



SCHOOL COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we enter Spring in Ontario it is unlike any we have experienced before as we all do our part by social distancing and staying at home.

We have seen big changes to the way our children are learning right now with everyone moving to an online platform and the skills parents need to support them at home.

I hope that one of the lessons that will come out of this difficult time will be the importance of parent engagement in their children's learning and mental health. Clearly, there are a lot of parents out there who may not have gotten involved in their children's learning that now are having to be home "teachers". For some it will come naturally, and for others it is definitely a struggle. I hope all parents remember this time and stay engaged in this children's education as long as they are in school. Take advantage of math and literacy parent nights at school or online to build your skills.

I would like to applaud our children. Their world has been turned upside down between being isolated from the friends and family, they are taking on a whole new way of learning and doing a fantastic job. Please give your child a

well-deserved "pat on the back" today and let them know what a great job they are doing.

Likewise, our teachers and administrators have stepped up and had to adapt to a whole new world as well. Who would have thought that we would ever have to close our schools for such an extended amount of time and that the whole system would shift to online learning? Thank you.

This month's newsletter features tips for supporting your children while they are at home as well as strategies to be successful while learning online. It also features positive messages from many organizations to parents, students and educators.

This month's issue is a THANK YOU card to all of those who are involved in the education system in Ontario.

Remember, DREAM BIG because together we can do more!!

Theresa Pastoreo

*Executive Director,
Parents Engaged in Education*

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR ELEARNING

Source: Christopher Tappas

COURSE: 8 STUDY TIPS FOR ONLINE LEARNERS

Taking online courses can be very convenient for many people. However, online learning requires time management skills, self-discipline, willpower, and strong motivation, as it may be challenging for online learners to successfully complete their eLearning courses. In this article, I'll share 10 key study tips for online learners, in order to help you stay focused and motivated when taking courses online.

1. UNDERSTAND ONLINE LEARNING PRACTICES AND EXPECTATIONS.

The first thing you need to realize is that online courses are not an easier way to learn, but rather a more convenient one. To successfully learn online, you need to dedicate a significant amount of your time, consistently attend the program, be concentrated while studying, and fully commit to your learning process, just as you would do for a regular course. You should also have in mind that when you take an online course, you may be expected to:

- Fully commit yourself and participate in the virtual classroom as required.
- Be, or be willing to become, tech-savvy. o Work with others effectively.
- Complete your learning tasks and assignments on time.

- Be self-disciplined. If you are not able or willing to do all of the above, you will probably not be a very happy online learner.

2. MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE RELIABLE INTERNET ACCESS.

Technology glitches happen all the time. Imagine you are working in the middle of the night and your computer crashes. To avoid mishaps, ensure that you save your work repeatedly and backup regularly using cloud storage, for example Dropbox or Google Documents, in order to be able to access your previous work from your smart phone or tablet, if needed. Furthermore, ensure that you not only have a backup of your online course material and assignments, but also you have saved your instructor's or trainer's contact information in your cell phone or in your

email. A reliable internet access will also give you the opportunity to check in, stay current with your eLearning course, and deal with sudden schedule changes.

1. **Have a dedicated study space.**

Whether you decide to study in your office or in your living room, ensure that this place is quiet, organized, distraction-free, and available for use at any time. Your study environment should be one of your main concerns when you are an online learner, so make sure that it enables your study routine. Furthermore, ask your friends, relatives, and colleagues to respect your “work mode” and consider turning off your phone and logging off of all social networks when studying; you will want to be neither interrupted nor distracted.

2. **Identify your learning objectives and goals.**

To stay on track with your online course, make sure that you always keep in mind what you hope to accomplish by the end of it. The learning objectives and goals of the eLearning course can be an excellent road map during online learning; read carefully your online course requirements, create notes that are closely related to your objectives, and make sure that you review them thoroughly every time you start an assignment, so that you stay focused on your goals. Finally, consider starting with the most difficult tasks, as this will improve both the effectiveness of your study and your performance.

3. **Build a study plan.**

An study plan is critical to online learning. Here are some tips to help you build it:

- **Plan ahead.**

Never wait until the day before an assignment due date to start working on it. It will stress you and stress will prevent you from effectively completing

the online task. Furthermore, knowing when all of your assignments are due until the end of the eLearning course will facilitate your time management; for instance, if you are going on vacation in the middle of the eLearning course, you can study ahead.

- **Have an effective calendar system.**

Online learning needs structure; create a study calendar that will help you remember all important dates, like exams, or deadlines for submitting your assignments. You can save your calendar in your computer or in your mobile device, or you can even create a wall planner, which you can mark up and check every time you study.

- **Create to-do lists.**

At the start of each week, make a to-do list of the tasks you need to complete by the end of the week. This is an excellent way to prioritize your study plan and stay on track with your studying.

- **Set time limits.**

Before you start studying, estimate how much time each task will take to complete, whether it is a specific assignment or simply reading a chapter. Try to stick to your time limits, as this will help you develop your self-discipline. Furthermore, when you realize that despite your best efforts you cannot concentrate, consider stopping for an hour or for the night; it is better to wait until you are able to start afresh than to waste your time trying to focus.

