

ADOBESTOCK

REMOTE LEARNING

How to make remote learning more rewarding, fun for students



STATEPOINT

StatePoint

In the remote-learning environment of the 2020-21 academic year, certain types of classes have been deprioritized, and the school day has lost some of the structure and sociability that in-person learning affords.

In the face of these challenges, how can you make remote-learning more rewarding and fun for your child? Consider the following tips and ideas:

ENCOURAGE VIDEO STUDY SESSIONS » Socializing is an invaluable aspect of a traditional school day. Unfortunately, remote-learning can be a lot more isolating. Have your child invite classmates to form a remote study group. Doing so will help reinforce lessons, make learning the ma-

terial more interactive and provide a much-needed opportunity for students to socialize.

REINCORPORATE MUSIC EDUCATION » Have music classes been cancelled this year? Your child can still reap the benefits of a music education by playing an instrument like a Casiotone Keyboard. The Casiotone series of keyboards are great for beginners. Not only do they have a built-in learning system, they have a $\frac{3}{4}$ jack for headphones so the rest of the house doesn't have to be distracted during practice sessions. Learning to play a keyboard is not only fun, it can help with science, math and cognitive learning. Studies have shown that children and adults with musical training have heightened skills in an area called executive functioning.

SCHEDULE MIDDAY MOVEMENT » Physical education may no longer be part of your child's curriculum, but you can still make time for movement. Schedule a screen-free block of time each day to replace gym class or recess. Encourage kids to move around and if possible, get some fresh air. They'll return to their next class refreshed and focused.

MASTER MATH AT HOME » Math can be an especially tricky subject to master remotely. But new tools can help students grasp complex concepts. For example, ClassPad.net is a tool geared toward K-12 and beyond that exceeds the functionality of a calculator. Among its many features are a virtual protractor and compass, and a math-based text editor that pro-

vides a rich assortment of mathematical templates. This web-based calculator also gives users the ability to create folders, organize and share work. These tools are free to educators and students and can eliminate the need for an expensive graphing calculator. To register or learn more, visit ClassPad.net.

CREATE DIGITAL MASTERPIECES » Art is still an important subject for kids, even if it isn't being offered this year. However, you don't need to install a full-fledged art studio in your home for kids to be able to create artwork in a range of mediums. Digital apps mimic the act of drawing, painting, illustration, collage and more, helping to build a foundation of skills and lay the groundwork for further exploration.

While some of the challenges of remote-learning are inevitable, there are many ways families can make the experience more positive for students.

GIVING



METRO CREATIVE CONTENT

Schools play integral roles in many communities, and efforts to give back can begin on campus or through school-sponsored programs.

Community giving starts at school

Metro Creative Content

When people want to give back, many look to support national charities and other causes that they hold near and dear. Certainly these are worthwhile causes. However, giving back on a local level is a great way to help the people you see every day. Schools are the heart of many communities. School buildings may serve as gathering spaces for sports practices or meetings for various organizations. Even though schools are likely to receive municipal funding for certain operations, budgets are frequently being cut and schools may need all the help they can get. This year the boundaries of the budget may be pushed even further as schools revamp their spaces and implement certain safety protocols to confront the pandemic. Now more than

ever schools may need help. Here's how to do just that.

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME » Find out ways you can volunteer time at school. This may be helping teachers make copies of assignments, supervising children at recess or lunch hours, serving as a chaperone at school functions, or being a coach or mentor for after-school activities.

ATTEND AND PARTICIPATE IN FUNDRAISERS » Fundraisers are essential to help offset costs for many special events and services for students. Whenever possible, give wisely through fundraisers.

PROVIDE SUPPLIES FOR CLASSROOMS » Teachers often have to supplement their classrooms with supplies bought out of pocket. Reach out to teachers to see which items they need and do your best to supply them.

JOIN THE PTA OR A SIMILAR SCHOOL-SANCTIONED ORGANIZATION » Many groups perform functions that facilitate strong connections between home and school. Joining and working with such organizations can improve the school experience for everyone.

BUY BOX TOPS-AFFILIATED PRODUCTS » The Box Tops for Education program donates 10 cents per box top label collected and submitted by schools back to that school. More than 80,000 elementary schools have earned money through the program to buy equipment and supplies. Box Tops can be found on many different food packages.

TREAT THE TEACHER » In addition to supporting Teacher Appreciation Days and other school events, send in an uplifting note, snack or another way of showing you appreciate his or her efforts.

TECHNOLOGY



METRO CREATIVE CONTENT

Remaining safe when using the internet is even more important as professionals, students and the general public find themselves relying on online services more and more.

Steps to be safer when using internet

Metro Creative Content

The world relies on computerized devices and the internet is as much as ever. As of the third quarter of 2019, there were more than 4.33 billion active internet users, according to DataReportal. That marked a 327 million user increase from the year prior. At 8.2 percent, the growth of active internet use is now eight times faster than the overall worldwide population growth. The internet is used for professional, personal and educational purposes. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the global reliance on the internet. Without the internet, it would be much more challenging for people to work, go to school remotely and maintain connections with their loved ones during the pandemic. As more time is spent online, it is essential that all internet users refresh

their memories on safety practices.

