

## Motivating Kids for Learning



**We are living in a time where so much has changed in a short period of time.** Some of those changes are hitting people really hard—both young and old. And now, on top of the changes that have already happened we're asking you, and your young ones, to figure out how to support school at home. It's a lot. Some kids may avoid having to sit down and "do" school at home (and some parents are going to feel anxious about the idea as well). But we will get through this together. You've faced 5001 different kinds of challenges as parents and you have figured them out. You will figure something out that works for you and your family for school as well. *And we are here to help you do that.*

### **Suggestions for motivating students to do schoolwork at home:**

- 1) ***Set the stage for school by looking forward to reconnecting with their teacher*** rather than talking about "having to start school". Saying things like "It'll be so great to hear from Ms./Mr. \_\_\_\_ on tomorrow. I know they've been missing you. I wonder what they'll ask you to do?". Using a tone of interest/excitement to look forward to reconnecting may help shift a child's focus away from not wanting to work and toward being curious about what's coming.
- 2) ***Determine in yourself that school/learning is going to happen.*** Your child may need to have a meltdown(s) about it but your resolve needs to stay strong because you know that this is important for your child. You can weather meltdowns knowing that learning is worth the upset that comes your way. Back off and take breaks as necessary but keep the goal of learning in mind even as you're backing off for the moment. Give permission for the meltdown while keeping the goal in front of your child "I can see you need a meltdown right now. That's OK. Learning will wait until we're ready for it."
- 3) ***Set your family up for success whenever you can.*** Ensure everyone sticks to a regular sleep schedule/routine (as much as you are able given the circumstances). I realize that some people may be working from home and needing to manage young children while they do it. Recognizing your own limitations is important in those situations. Do the best you can for you and your kids given the time and resources that you have.
- 4) ***Make a flexible schedule with your kids (use pictures if that's helpful).*** Let them see when school will be and when play will be. Make sure play is worked in and amongst the harder things they have to do so that they get breaks. The regular school day has a rhythm and flow. Teachers schedule activities that bring kids together, then something that requires lots of concentration, then something that allows for brains to rest and relax a bit, and then creative activities, so it makes sense for learning at home to have rest periods worked into their day.
- 5) ***Read your child.*** If they seem tired give them a 10-15 minute break. Whenever possible, make that break focus on something other than technology as the shift back to work will often be easier to manage if you're not removing them from a screen.
- 6) ***Mix up their work tasks.*** Think about interspersing paper/pencil work, movement, quiet time, outside time, music, and art activities.
- 7) ***Use First/then language.*** "First we'll do these ELA questions then we'll play a game" or "We'll play a game as soon as we've done \_\_\_\_."
- 8) ***Chunk work.*** Give your child a few questions to do and then take a break or switch to a task they like more.

- 9) **Take breaks!!** If you're getting frustrated and/or they're getting frustrated, take a break. Teach them about self-regulation by demonstrating what wonderful things breaks are. And teach them to recognize the signs in themselves that they need a break "My stomach feels all tight, my shoulders hurt, and my brain just doesn't want to work right now. I'm feeling frustrated. Are you noticing some of the same things?"
- 10) **Limit screen time until after schoolwork is done if you can.** I know this might be hard if you have multiple kids needing to share one device so you'll obviously need to be flexible in how you arrange this.
- 11) **Use timers.** You can use the one on the stove or, if your kids have access to a phone or tablet, there are free visual timer apps to use.
- 12) **Integrate your child's interests into what they're learning when you can.** Sometimes this can lead into fun projects which is huge in terms of motivation.
- 13) **Switching to school at home will be a challenge for many kids.** Sitting with them while they're working will be helpful to start. You can then gradually "fade out" as routine is established (you can start by "needing to go to the washroom" while they're working etc.)
- 14) **Focus most of your child's academic work in the morning if you can.** We all become more tired as the day goes on which makes learning more of a challenge later in the day.
- 15) **Surprise them with little rewards.** Catch them on task and sneak them a little treat occasionally.
- 16) **Celebrate together when the school day is done.** "Wow...that was a challenge but we got through it. That feels good. How are you feeling?" or "Wow...that was easier than I thought it was going to be. Feels good to get it done though doesn't it?"
- 17) **Reach out!** We are here to help you – if you and/or your child are struggling please let the school know and we will do our best to help you.