- **Stay on schedule.**

Finally, stick to your study plan. Procrastination is the worst enemy of online learners, so make sure that you stay organized and you are not falling behind in your online class. If you are having difficulties submitting your

assignments on time, contact your online course instructor and let them know, so that they can help you create a consistent study routine.

4. Ask for help when you need it.

While it may be constructive to look for answers to your online course-related questions independently, hesitating to contact your online instructor when you are stuck may be problematic. If you don't ask for help when necessary, you may end up falling behind, which may lower your self-esteem, as you may not be able to keep up with the online course. Build a relationship with your online instructor and avoid misunderstandings by contacting them regularly and informing them who you are, and how you could use their help. By asking your online instructors to clarify problems, you will also help them not only to evaluate learners' level of understanding of the online material, but also to get an idea of the overall effectiveness of the online course. Finally, due to the open nature of online courses, by asking a question, you also help at the same time your virtual classmates, in case they are having similar difficulties. Keep in mind that if you don't ask for help when you need it, your online instructor may never know that something is wrong.

5. Review, revise, repeat.

Regular revisions of the things you have already studied will not only improve your memory, but they will also help you better understand what you are learning. Create your own flash cards for your key notes and quiz yourself on the key concepts of the online course. Furthermore, consider having one or more study partners; working in groups will offer you alternative views of difficult concepts, motivation to achieve better results, and help in

completing your online assignments more quickly by reviewing what you have learned. Share your study notes and habits with your virtual classmates and support each other throughout the online learning process.

6. Take study breaks.

Your performance will decrease if you are feeling tired or frustrated while studying. Integrate some personal time into your study routine and you will be able to work more effectively on your online course goals. When taking a break, make sure that you get away from your study space; you need to have a change of scenery. A mild physical activity, such as a walk around the block, will help you maintain balance, renew energy, and go back to studying with a clear mind.

7. Participate in online discussions.

Online learning doesn't necessarily mean learning in isolation. Connecting with your virtual classmates on social media or your online course's forum will enhance tremendously your eLearning experience, especially if you are an introvert and visual barriers hinder you in expressing yourself. Participate actively in online discussions and group activities, suggest study tricks, offer your input on the eLearning course, and engage in new ideas. Just ensure that you are mindful of your online tone; be respectful when you disagree with other members of your online group, and always write in complete and clear sentences to avoid misunderstandings and tone mishaps.

8. Stay motivated.

Finally, don't underestimate the effort needed to fully commit to your online course. To make sure that you stay motivated and engaged in your online learning experience, consider following these tips:

LEARNING AT HOME

From: blog by Aubry Lee, Education.com

In my social communities, I have witnessed a collective, understandable anxiety from parents suddenly asked to be their child's teachers. So first off, remember that you have always been and always will be your child's primary teacher. Furthermore, I went to school to be a teacher, taught elementary school, then spent a decade as a school administrator, and I can tell you this: no one expects you to be teaching your child in a manner that mirrors what would happen in school. Remember that learning can and should happen everywhere, and these times will certainly call for flexibility.

For those are that learning at home, here are some ideas you may not have considered:

OFF-SCREEN LEARNING

- **Play with a Deck of Cards:**

I suppose you could teach your kindergartener how to play Texas Hold'em, but in the event that isn't for you, did you know there are a ton of games that reinforce math skills using only a deck of cards? And beyond a deck of cards, Family Math, a phenomenal resource by the Lawrence Hall of Science in Berkeley, is also bursting with games to play at home.

- **Read, Read, Read:**

I know I say this in every blog, but again, this is a perfect time to pick up a book and read. For children who are reading independently, have them record their reading or make a video reading a book to a class. I bet your friends and family would love to watch your kid reading *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* And don't forget about audiobook services, which have many great titles for kids. Audiobooks don't replace the physical act of reading, but in tandem, they can be a fabulous way to hear the language of books. Also, consider a family book club! Rotate who chooses the book--parents, it is really comforting to read a children's book right now--and have a sit-down, grown-up

discussion about it, hopefully with food. Check out some discussion prompts for book talks here.

- **Go on Scavenger Hunts:**
Give your child a clipboard or a pad of sticky notes and send them on an indoor scavenger hunt for just about anything. Here are some ideas: find all the squares/circles/triangles, find everything yellow, or find everything that starts with the letter M. For older students, find compound words, long vowels, right angles, or fractions.
- **Label Things:**
Okay, I know I'm manic with labels. But hand your early learner a pad of stickies and have them label the living room.
- **Use your imagination and build something:**
In my day, before the internet and cable TV, a refrigerator box was like, the coolest thing ever. Don't have a refrigerator box lying around, and don't feel like ordering one today? Give your child a box full of recycled materials, such as paper towel tubes, egg cartons, empty cereal boxes, and a roll of tape and have them go at it. You can also give them a challenge: can you build something that can hold two books on top while only using 6 things from the box? What's the tallest thing you can build only using 2 items, but as many of those items as you want?

