EVIDENCE-FUELED REMOTE LEARNING

5 Tips to Help K-12 Kids Learn

Remote learning isn't all about screens; it’s about balance and being tech-intentional. We've isolated 5 of the most important research-based pillars of student learning and success to help guide educators and parents as they help students learn remotely.

These are also 5 of the most important research-based insights behind Everyschool.org’s model of healthy classroom tech use, The EdTech Triangle.

Boredom breeds creativity, reading printed texts and handwriting assignments helps students retain more and test higher, physical activity increases focus and brain power, and screen time should be intentional.

*This content was created by Everyschool.org, a nonprofit whose mission is to empower every school to embrace healthy, research-based educational technology.
BE BORED

WHY?
Nationwide, research shows our kids' creativity is on the decline, but boredom is actually a tool that sharpens the creative mind (among its many other benefits). The time and space for boredom is quite hard to come by in our modern culture, though; the average child aged 8-18 spending upwards of 6-8 hours on screens daily (and many children are over-scheduled with pre-planned activities when they're not on screens).

When students are bored, they:
- learn to delay gratification
- learn to cope with unstructured time
- learn self-reliance
- have time for reflection
- increase their creativity

Added common-sense benefits:
- students can learn the importance of being tech-intentional
- less screen time, which at its basic level can disrupt sleep, cause eye problems, and decrease cardiovascular fitness

HOW?
Teachers Can...
Encourage quiet, reflective time by reducing busy work and assigning homework that encourages students to process their thoughts free of artificial limits. Teachers can also embrace the idea that learning doesn’t always have to be intensely overstimulating, entertaining, or "game-based."

Parents Can...
Encourage and schedule blocks of "bored time" for their children. What results will be unstructured play for younger kids, and reflection or awareness for older kids. What's more, kids can begin to further develop hobbies and interests outside of screens and start to feel the satisfaction of being internally motivated to engage in activities (as opposed to externally motivated).

READ ON!
"The Creativity Crisis," by Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman
"Is Your Child Getting Enough Real Downtime?" by Susan Bartell
PRIORITIZE PRINT

WHY?

Reading printed texts isn’t just an old-school, romanticized practice; when it comes to learning, research shows it’s superior to reading electronic texts in almost every way.

When students read a printed text vs. an electronic text, research shows they:

- comprehend and retain more information
- engage in deeper and more fluid reading
- are more likely to enjoy reading and be above-average readers
- test higher
- focus better

Added common-sense benefits:

- less device-based distraction
- students can learn the importance of being tech-intentional
- less screen time, which at its basic level can disrupt sleep, cause eye problems, and decrease cardiovascular fitness

HOW?

Teachers Can...

Decide to prioritize print where possible by encouraging students to read the print books they have at home for certain assignments (although not all students have access to a robust print library, neither does every student have access to reliable Wi-Fi). Teachers can also ask their District for assistance in safely providing print books from the school library or other sources.

Parents Can...

Ask their child’s teacher if the school has a safe method of providing access to print books via the school library or other sources. Parents can also seek out books via their local library (if open!) or through a neighborhood book exchange. Affordable sources for print books such as www.paperbackswap.com are useful as well.

READ ON!

"As Kids' On-Screen Reading Overtakes Print, Outcome is Worrisome," by Dennis Abrams
EMBRACE HANDWRITING

WHY?
For creating ideas and remembering information, handwriting assignments or class notes has proven to be more effective for learning, and it helps younger students develop critical fine motor skills.

When students handwrite vs. type an assignment, research shows they:
- comprehend and retain more information
- test higher
- focus better
- develop fine motor skills

Added common-sense benefits:
- students can learn the importance of being tech-intentional
- less screen time, which at its basic level can disrupt sleep, cause eye problems, and decrease cardiovascular fitness

HOW?
Teachers Can...
Require students to handwrite assignments when possible, and especially for younger students. Handwritten work can simply be turned in electronically via a photo of the assignment, or then typed (if practicing keyboarding is a goal).

Parents Can..
Encourage their children to handwrite their assignments, and also encourage letter-writing, drawing, or other activities.

