



Learning On The Go: Parents' Role During Remote Learning

With schools temporarily operating remotely and everyone sheltering in place, you have suddenly been thrust into a new role and perhaps have many questions. Should I hover and make sure my child does every assignment? Should I back off and allow for space? Should I stay in touch regularly with the teacher(s)? What are the best suggestions for this role that I now have? Thanks for asking....and of course, the answer depends on the age of your child(ren).

We want to acknowledge that Waverly's elementary school doesn't usually ask much in terms of home learning. In a regular school environment, we believe that children are learning and working hard between 8:45-3:00 each day, so tacking on extra work for home isn't necessary or conducive to deeper learning. For many homes, the current reality is a new experience.

Yet, we are in a new paradigm and you (yes you!) are being asked to support your child's learning at home. Here are some tried and true ways to be supportive and provide a healthy home learning environment.

1) **Create routines.**

Plan a daily or weekly schedule with your child. This provides you both with a routine and consistency. At Waverly, this is what the teachers do for the first 6-8 weeks of school. Discuss each part of the schedule and have them practice it a few times. This reliability to the day regulates you and your child and is probably the most important aspect of any type of learning environment: consistency, consistency, consistency.

2) **Carve out a space; even the smallest is helpful.**

Each home is different, and we don't want to assume that everyone has space already set up for home learning. Yet if you think creatively and re-arrange to create a dedicated space, this will support consistent routines. It provides a non-negotiable decision already in place every time work is being done.

3) **Facilitate, don't dictate.**

Remember that the teachers are developing and sharing curriculum for your child to do independently. Most of the daily work consists of activities that your child has practiced many times throughout the first six months of school. Instead of explaining the work to them, ask questions such as, "What do you think you do first?" "What do you think comes next?" "Try one first and then we will look at it." "What do you know about this question" "What specifically are you not sure of?" Helping children remember the strategies they know builds self-confidence and independence.

3a) **Asking for help.**

When #3 isn't working, please use the practice we employ at school in terms of helping children develop independence. Have them re-read directions, do the first problem and then check in with you, circle what is confusing, skip the problem, and finally stop when it is too frustrating. Flexibility is key here. Don't demand...back off! Try "Let's put it away for now and come back to it later."

4) Be specific with expectations!

Power struggles are the worst. If you find yourself beginning to demand, step back and refresh your memory on #3 above. When giving instructions, be specific and concise. “Please spend the next 10 minutes finishing your math work” rather than “Can you please finish your math work now, so I don’t have to keep asking you?” Be direct in a loving way and remember that less is more. “Tidy your room” rather than “I see you have clothes all over the place, you have cups on the table, your toys are a mess...etc.” Another great one is, “Do you want to clean up now or in two minutes?” Offer choice within your comfort level!

5) Take breaks...for yourself and your child.

As you develop #1, set up regular break times throughout the day. These can be short movement breaks (stretch up high and touch the ceiling, stretch down low and touch your toes) to longer breaks (walk the neighborhood, ride a bike, play outside, quiet reading, drawing, etc.) Being developmentally thoughtful, Waverly teachers build in breaks very regularly, even if just to stand up, stretch, get a water bottle, change spaces, etc. Figure in these times for yourself as well. This is especially key so that you can be your best self (mostly!).

6) Develop a code word or gesture for when you need to create space from each other.

In many of our classrooms, we develop an individual code word or sign that lets the student and teacher know they may need to use the bathroom or take a break without interrupting the flow of the lesson or work time. Before you become frustrated and demanding, come up with a code word that you can use or your child(ren) can use that announces space is needed. This code word/gesture shouldn’t be used with anger or frustration; just say it or make the gesture and that means you mutually agree to stop and give space.

7) Imagine your “favorite” space and go there in your mind occasionally.

Some of us have a favorite place or space to go to when overwhelmed. If you don’t, envision one! Remember (aging myself now) the 70s commercial “Calgon take me away!” Maybe combine this one with #6...so when the code word or gesture is used...you get to “Calgon away!”

8) Find ways to talk to other parents/adults; video chatting through Zoom.

The classroom teachers are providing regular visual check-ins with their students. This offers community and the idea that we are still a group that supports each other. Through the [Zoom website](#), you can create adult meetups or ‘happy hour’ type conversations. Check it out—and please don’t invite our teachers...they can’t participate!

9) Don’t think you have to do everything, every day.

Waverly teachers are working each day with the plan of providing a rich remote learning experience. How long an individual student may take to work on an assignment at home, what your daily routines and life plans may be, or whether you can be available are out of their control. Please don’t worry if your child(ren) aren’t completing everything every day! You know your child best--again going back to #1 above in this now very long list of suggestions.

10) Provide playtime for yourself and your child.

This should probably be #1 in this list as it can easily get lost in the demands of the day. Log off, unwind, cuddle, play games, and have quiet times in the house where everyone is off the computers. Watch the sunset, learn something new you never thought you would have time for, imagine life when your child(ren) will be back at school.