

Importance of Keeping Our Students on a Regular Schedule!

As we navigate new service delivery models, we want to encourage you to work with your state agency partners, including your local DJJ facility and your private child care agencies to ensure students are keeping a regular schedule. The research is clear that keeping a schedule is critical to helping our students be successful. Below is an article recently published in the New York Post about the importance of daily schedules (with minor edits for content). Please reach out to your agency partners to work together in planning the daily activities for our students while they are receiving distance education services.

How To Keep Your Kid On A Schedule During Coronavirus School Closings ([Link to Original Article](#))

By Melkorka Licea
March 16, 2020 |

There's nothing routine about the coronavirus epidemic, but **experts say keeping a regular learning schedule for kids and teens is a must.**

That's why when Massachusetts mom Jessica McHale started keeping her kids home from school last Friday, she crafted a colorful "COVID-19 Daily Schedule" that includes blocks of time for "morning walk," "creative time" and "academic time."

"I knew in order to keep them mentally engaged and happy for however many weeks we're home, they'll have to have something to look forward to," McHale tells The Post. "It reduces anxiety in kids that are anxious because they have that structure to look to."

Thinking it may help out a friend or two, McHale, a photographer, posted the schedule on Facebook, where it swiftly went viral.

"I had no idea so many other people would like it," she says of the timetable, which has been shared 52,000 times and was even made into a meme ("10:00 – 11:00: Fight. Ask for snacks"). "I think it's because routines provide comfort, and right now, there is so much chaos that everyone is just looking for comfort and safety wherever they can find it."

Here, McHale and other education experts share all the best tips and tricks for keeping kids on schedule and out of trouble while they hit the books from home.

Just like morning and afternoon recess at school, parents [and others responsible for providing supervision of educational experiences while schools are closed to in-person services] should factor in two periods of outdoor time so kids of all ages can let out their energy and keep their spirits up. Consider a walk around the block, bike ride or a stoopside chat — keeping in mind social-distancing parameters — first thing in the morning.

"My kids are very energetic, and if they start the day lazing around and watching TV, we'd never get the momentum back," says McHale, who has three kids ages 7, 9 and 13. "Getting outside, moving, fresh air — it just puts everyone in a good mood."

Schedule the second outdoor block after the 3 p.m. slump. Just like adults who crave their post-lunch coffee as a pick-me-up, teens and kids should recharge outside midafternoon. Getting fresh air is great for teens, too, says Amber Robbins, a grad student in teen counseling, who made her own teen-focused coronavirus schedule. “It gives them the chance to mentally prepare for the day and practice mindfulness.”

Both experts agree that helping around the house [or cottage or residential pod] earlier in the day helps remind teens and kids that they’re an important part of their family/support units. “For young children, doing chores gives them a sense of control over their own safety,” says McHale. Plus, adding in chore time to when parents might be cleaning themselves — like after lunch on McHale’s schedule — helps encourage the kids to join in. Teens also need that positive reinforcement. “We call ourselves Team Robbins, and we all have a role to play and that really helps to build resilience, a sense of responsibility and being needed.”

While keeping up with academic assignments from school is important, Robbins says parents should use this time to teach them everyday lessons that are often overlooked like laundry, cooking and even financial tips. “I hear so many adults say, ‘My kids are so busy with school and after-school stuff, they don’t even know how to do the laundry,’” says Robbins. “How often will we be blessed with this time together? This is a great time for parents to focus on teaching those adult-role lessons.” Younger kids can learn similarly useful skills by doing things like setting the table, arranging snacks for the family or feeding the family pet.

McHale recommends putting any allotted screen time at the end of the day as a reward.

“I know that if my kids start off the day with a walk and they get into their creative projects, what they come up with is amazing,” says McHale. “But once they hook into the screens, they tend to not have the same level of energy.”

For teens, constantly reading the coronavirus updates can lead to more stress rather than help them hone new skills, says Robbins, of Salt Lake City, Utah. Instead, allow them to only use screens for educational apps and documentaries during the daytime, and save social screen time for after dinner. [However, it is important to have age appropriate conversations with our students about what is happening, why it is happening, why they are not in school, etc. Governor Andy Beshear will have a YouTube video conference today, march 17 at 5pm to talk directly to kids.]

While it may be easy to draft a schedule, the hard part is actually sticking to it. That’s why McHale and Robbins always recommend printing it out and keeping it posted around the house, so kids and teens can see it every day and make check marks next to their completed tasks.