

Continuity of Learning: Guidelines for Families and Guardians of PK-5 Students

Continuity of Learning

In his [March 26, 2020 Directive Number 5](#), Governor Scott directed schools to close and supervisory unions and districts (SUs/SDs) to transition to Continuity of Learning for the remainder of the school year. Continuity of Learning (CoL) means districts will be required to provide education services and related supports to all students remotely so that student learning and academic progress is achieved during this time. Though this will look different in various households, parents, families and caregivers can play an important role in setting routines and encouraging student learning at home. Since all families are unique, they can support their children in a variety of ways. This support can take on different forms and should reflect what is best for each family.

The following guidelines are designed to help families and at-home caregivers navigate this new challenge.

The Role of Families/Guardians in Supporting Remote Learning

Home-based learning is unique and should not try to recreate school. Attempting to support school-like learning in a home setting may frustrate students and families. Families are encouraged to continue to have meaningful learning experiences that connect what their children have learned in school to their home lives, interests, and identities. In addition, families can support continuity of learning for their students by doing the following:

- **Focus on Relationships and Social-Emotional Development:** Relationships are particularly important to children in prekindergarten, kindergarten and the primary grades. Children learn best when they feel nurtured, safe and supported. Creating opportunities to provide calm, reassuring interactions every day is important.
- **Connect Academics and Everyday Life:** Many activities families engage in every day can support meaningful learning. Look for connections between learning activities and academic subject areas, and everyday life. Allowing children to follow their interests can help them to expand on that interest through exploration, observation, curiosity and inquiry.
- **Encourage Active Use of Technology:** While watching programs on television, using the computer or engaging in on-line activities, families can interact with children before, during and/or after. Conversations including asking questions with children can help them to prepare, comprehend, respond and interact with digital content. If it is not possible for families to view and interact with their children while watching programs, either on television or online, parents can talk about the program before the child engages and suggest things to watch for or think about.
- **Emphasize Active, Experiential Learning:** Families can support their children by providing activities that are creative, experiential, and keep them moving. Physical

activity is essential for children's self-regulation, concentration, learning, and positive social interactions and relationships. Imaginative and dramatic play allows children to express themselves by building and creating in a variety of ways.

- **Recognize the Value of Developing Transferable Skills:** Being at home during this time is an opportunity for children to develop independence, flexibility, and communication skills as they take on increased responsibilities within their family.

The Importance of Developing a Schedule

While at home, it is recommended that families develop a daily schedule to provide some structure. This can include planned time for educational activities (e.g., reading books, playing math games, etc.), exercise, arts, and positive social interactions. Outdoor activities are encouraged whenever possible. Active learning experiences, however, are more important than following a strict schedule, so be flexible. Remember, this is an opportunity to enjoy being with your child, so don't worry about "doing it right."

The following are some suggestions to help develop your schedule:

- Collaborate with your children on creating a schedule (younger children can create or use images they recognize). Post the schedule and stick with it when it makes sense. These are unprecedented and stressful times, so it is important to be open to making changes. It's important that children take part in any schedule changes so they are aware of what is happening next.
- Be realistic in regard to academic requirements. Eliminate extended blocks of time without movement and pay attention to needs within the home (parent work schedules, nap times for younger children, etc.). Below is a table of suggested amounts of dedicated academic time.

Grade Level	Minimum	Maximum	Recommended Length of Sustained Attention
PreK	20 minutes/day	60 minutes/day	3-5 minutes
K	30 minutes/day	90 minutes/day	3-5 minutes
1-2	45 minutes/day	90 minutes/day	5-10 minutes
3-5	60 minutes/day	120 minutes/day	10-15 minutes

[Remote Learning Recommendations During Covid-19](#), p. 17

- Here is another [sample schedule](#), developed by educator Moritza Termin, with links to activities; see other suggested activities in the Resource section of this document.
- Remember that this learning environment is temporary. Do your best and be patient with yourself and your family; boredom is often the precursor to creativity and innovation.