READ ON!
"The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking," by Pam A. Mueller and Daniel M. Oppenheimer
"Handwriting Engages the Mind," by Deborah Bach
"Better Learning Through Handwriting," by Trond Egil Toft
Get Moving

Why?

Exercise and movement are brain fuel.

When students engage in physical activity, research shows they:

- improve their cognition
- improve their memory
- increase their attention spans
- improve their test scores

Added common-sense benefits:

- better physical health
- increased happiness levels

How?

Teachers Can...

Incorporate movement or exercise into their curriculum—even for older students. This can come in the form of a movement-based assignment, but teachers might also simply require students to do a physical task (such as a walk) at a certain time during the remote learning day.

Parents Can...

Model, encourage, and support movement-based activities and exercise. Consider blocking off time each day for physical play and exertion, and participate with your child if you like (or, don’t, and use this as an opportunity to build your child’s independence).

Read on!

"Learning in Motion: Bring Movement Back to the Classroom," by Marwa Abdelbary
"Move Your Body, Grow Your Brain," by Donna Wilson
"Movement During Class Improves Students’ Academics," by Linda Carroll
BE SCREEN AWARE

WHY?

Screens are ubiquitous and compelling. But, without truly paying attention to when they're used, how they're used, and how much they're used, they can quickly impact our lives in a myriad of negative ways.

Research shows that too much screen time:

- decreases creativity
- decreases curiosity
- is linked to slower language acquisition
- is linked to slower motor skill development
- is linked to lower test scores
- is linked to physical problems such as sleep disturbances, eye problems, and decreased cardiovascular fitness

HOW?

Teachers Can...
Streamline the number of interfaces students or parents have to interact with, assign activities or lessons that don’t include screens, and collaborate with other grade-level teachers to coordinate virtual conferences so as to avoid scheduling conflicts or "Zoom Fatigue." Teachers can also provide printed materials or assign hands-on activities when possible.

Parents Can...
Take an active role in their kids' digital health by creating family standards and practices surrounding screen time and types of apps used. Parents can also help kids schedule blocks of screen-free time throughout the week as well as modeling healthy screen habits themselves.

READ ON!

"'Zoom Fatigue' is Taxing the Brain," by Benjamin Rasmussen
"More Screen Time Equals Weaker Brains, Lower Language Scores," by Varda Epstein
"More Screen Time for Young Kids Now, Poorer Development Later?" by Elizabeth Hlavinka

www.everyschool.org
REFLECTIONS ON REMOTE LEARNING

WE KNOW:

- Kids get enough screen time
- In-person instruction is uniquely powerful compared to remote/screen-based instruction
- Screens can be addictive, distracting, overstimulating, and vehicles for bullying or inappropriate online content

Practical and Philosophical Questions To Consider:

1. What would teachers have done 30 years ago to teach students remotely?
2. How can schools streamline the platforms and applications they use?
3. How does technology complicate deep learning? How does it support deep learning?
4. Is the pressure to adopt screens for most aspects of remote learning founded? Would there be benefits to providing printed materials for some portion of the curriculum?
5. Does screen-based remote learning make it easier or harder for parents to oversee?
6. How can teachers better prioritize handwriting vs. finger writing or typing on a device so as to support fine motor skill development in younger students?
7. If your District is considering a fall 2020 schedule that includes both in-school days and out-of-school, remote learning days, can teachers assign and provide materials while kids are in schools so as to minimize screen time and streamline instruction?

More about Everyschool.org

If you've found this short guide to remote learning helpful, check out the others things we do:

- We share research. We believe educators are more effective when they know what the scholarly research community says about best practices with technology in the classroom.
- We've created a model of healthy classroom tech use. We believe that most schools can benefit from a clear system or philosophy with how they use technology in the classroom, and that's why we've developed The EdTech Triangle, the first-ever research-based model of healthy classroom tech use. To find out more, and to download free posters of The EdTech Triangle, visit www.everyschool.org.
- We partner with schools. Everyschool's Independent Technology Assessment (ITA) is a comprehensive survey suite designed to help administrators determine how technology is being used across their school district— including what's working and where there might be room for improvement. Interested Superintendents can email us at hello@everyschool.org for more information about this service.