

# Ready, Set, Go...Remote Learning: Focusing on What's Important + Reasonable

By Ashley Kohn | Categories: Technology & Remote Learning

In a snap, we were asked to adjust our entire way of school. In a snap, we were asked to create quality remote learning experiences for our students – no matter the age, no matter the content, no matter the virtual platform, no matter the home conditions.

This got me wondering, *are we trying to do too much? Are we trying to recreate the school day to be enacted at home when we don't understand what students are navigating at home? What families are navigating at home? Perhaps now is the time we should consider, what is most generative, supportive and reasonable during this exceptional time. What might we offer our students and families to support their social, emotional, and academic development?*

*What if we focused on what is important and reasonable during this unprecedented time?* Here's what is important to me:

## Academics

Adjusting our expectations of academic learning is going to be essential for our students. Students are now being asked to learn in a completely different way in a completely different environment without the safety and support of their classroom community. *What expectations might need to be adjusted? What are the essential academic aspects that are important for the students you teach?*

*High volume reading.* Children should have lots and lots of opportunities to read. Reading experiences could be engaging in a read aloud, reading self-selected accessible books for enjoyment, reading self-select accessible books for a purpose, reading a recipe, or reading with a friend via FaceTime or Zoom.

For our youngest readers, this might include looking at pictures, retelling familiar stories, and listening to stories read aloud. For our older readers, this might include the newspaper, magazines, articles, online research.

*High volume writing.* Children should have lots and lots of opportunities to write. Writing experiences could be in connection to reading, it could be letters to friends and family members they are missing, or it could be journaling about their feelings or gratitude.

For our youngest writers, this might include drawing pictures and telling about their stories or writing their own familiar stories like, "I went walking, what did you see? I saw a \_\_\_\_\_ looking at me!" For our older writers, this might include poetry, interviewing family members to create a story of us, research, or creating a novel.

*High volume talking.* Children should have lots and lots of opportunity to talk. Talking experiences could be formal conversations about their reading or writing, informal conversations about their day, or opportunities to share their thinking or learning.

*Opportunities to review.* Children should have lots and lots of opportunities to review previous learning. As children digest all that is happening in their world, it might be difficult for them to take on new learning. Providing children with the opportunity to engage in

learning activities related to what is known can provide a sense of security and comfort.

### Connectedness

A powerful part of the school experience is the opportunity for students to have a sense of connectedness and a part of a classroom and school community. *How might students stay connected to their classroom community? How might students stay connected to their school community?*

*Class meetings.* Continue to engage in regular class meetings (morning meetings/afternoon meetings/check-in meetings). These types of discussions will provide a forum for students to share, hear from others and be regularly connected as a class. These check-in meetings will also provide valuable data for you to make any adjustments that may be needed.

*Teacher-Student.* Regularly schedule time with each child to engage in formal and informal discussions. Formal discussions might include reading or writing conferences or support them with something that is hard. Informal discussions might include hearing what is happening in their day-to-day lives or learning more about what they are feeling or wondering about during this time.

*Student-Student.* Provide opportunities for children to connect with their friends! Schedule a time to bring small-groups of children together for a conversation. Encourage “virtual” playdates where children could read together, write together, play games together or just talk.

### Home Life

Parents/care-givers and students are now home all day trying to navigate all aspects of this unexpected and unprecedented time. The loss of a job, the inability to access technology, the lack of stable internet, the limited access to books, the inconsistency of routine/food/community will all deeply impact our students. *What might our students be experiencing? How might we support our parents/care-givers? What is reasonable to be happening at home?*

As we remind ourselves that parents/care-givers are not teachers, are trying to navigate their own emotions and understand the expectations of adulthood during this time, let's encourage a lot and lots of time for children to play, use their imaginations, join in cooking a meal...

I've read various social media posts from teachers and parents – some have been heartfelt, others have been humorous and still others have conveyed a sense of being overwhelmed. We are all going to experience a range of emotions and lack of understanding, adults and children. Let's strive to not try too hard or do too much, patience over perfection. Let's consider what is most important and reasonable for adults and children.

*Consider sharing our parent letter! [Click here to access.](#)*