the left hand makes a /b/.*
- *Ask them to explain their thinking and use open ended questions such as "tell me more" or 'why do you think?' ...*
- *Praise specific actions. For example, **don't say** "I like" but rather, " **I noticed** you fixed your own mistake", or " you went back and re-read that." This reinforces strategies you want them to use.*
- ***Your IST is your most valuable resource so discuss any concerns with them and they will support you.***
- **If you or your IST have any concerns about your student's academic progress, or any concerns in general, we can hold a student study team meeting (SST) to discuss the concerns and come up with a plan for support or intervention. Please ask your IST about this process if you need more information.**