# SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL ROUTINES AT Home

##### Kids Thrive on Structure

*April 1, 2020*

Welcome to the world of unexpected home-schooling! The date above is ironic, but unfortunately this is not a joke. The good news is that we are all in this together, so as a teacher and mother of two I’d like to share some tips and resources that I’ve found to help your home run more smoothly...

**Sleep**

It might surprise many adults to learn that the average elementary-aged child needs at least ten (***yes, 10!***) hours of sleep. Their bodies and minds are growing and changing constantly, and the *anxiety* of an uncertain school year- with a new family togetherness, limited access to friends and fresh air, lots of unstructured time- means that adequate sleep is paramount for learning. A calming evening *routine* is very helpful for good sleep hygiene: start by turning off *electronics*, take a warm bath or shower, then follow up with quiet reading time and lights out. Set an alarm for the morning and encourage your child to be as *independent* as their maturity level allows. Structure can be very reassuring, and parents... If your kids go to bed early, you have some downtime to de-stress! [school.sleepeducation.com/](http://school.sleepeducation.com/)

**Nutrition**

*Breakfast is the most important meal of the day*… who said that, anyway? (19th century Seventh Day Adventists James Caleb Jackson and John Harvey Kellogg, in order to sell their cereal!) Obviously this true for everyone, but for a child whose stomach is approximately the size of their fist, the importance of good nutrition to jump-start the day is clear. Whatever works for your family is fine… not many people have the time to make an omelet, but a breakfast high in protein, fiber and vitamins (cold pizza or Chinese food, anyone?) will keep your child’s brain functioning at its best until snack time... And yes, schedule healthy snack breaks mid-morning and mid-afternoon: the whole family will benefit! And don’t forget about lunch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SY1VL-Jhn90>

**Exercise**

Spring is generally an active time full of family get-togethers, playdates, festivals and vacations. Suddenly here we are with nowhere to go, and young children need to move! Experienced teachers know to take recess *breaks* so that children have a chance to expend some energy. Home-schooling parents also need to consider how much exercise children are getting inside (*or out if there’s a safe space*). [**www.theactivetimes.com**](http://www.theactivetimes.com/)

Just as you would for your own health, encourage children to walk (or race!) around the block, ride a bike or scooter, play catch or frisbee (*while maintaining a safe and healthy social distance*). In my area playgrounds and basketball courts are closed, but tennis is still an option. You might even start jogging as a family- it is totally fine to alternate running and walking as you all build up some stamina! If it’s a rainy day turn on some music and have a family “freeze dance” or play Simon Says! Most online resources are free during the pandemic, so check out the following:

<https://www.gonoodle.com/blog/gonoodle-games-movement-app-for-kids/> (fun for kids of all ages)

<https://6abc.com/health/virtual-workouts-you-can-stream-at-home/6021676/> (more for adults)

**Reading**

Read with your child! Fiction, nonfiction, books, articles, comics, poetry, signs, cereal boxes… It doesn’t really matter, as long as you’re *enjoying* your time together! If you enjoy reading, let your child see you reading too- have a daily DEAR time at home (*Drop Everything And Read*). Show them that reading is fun as well as a way to learn new *information*. If you have a computer or other device, go online and investigate a topic of interest: dinosaurs, outer space, ballet dancers… and be sure to discuss the fact that not everything on the internet is true! If you’re cooking a meal, have your child help read the recipe (or back of the box) and find the ingredients you need.

<https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/packages/recipes-for-kids/cooking-with-kids>

In the early elementary years, children will need to be able to recognize and write both capital and lowercase letters and be familiar with the sounds letters make. Their first and last names are good places to start! Begin their journey towards learning *phonics* by having fun with tongue twisters (alliteration) and reading rhyming poetry or Dr. Seuss books. The more familiar students are with basic *sight* words (most two-letter words), the more fun it will be to attempt to read and make meaning of a story. Ask questions like “What do you expect?” or “Why do you think?” that encourage *discussion*. Practice taking a “picture walk” together, finding context clues in the cover and illustrations that help predict the content of the book. And when your children are sick of the sound of your voice, let them read to you... or send them to the professionals! <https://www.storylineonline.net/>

**Math**

Count everything! Forward and backward, by twos and fives and tens… In order to do math, your child needs to know the *counting* words and understand that each one *corresponds* to an object in front of them. Can they tell you how many toys they have, or who has more candy? Your kindergartner should ideally be able to *recognize* and write the numbers from zero to twenty (or one hundred), and at minimum read and write legibly the *digits* zero through nine. There are lots of simple place value games to play using regular playing cards. Just remove the aces and face cards, divide the deck into two piles, and play “War” (the person with the higher card keeps both). You can also use any kind of flashcards to play War!

