



The Role of Parents in Virtual Learning

Supporting your child's virtual learning experience is an essential part of their success while learning from home. Just like in a conventional, face-to-face classroom learning model, all curriculum subjects/frames are taught and reported on. During virtual learning, your child is expected to participate in instruction and complete assigned learning activities each day. They will show proof of participation in daily virtual learning by satisfactorily engaging with assigned learning activities and completing assignments to demonstrate their learning by the assigned due date. For students with special education needs, this will include instructional and assessment accommodations as identified in their Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Educators may engage with students through a variety of means including Microsoft Teams, D2L, telephone, email and there is no expectation for educators or students to be in a Teams meeting all day.

Communicating with the Teacher/Educator

During virtual learning, your child is expected to participate in instruction and complete assigned learning activities each day. Staying up to date with communications is an essential component to providing support for your child's virtual learning experience.

- Consistently monitor the communication from your child's educators
- Make sure you know when and how to best communicate with the educators (i.e., email, phone)
- Recognize that educators are teaching during the instructional day, just like in a conventional, face-to-face classroom, and interruptions during instructional time negatively impact teaching and student learning
- Address concerns regarding your child or instruction during the times provided by the educator, such as before or after school, as doing so while the educator is online with students is not appropriate and would not occur during conventional teaching
- Make sure you and your child stay in communication with their educators when in need of additional learning support.

Supporting Your Child

No one expects parents to be full-time teachers or to be educational and content matter experts. One of the goals for students is to become independent, and that takes lots of practice! Checking in with your child throughout the day will support them in processing instructions and communication from their educators. For younger children, this means supporting them at the beginning of the day and with check-ins throughout the day. Longer check-ins in the morning or evening may provide older children the support they need.

- Remember, you do not have to be the teacher to ensure that your child learns
- Avoid hovering over every lesson. Your child needs to make mistakes, interact with others, and learn to attend, all of which may be hindered if you are watching everything that they do
- Provide support and encourage your child while expecting them to do their part
- Resist the urge to help by providing your child with the answers...struggling is allowed and encouraged and that is how learning happens! It is important for your child's educators to know what they are able to do independently
- The virtual classroom is designed to support teaching and learning. Respect and honour the classroom space, just as you would a regular classroom.

Here are some questions that might help spark a conversation with your child:

In the morning, you might ask:

- What will you be learning today?
- Why are you learning it?
- How will you know you learned it?
- What resources/materials do you need?
- What can I do to help?

At the end of the day, you might ask:

- How far did you get in your learning tasks today?
- What did you learn/practice/read today?
- What learning did you enjoy most today?
- What was easy or challenging for you?
- Do you have any questions for your teacher?
- What could we do to make tomorrow a good day?

Becoming Familiar with Tools and Resources

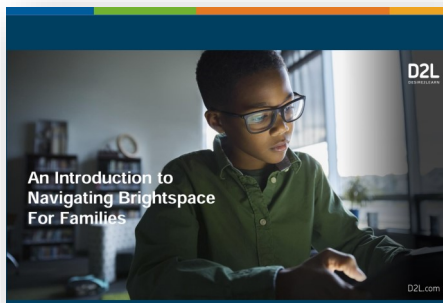
HCDSB uses a learning management system (LMS) to support remote learning and this is the primary way that your child will access content and activities. HCDSB educators are using the Brightspace/D2L and/or Google Classroom LMS. Microsoft Teams is how educators are meeting with students online. To maximize your child's learning, become familiar with the features of the learning management system so that you can help your child, as needed.

This includes knowing:

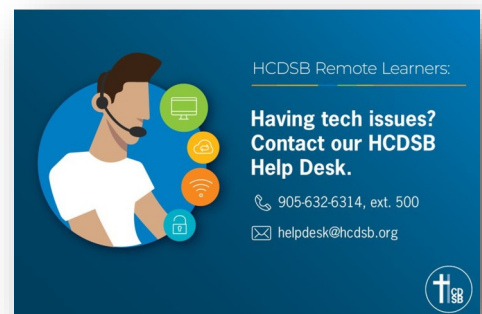
- How to log into the learning management system with your child's username (younger children will need help to log in each day while older children are encouraged to do so independently)
- How to navigate the site
- How learning is organized
- How to use the mute button when there is background noise in the environment or to unmute to answer questions or interact with peers
- How to use the camera: Encourage your child to keep the camera on as seeing faces helps to build a sense of community and belonging and visual cues help the educator to know if a child is understanding the lesson or not
- How to raise their hand
- How to submit assignments
- How to ask the educator a question about an assignment

The following resources have been developed to support parents/guardians. To access, click on the document. If you encounter technical issues related to remote learning, please contact the HCDSB Help Desk helpdesk@hcdsb.org

Please note that Chrome or Firefox are the recommended browsers to use with D2L.



Getting Started with D2L for Parents and Guardians (CPIC PPT linked to )



Establishing Regular Routines

Establishing a regular routine will support your child in taking ownership of their learning and structuring their virtual school day. Establishing predictable routines for children helps them to better self-regulate and are known to reduce stress (Shanker, 2013). Creating a schedule for waking up, going to bed, eating meals, brushing teeth, going to school, etc., will improve your quality of life and decrease the stress level of your children (Wiseman, Fisher, Frye & Hattie, 2020).

