



# The Role of Parents in Virtual Learning (Secondary)

Supporting your child's virtual learning experience is an essential part of their success while learning from home. Just like in a conventional, face-to-face classroom learning model, all required courses are taught and reported on. During virtual learning, your child is expected to participate in instruction and complete assigned learning activities each day. They will show proof of participation in daily virtual learning by satisfactorily engaging with assigned learning activities and completing assignments to demonstrate their learning by the assigned due date. For students with special education needs, this will include instructional and assessment accommodations as identified in their Individual Education Plan (IEP). For English Language Learners, this may include assessment accommodations as well as remote support from their classroom or ESL teacher.

Teachers may engage with students through a variety of means including Microsoft Teams, Google, D2L, telephone, email and there is no expectation for educators or students to be online all day.

## Communicating with the Teacher

During virtual learning, your child is expected to participate in instruction and complete assigned learning activities each day. Staying up to date with communications is an essential component to providing support for your child's virtual learning experience.

- Make sure you know when and how to best communicate with teachers (i.e., email, phone)
- Recognize that teachers are teaching during the instructional day, just like in a conventional, face-to-face classroom, and interruptions during instructional time negatively impact teaching and student learning.
- If a parent has concerns or questions, they should be addressed during the times provided by the teacher, such as before or after school. *Parents are not to interject themselves into a classroom environment while the teacher is online with students; this would not occur during conventional teaching. Parents should not be using the chat function to address the teacher.*
- Make sure you and your child stay in communication with their educators when in need of additional learning support
- Audio/Video recording or taking pictures of the online classroom environments is not allowed to protect the privacy of staff and students

## Dates to Consider

Students are encouraged to stay in communication with their teachers when in need of additional learning support. Being aware of key dates during the quadmester will help you to check in with your child and monitor their progress. Please note that culminating tasks will take place during the last two weeks of the course.

Quadmester	Begins	Ends	Turnaround Day
2	Monday, November 16	Thursday, February 4	Friday, February 5
3	Monday, February 8	Wednesday, April 21	Thursday, April 22
4	Monday, April 26	Monday, June 28	

## Supporting Your Child

No one expects parents to be full-time teachers or to be educational and content matter experts. Staying connected to your teen helps them to balance the demands of school with their other commitments and interests, and supports them toward the goal of being independent.

- Avoid hovering over every lesson. Your child needs to make mistakes, interact with others, and learn to attend, all of which may be hindered if you are watching everything that they do.
- Provide support and encourage your child while expecting them to do their part
- Resist the urge to help by providing your child with the answers...struggling is allowed and encouraged and that is how learning happens! It is important for your child's teachers to know what they are able to do independently
- The virtual classroom is designed to support teaching and learning. Respect and honour the classroom space, just as you would a regular classroom. *The teacher is responsible for the classroom learning environment, including the content being taught, and ensuring a safe and positive learning experience for students*
- *Parents shall not use social media to post/share disrespectful messages or photos—any concerns should be addressed with the classroom teacher*

Here are some questions that might help spark a conversation with your child:

In the morning, you might ask:

- What will you be learning today?
- Why are you learning it?
- How will you know you learned it?
- What resources/materials do you need?
- What can I do to help?

At the end of the day, you might ask:

- How far did you get in your learning tasks today?
- What did you learn/practice/read today?
- What learning did you enjoy most today?
- What was easy or challenging for you?
- Do you have any questions for your teacher?
- What could we do to make tomorrow a good day?

## Becoming Familiar with Tools and Resources

HCDSB uses a learning management system (LMS) to support remote learning and this is the primary way that students will access content and activities. HCDSB teachers are using the Brightspace/D2L and/or Google Classroom LMS.

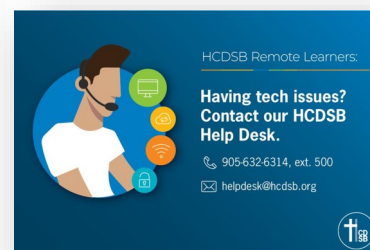
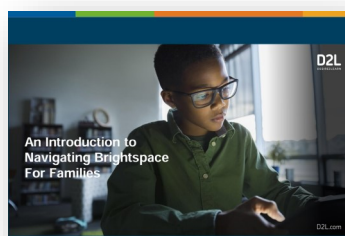
Microsoft Teams is how teachers are meeting with students online. Ensuring your child is familiar with the features of the learning management system will support them to successfully engage in virtual learning.

This includes knowing:

- How to log into the learning management system
- How to navigate the site
- How learning is organized
- How to use the mute button when there is background noise in the environment or to unmute to answer questions or interact with peers
- How to use the camera: Encourage your child to keep the camera on as seeing faces helps to build a sense of community and belonging and visual cues help the educator to know if a child is understanding the lesson or not
- How to raise their hand
- How to submit assignments
- How to ask the teacher a question about an assignment

The following resources have been developed to support parents/guardians. To access, click on the document. If you encounter technical issues related to remote learning, please contact the HCDSB Help Desk [helpdesk@hcdsb.org](mailto:helpdesk@hcdsb.org)

Please note  
*Chrome* or  
*Firefox* are the  
recommended  
browsers to use  
with D2L.