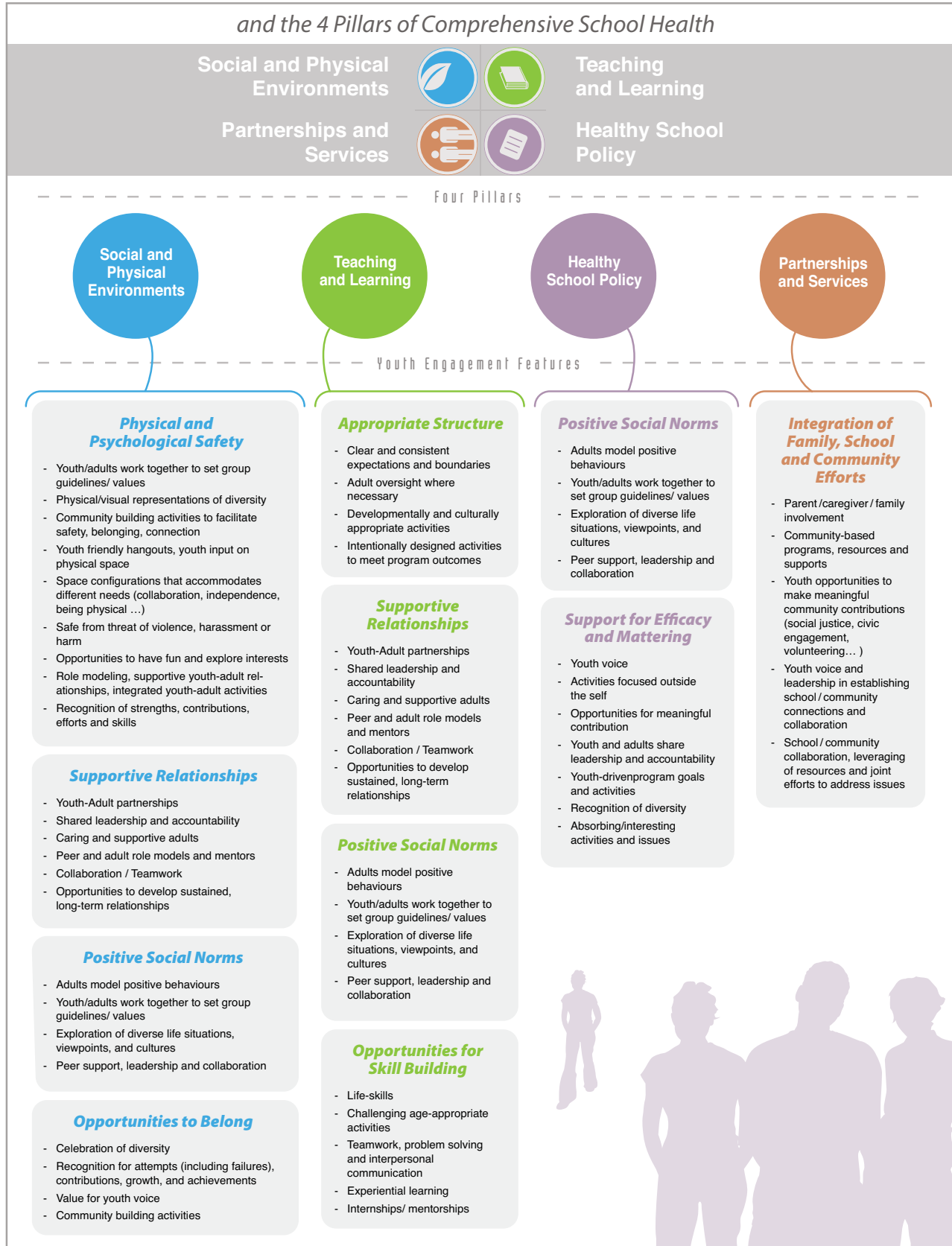
ON-SCREEN LEARNING

While we don't want our kids to be staring glassy-eyed at screens all day long, there are certainly learning opportunities online as well, many of which have been circulating these days. Here are a few additional ideas:

- **Take a Virtual Tour:**
Many museums and other places are offering free virtual tours. Have your child pick a place to "visit" and write, tell, or record five new things they learned.
- **Interview a Family Member Virtually:**
With many people in the same situation, make a virtual date with a family member for an interview. Here are some interview questions you can try (Family Interview: Culture and World Events and Interview: Everyone Makes Mistakes), or you can make up your own.
- **Listen to a Book:**
Many services online have made their books and the audio recordings available online. Who doesn't love to be read to?
- **Create Something:**
I painted a bunch of Harry Potter peg dolls for my sister once. (Really, look it up. It's a thing.) Well, my super creative niece decided to use them to re-enact all the books using a stop-motion video app. The point is there are tons of ways to be active rather than passive with technology. Have them make a movie, create a website, animate a cartoon, code a program, or write a book.

KEY FEATURES OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

and the 4 Pillars of Comprehensive School Health



Check out the **Key Features of YE and CSH** resource.

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See our list of COVID-19-related resources for parents.

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**We're all
in this *together.***



**Stay strong,
stay safe.**



Unity is our strength.
Education workers,
students, parents,
and families will
get through this
together.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND SCHOOL COUNCILS IN ONTARIO

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