<https://quizlet.com/features/flashcards>

You can also turn cards face down and make it into a “Memory” game- try to match numbers (or equations), saying both out loud. Many resources can be found at the Dollar Store (which is still open!) If you have an analog (non-digital) clock at home, practice telling *time* to the hour and half-hour. Search for shapes and patterns everywhere you go. Read through supermarket circulars, give kids a list and budget, and let them figure out if there’s enough *money* for that special treat they want 😉

<https://learn.khanacademy.org/khan-academy-kids/>

Elementary students need to understand place value, especially the idea that there’s a *pattern*-

Hundred millions/ten millions/(one)millions , hundred thousands/ten thousands/(one) thousands , HTO!

Once they can add and subtract two or three digit numbers, try four or five digits- again, it’s a pattern! (*Multiplication* is just adding the same number over and over. *Division* is repeated subtraction.)

Pre-teens and teenagers should be able to compare, order and compute the value of all TYPES of numbers: fractions, decimals, positive and negative numbers, percentages... counting money is a good lead-in to all.

<http://www.watchknowlearn.org/Category.aspx?CategoryID=81>

**Homework**

This seems like common sense, but homework is for the *student*, not the parent! It is intended to be extended *practice* of a skill learned in school. If your child does not understand the homework, do your best to be supportive, but do not attempt to complete it for them! Ask questions like “What did you learn in class?” and “What did the teacher say?”. Set up a study area that is quiet and comfortable, and make sure they have all of the materials they need (paper, pencils, crayons, scissors, etc.) so there are no excuses not to get straight to work. If a student is struggling, frustrated, or taking an hour every night to do a simple worksheet, *the teacher needs this information.* Maybe the workload could be modified for your child, or perhaps everyone in the class had trouble with the assignment and the lesson needs to be *retaught*.

(Especially during this time, when we’re all trying to figure out how to manage, let the school do most of the educating so you focus on basic needs, love and all of the other important things!)

<https://www.verywellfamily.com/do-you-do-your-childs-homework-617225>

**Communication**

Find out what your school is doing to *help* during this stressful time, and reach out if you have a question or if there’s anything going on that feels like too much to handle... (like cabin fever!) Life *changes*, such an addition to the family or move to a new home, affect a child’s sleep patterns and energy level. This pandemic Is causing many to feel lonely and anxious. Please check email regularly, but also make time to step away from electronics and just *breathe* or look out the window... Also, remember to check in (by phone or snail mail!) with neighbors and classmates who may not have *access* to technology.

Each school, and in some cases, each classroom teacher, is using a different online tool to try to stay connected. Class Dojo, Zoom, Google Classroom...? The options can be confusing and *overwhelming*, so please be patient with yourself, your child, and your school. The best thing for your child is for you and the teacher to be part of a *team*, with the goal being your child’s academic, social and emotional success. It really does take a (global) village to raise a child, and teaching children that it’s okay to ask for help is a *valuable* life skill- today more than ever!

<https://www.howtogeek.com/661906/the-6-best-free-video-conferencing-apps/>

**In conclusion**, it is possible to cope and even *thrive* during this trying time if you keep a few simple things in mind: meet your child’s physical needs, support them academically, and keep the lines of communication open. Best wishes for a successful and healthy Spring, family and child!

**GENERAL RESOURCES**:

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/top-picks/best-student-collaboration-tools>

<https://6abc.com/stuck-at-home-coronavirus-closures-covid-19-homeschool/6018631/>

<https://sharemylesson.com/collections/free-online-resources-educators-parents-and-students>

<https://whyy.org/whyy-brings-the-classroom-home/>

<http://www.coloringpages101.com/>

**About the Author:**

**Jill Van Rawley, MAH** is a long-time educator and mother of two thriving teenagers. She has been working at CORA for the past five years, and before that performed a similar service at Catapult Learning. Jill has taught every age from preschool through eighth grade in private, public, and parochial schools. She was a classroom teacher in the upper elementary grades in Cherry Hill, NJ for ten years before staying home for several years while her two children were young. Teaching for CORA gives Jill a chance to provide targeted instruction and hands-on learning to remedial math students, and also indulge her creativity in art, music, and drama with enrichment reading groups. Jill teaches at three different parochial schools in Philadelphia, as well as through Zoom, *hopefully*!