Social and Emotional Support for the Entire Family

Supports for Children

- Listen to your children and follow their lead. Stay calm, offer reassurance, and use your children's questions to guide the conversation.
- When talking with your children, responses should be positive, simple, clear, honest, and age appropriate. Dispel rumors that could be inaccurate or fear-inducing.
- Be a role model by focusing on the positive.
- Demonstrate stress-reducing techniques such as deep breathing, mindfulness, and meditation.
- Be aware of risk factors that could lead to increased anxiety, such as pre-existing mental health problems, prior traumatic experiences or abuse, family instability, or the loss of a loved one. Notice changes in your child's behavior, such as:
 - **Preschoolers**—thumb sucking, bedwetting, clinging to parents, sleep disturbances, loss of appetite, fear of the dark, regression in behavior, and withdrawal.
 - **Elementary school children**—irritability, aggressiveness, clinginess, nightmares, school avoidance, poor concentration, and withdrawal from activities and friends.

For more information, visit [Helping Children Cope with Changes Resulting from COVID-19](#)

Supports for the Family

- Engage in family activities such as board games, cooking, and crafting.
- Take the opportunity to explore nature and the outdoors.
- Identify projects that might help others. Write letters to neighbors or others that might be stuck at home alone. Create art, sing, or read to one another.
- Stay connected and maintain relationships. Isolation is a new concept for families and students. Find ways to break down the barriers of isolation and keep track of how your family is doing.
- Be ready to help discuss conflicts and set guidelines for how to resolve problems that arise due to tight quarters and limited time for personal space.

Be patient with yourself and each other. These are unprecedented times; we are all in this together.

The Importance of Self Care for the Caregiver(s)

- Monitor your own use of social media and checking the news, which can increase anxiety.
- Practice the same deep breathing, relaxation, and anxiety-releasing techniques that you are sharing with your children.
- Stay connected with your children's school(s).

- Find ways to decompress and take breaks; this may mean that you will have to work as a team to schedule time for personal care.

If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety call:

- Dial or text 911
- Reach out to the Mental Health [Crisis Text Line](#) - Text VT to 741741 and a trained counselor will respond within five minutes
- The [National Association of School Psychologists](#) (NASP) provides suggestions regarding how parents/guardians can respond to children's fears regarding Covid-19.

Good News

Educators from across the country are collaborating, like never before, to support young learners. Authors and police officers are reading books online, educational materials are being made available free of cost, and at least one writer/ animator, [Mo Willems](#), is doodling with children at lunch time. Additionally, towns across the world are creating Teddy bear and rainbow scavenger hunts for children, while others are making signs to cheer up the elderly. Although these are definitely uncertain times, it is certainly heartwarming to see how people across the country, and the world, are rising to meet this challenge in a positive way.

Resources

Internet Access

As families look for ways to support their children at home, whether academically or socially, the internet can be an invaluable resource. As the demand for both internet access and available data has increased rapidly, many providers have responded with special offers. The offerings vary from free internet to unlimited data. Check with your local provider for offerings, or [The Federal Communications Commission](#), which has a list of companies and organizations that have signed the Keep Americans Connected Pledge.

Partnership with PBS

Vermont Public Broadcasting System (PBS) and the Agency of Education (AOE) are partnering to support continuity of learning for our students and school communities. This partnership will provide access to free educational programming resources via television broadcasts. Additional resources will be provided by the AOE and Vermont PBS, both on-air and online. The curriculum-supported PreK through grade 12 programming is aligned to national standards and includes interactive lessons and suggested activities. Programming for PreK-8 began Monday, April 6, on the PBS main channel which is broadly available throughout the state and does not require cable

Low-Tech Ideas that Can Keep Learning Happening at Home

[Remote Learning Resources for PK-2](#)

[Remote Learning Resources for Upper Elementary Grades](#)

[Bright by Text](#)

[Learn at Home for All Students](#)

[Vermont Early Learning Standards Family Resources Birth through Grade 3](#)

[Family Resources on Helping your Child at Home](#)

[Are stay-at-home orders putting vulnerable kids at risk? - Linda Johnson PAV](#)
(Prevent Child Abuse Vermont), WCAX