



## Helping Kids Learn – Post #1 4/1/20

There's a reason schools have teachers, guidance counselors, arts teachers and other specialists, IT staff, support staff, custodians, and principals. All of the roles in a school involve both knowledge and know-how and have taken many of us years to do well. Now, parents are plunged into all those roles at once. Yikes! Plus, it seems like every other email in your inbox has the "solution" to learning from home – for a price.

### Prevent COVID Slump

We know that kids who don't keep learning in the summer start the next school year behind their peers: *summer slump*. We don't want to see that happen now when many of us are still learning how to make virtual learning work. The Center staff is committed to helping families keep learning alive. We will update this regularly, so please check back.

### The Set-Up

Most homes have places for specific things to take place: cooking, TV, gaming, toileting, sleeping. Learning needs a place, too. Set up a spot for learning:

- ✓ It can be as small as 24 x 15 inches or as big as a room.
- ✓ There should be enough light to read, write, and view without eye strain and without glare.
- ✓ If you sit in a chair, your feet should be flat on the floor or on an incline board (an old 3-inch, 3-ring binder can work). Sitting, even lying flat on your tummy on the floor, is OK for some tasks.
- ✓ Keep paper, pens/pencils/erasers, crayons/markers/colored pencils there so nobody has to hunt when the need arises.

That's it for the basics.

### Helping Your Brain

Your brain needs some things for learning to happen and to stick:

- ❖ Drink water - your brain starts "feeling" dehydrated before you feel thirsty.
- ❖ Predictability – knowing what's coming helps your brain pick the right place to put learning or get to stuff you already learned.
- ❖ Novelty – something even a little different "makes you think" so learning happens.
- ❖ Movement – even something simple like standing up and sitting back down helps your brain "park" new information in a useful place. Doodling helps some kids "get it." Moving things like markers or pipe cleaners or writing something down makes it stick. After learning something really new – like multiplication for the first time – doing 15 minutes of exercise can help a lot.

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- ❖ Rest – “sleep on it” really does work to allow your brain to plant new learning where you can get at it later on; blue light from screens, and light in general, interferes with this process.

## Finding Time

It might sound boring but *a routine* – doing the same thing at the same time every day – actually *helps you learn!* It frees up your brain (the *predictability* part) to seek *novelty*.

Make a schedule. Write it down with your kid. If you want it to change – say, Monday, Wednesday, Friday versus Tuesday, Thursday – you can use a white board or just write out both schedules like the Student Planner class schedule page.

Then – the hard part – stick to the schedule you make for at least a week.

## Free Free Free STEM Resources

Your child’s teacher(s) will be giving lessons and assignments. Beyond that, gobs of cultural websites have really great, FREE content now. Here are a few with no endorsement implied by the Center – **see Post #19 for more:**

**SCIENCE** <https://www.science4us.com/demo/> (K-2)

<https://mysteryscience.com/school-closure-planning> (K-5)

<https://www.freesciencelessons.co.uk/> (high school courses)

**TECHNOLOGY** <https://www.helpgidgit.org> Programming concepts in a debugging game format developed by NJIT Professor Michael Lee and students

**ENGINEERING** Both sites are organized by age level and topics.

[www.teachengineering.org](http://www.teachengineering.org) [www.tryengineering.org](http://www.tryengineering.org)

**MATH** [www.khanacademy.org](http://www.khanacademy.org) Has a built-in schedule and spans all grades

**ARTS - THE “A” IN STEAM** Architecture combines art, science, technology, engineering, and, math!

<https://kinderart.com/art-lessons/sculpture/four-orders-architecture/>

<http://archkitecture.org/2020/03/24/what-this-house-cleans-itself/>

To learn how some art is created, try the Learn feature at

<https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2020/digital-digest>

Doing art: <https://kinderart.com/art-lessons/painting/teaching-art-at-home/>

To tour museums for free: [www.newarkmuseumart.org](http://www.newarkmuseumart.org)

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[www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org)

[www.moma.org](http://www.moma.org)

[www.louvre.fr/en/](http://www.louvre.fr/en/)