## Establishing Regular Routines

Establishing a regular routine will support your child in taking ownership of their learning and structuring their virtual school day. Establishing predictable routines for children helps them to better self-regulate and are known to reduce stress (Shanker, 2013). Creating a schedule for waking up, going to bed, eating meals, going to school, etc., will improve your quality of life and decrease the stress level of your children (Wiseman, Fisher, Frye & Hattie, 2020).

Regular attendance in virtual classes is critical to your child's success. It is important that students feel like they are going to school, even when they are participating in remote learning. Similar to in-person environments, teachers take attendance at multiple times during the day. The expectation is that students are punctual, prepared and present for the duration of the class time.

The quadmester schedule places an increased importance on regular attendance due to the fast pace of learning. With fewer teaching days, but longer periods of time in class, missing a single day in a quadmester could be the equivalent of missing 1.5 to 2 days of a regular semester day.

## Evening Routines

The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology recommends a regular schedule of sleep and wake times, including 8-10 hours of uninterrupted sleep for children aged 14-17 years. Canadian researcher, Dr. Stuart Shankar, who is known as one of the world's leading authorities on self-regulation and child development, identifies sleep as an essential component for managing stress. Lack of adequate sleep can affect an adolescent's ability to manage their energy and emotions over the course of the day.

Halton Region's [Parenting Your Teen](#) website provides tips for a healthy lifestyle including sleep etiquette, nutrition, screen time, and physical activity.

## Executive Functioning Skills

Developing executive functioning skills is important for student success in school and in life. These skills include managing time, paying attention, planning and organizing, remembering details and multi-tasking.

*"Executive function and self-regulation skills are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. Just as an air traffic control system at a busy airport safely manages the arrivals and departures of many aircraft on multiple runways, the brain needs this skill set to filter distractions, prioritize tasks, set and achieve goals, and control impulses. They also enable positive behavior and allow us to make healthy choices for ourselves and our families."*

(The Center on the Developing Child <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/executive-function/>)

The Centre on the Developing Child shares the following strategies for building these crucial skills with adolescents:



Click on the image to  
access this document.

## Providing an Appropriate Learning Space

Provide an appropriate learning space for your child, when possible. Ideally, select a designated area for learning that is quiet, free from distractions and has a good internet connection. This will allow your child to focus on school learning activities and assignments, while practising appropriate digital safety.

Considerations for creating workspaces:

- Identify a dedicated workspace for each child where possible, ideally outside of their bedroom that has a good Internet connection
- Try to keep the space consistent so that habits form relative to that space
- Keep the supplies needed for learning in that space
- Minimize distractions and disruptions such as television and cell phones
- Develop plans for taking breaks, movement, and getting water or food
- Establish ground rules for using the space, including:
  - \* How others in the home should act in that space
  - \* How your child should remain in one spot and not walk around the house during meetings as this is distracting to the educator and classmates
  - \* Having your child leave that space to do other things, such as exercise, eat and socialize
  - \* Ensuring family members are not engaging in noisy tasks during online meetings

## Encourage Physical Activity

Virtual learning at home can have an impact on a child's physical activity. Encourage your child to engage in physical activity and exercise. This may include opportunities to be active together as a household. Also, allow time for them to get up and move around during their virtual school day.

## Self-Control, On-Task Behaviour, Achievement and Respect (SOAR)

The S.O.A.R Virtual Learning Matrix developed by Jessica and John Hannigan, outlines practical expectations for virtual learning related to self-control, on-task behaviour, achievement and respect (<https://www.pbisrewards.com/wp-content/uploads/virtual-learning-pbis-matrix-hannigans-w.pdf> and cited in Wiseman, Fisher, Frye & Hattie, 2020). Parents may find this matrix helpful when supporting their child with appropriate online behaviour.

S.O.A.R. VIRTUAL LEARNING MATRIX	
<b>S</b> SELF-CONTROL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow instructions</li> <li>Wait for your turn to speak or contribute</li> <li>Use the raise-your-hand feature</li> <li>Minimize distractions</li> <li>Utilize chat features appropriately</li> </ul>
<b>O</b> ON-TASK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Log in on time</li> <li>Be present/actively engaged</li> <li>Organize your materials</li> <li>Set daily goals</li> <li>Make yourself visible</li> <li>Have a backup plan if you get disconnected</li> </ul>
<b>A</b> ACHIEVEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete tasks on time/stay on top of assignments</li> <li>Be prepared</li> <li>Complete preparation work</li> <li>Reach out to the teacher for help</li> <li>Share and collaborate</li> <li>Write in complete sentences</li> <li>Create a schedule/space to complete assignments</li> </ul>
<b>R</b> RESPECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mute microphone when others are speaking</li> <li>Respect others' perspectives</li> <li>Use kind words</li> <li>Use proper text etiquette (ALL CAPS, bold, italics, sarcasm/jokes, etc. can be misinterpreted in a digital space)</li> <li>Help each other during group assignments and in designated meeting rooms</li> <li>Resolve conflict peacefully</li> </ul>



EQUITY  
in school  
discipline



Students should see their parents/guardians as their greatest cheerleaders and coaches. Supporting your child's virtual learning experience and guiding them to be independent learners and thinkers is an important part of student success and achievement. For additional information, you may find it helpful to read Halton Region's *Five Tips to Help Your Teams Succeed in High School* and *Digital Citizenship* from the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE).