It is important that children feel like they are going to school, even when they are participating in remote learning. Creating visual or written schedules with your child that includes time to wake up, get dressing for school, eat meals, prepare lunch and snacks, do homework and go to bed, will help your child to follow routines and provides them with a sense of security, confidence, independence and stability in times of stress.

The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology recommends a regular schedule of sleep and wake times, including 9-11 hours of uninterrupted sleep for children aged 5-13 years. Canadian researcher, Dr. Stuart Shankar, who is known as one of the world's leading authorities on self-regulation and child development, identifies sleep as an essential component for managing stress. Lack of adequate sleep can affect a child's ability to manage their energy and emotions over the course of the day.

Bedtime Routines

A regular bedtime routine promotes healthy sleep habits and helps children learn to transition from the busy activity of the day to settling down for sleep. In [Routines that Make Family and School Life Easier](#), Halton Region provides some helpful suggests for establishing bedtime routines.

Executive Functioning Skills

Developing executive functioning skills is important for student success in school and in life. These skills include managing time, paying attention, planning and organizing, remembering details and multi-tasking.

“Executive function and self-regulation skills are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. Just as an air traffic control system at a busy airport safely manages the arrivals and departures of many aircraft on multiple runways, the brain needs this skill set to filter distractions, prioritize tasks, set and achieve goals, and control impulses. They also enable positive behavior and allow us to make healthy choices for ourselves and our families.”

(The Center on the Developing Child <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/executive-function/>)

The Centre on the Developing Child shares the following strategies for building these crucial skills with children:

| Executive Function Activities for 3- to 5-year-olds | Executive Function Activities for 5- to 7-year-olds | Executive Function Activities for 7- to 12-year-olds |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Children's executive function and self-regulation skills grow at a fast pace during this period, so it is important to adapt activities to match the skills of each child. Younger children need a lot of support in learning rules and structures, while older children can be more independent. Ultimately, the goal is to shift children away from relying on adult regulation, so when the child seems ready, try to reduce the support you provide.</p>  | <p>Games can exercise children's executive function and self-regulation skills—and allow them to practice these skills—in different ways. At this age, children start to enjoy games that have rules, but do so with widely varying levels of interest and skill. Since an important aspect of developing these skills is having a constant challenge, it's important to choose games that are demanding but not too hard for each child. As the child players become familiar with these games, try to decrease the adult role as soon as possible; the challenge is greater for children if they remember and enforce the rules independently. Just be prepared with some techniques for negotiating conflict. Flipping a coin or drawing a straw are some methods used by Tools of the Mind, an early education program designed to build self-regulation.</p>  | <p>These games provide challenges and practice for executive function and self-regulation skills among school-age children. For children in this age range, it is important to steadily increase the complexity of games and activities.</p>  |

Click on the image to access these documents.

Providing an Appropriate Learning Space

Provide an appropriate learning space for your child, when possible. Ideally, selecting a designated area for learning that is quiet, free from distractions and has a good internet connection will allow your child to focus on school learning activities and assignments. Make sure an adult monitors online learning. Keep doors open, and practice good digital safety.

Considerations for creating workspaces:

- Identify a dedicated workspace for each child where possible, ideally outside of their bedroom that has a good Internet connection
- Try to keep the space consistent so that habits form relative to that space
- Keep the supplies needed for learning in that space
- Minimize distractions and disruptions such as television and cell phones
- Develop plans for taking breaks, movement, and getting water or food
- Establish ground rules for using the space, including:
 - * How others in the home should act in that space
 - * How your child should remain in one spot and not walk around the house during meetings as this is distracting to the educator and classmates
 - * Having children leave that space to do other things, such as exercise, eat and socialize
 - * Ensuring family members are not engaging in noisy tasks during online meetings

Encourage Physical Activity

Virtual learning at home can have an impact on a child's physical activity. Encourage your child to engage in physical activity and exercise outside of the physical education instruction provided in remote learning. Also, allow time for them to get up and move around during their virtual school day.

Self-Control, On-Task Behaviour, Achievement and Respect (SOAR)

The S.O.A.R Virtual Learning Matrix developed by Jessica and John Hannigan, outlines practical expectations for virtual learning related to self-control, on-task behaviour, achievement and respect (<https://www.pbisrewards.com/wp-content/uploads/virtual-learning-pbis-matrix-hannigans-w.pdf> and cited in Wiseman, Fisher, Frye & Hattie, 2020). Parents may find this matrix helpful when supporting their child with appropriate online behaviour.

| S.O.A.R. VIRTUAL LEARNING MATRIX | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| S SELF-CONTROL | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow instructions• Wait for your turn to speak or contribute• Use the raise-your-hand feature• Minimize distractions• Utilize chat features appropriately |
| O ON-TASK | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Log in on time• Be present/actively engaged• Organize your materials• Set daily goals• Make yourself visible• Have a backup plan if you get disconnected |
| A ACHIEVEMENT | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete tasks on time/stay on top of assignments• Be prepared• Complete preparation work• Reach out to the teacher for help• Share and collaborate• Write in complete sentences• Create a schedule/space to complete assignments |
| R RESPECT | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mute microphone when others are speaking• Respect others' perspectives• Use kind words• Use proper text etiquette (ALL CAPS, bold, italics, sarcasm/jokes, etc. can be misinterpreted in a digital space)• Help each other during group assignments and in designated meeting rooms• Resolve conflict peacefully |



Students should see their parents as their greatest cheerleaders and coaches. Supporting your child's virtual learning experience and guiding them to be independent learners and thinkers is an important part of student success and achievement.