SECURE YOUR INTERNET CONNECTION » The first step toward safety is to use a secure connection. Your local internet connection can be a weak point that allows data to be compromised. Use a password-protected router and Wi-Fi connection to improve security.

CONSIDER USING A VPN » VPN stands for virtual private network. When you use a VPN, it encrypts all data from the moment it leaves your computer, tablet or other device and enters the internet. It provides an extra layer against hackers, and also can provide secure access to the internet even if you are using public Wi-Fi, according to Kapertsky security products.

PROTECT YOUR PASSWORD » When creating passwords for accounts, do not share them, and also select

unique, complicated passwords. Include a mix of numbers, symbols and letters. Avoid using the same passwords for multiple accounts. Longer passwords are always stronger; consider using a favorite quote or song line.

ENABLE MULTI-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION » This security feature makes accounts even safer by requiring an extra step before you can log into an account. One example of multi-factor authentication is the random generation of a code that must be entered in addition to the password before an account can be accessed.

BE CAREFUL WHERE YOU CLICK » There are many lingering risks online, including viruses, spyware bots, Trojan horses, and phishing attacks, according to Microsoft. Always think before opening attachments or clicking on links.

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TEACHING



STATEPOINT

Today's students are tomorrow's teachers. By instilling a love of learning in your child, you may spark their interest in the field of education.

How to spark your child's interest in the field of education

StatePoint

If your child is an effective communicator and a natural born leader, they may have what it takes to be an amazing teacher.

However, a love of learning is fundamental to a career in education.

Here are a few ways to cultivate a passion for learning and put this rewarding career path on your child's radar:

BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL » Whether it's checking out library books and watching documentaries or pursuing an advanced degree, you can serve as role model by demonstrating the ways that learning can and should be a lifelong pursuit.

BE UNDERSTANDING » School is not always going to be easy. Avoid punishments and other negative

consequences for less than stellar grades. Such an approach is unlikely going to motivate your child to work harder and may only backfire. Instead, start a conversation and find out what's going on. There could be a larger issue causing the setback.

MAKE LEARNING FUN » You can help make sure that learning never feels like a chore by giving your child the space and tools to explore topics of interest to them. For example, if your child wants to learn to play a musical instrument, check out new tools that make the process fun and easy.

For example, the range of keyboards available from Casio have built-in learning tools and also connect to the Chordana Play app, which can help budding musicians quickly take their skills to the next level. With the option to

add any MIDI file into the app, your child can select the exact songs they want to learn.

ENCOURAGE PEER-TO-PEER TUTORING » Is your child excelling in a particular subject? Encourage them to help out classmates who may be struggling in the same area. Whether they volunteer their time bringing friends up to speed or turn it into a business, this is an excellent way for your child to hone instructional skills. When it comes to math and science, free online resources can help them dial in their own grasp of the material and get started tutoring.

Check out Casio's education resource page, which features lesson plans and webinars — useful tools for students and educators of all ages. To access these resources, visit casioeducation.com.

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West Chester University goes full speed ahead

West Chester University

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Don't see a major that fits your interests? You can create your own program through our Interdisciplinary Studies options.

Searching for interesting opportunities? West Chester has opportunities everywhere you turn. From more than 670 study-abroad

programs and 300 clubs and organizations to our 24 NCAA Division II varsity athletic teams and 710,000-plus hours of community service in 2018-19 alone, you can do anything, be anything and go just about anywhere from here.

So where do our students and alumni go from here? Everywhere! There are nearly 20,000 jobs and internships posted annually through the Career Center. WCU students have landed internships at the United Nations, the World Health Organization, Google, URBN, and everywhere in between.

Thanks to a new mentorship program, current students can also connect with alumni working in their field of study. With more than 110,000 alumni, that's an expansive network! And our graduates? They can

be found leading the way in every industry in the U.S. and beyond.

Then there's WCU's location. Downtown West Chester has been ranked among the top college towns in the country, as a top college town to live in after graduation and as one of America's best main streets.

West Chester is home to independent shops, coffee houses, and tons of restaurants. Located under 2.5 hours from most of the New York City metro area, 2.5 hours from Washington, D.C., and just 30 miles from Philadelphia, West Chester University puts the very best of the East Coast at your fingertips.

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We know these are

challenging times. You've had to adapt to new ways of learning in high school and your search for the perfect-fit college has been greatly impacted. But Huskies are never afraid of the path ahead, and face every challenge as a new way onward. If you've got a forward focus and the spirit to back it up, you're ready to experience the Husky difference.

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MATH

Are calculators a helpful tool for teaching children math?

StatePoint

If you remember your teachers and parents telling you not to rely too heavily on calculators, you may be inclined to pass on the same mindset to your own children.

Here are some of the pros and cons to using calculators to master STEM subjects:

ADAPTATION TO A CHANGING WORLD » Tech tools are ever evolving, featuring expanded capabilities with each new update or model. Being able to successfully navigate these tools and platforms over time is critical, and calculators are no

exception. In fact, in many math and science classrooms, calculators play a central role in lesson plans and are even allowed to be used during tests. Being able to comfortably use a calculator will give your child a leg up academically. What's more, kids today are digital natives. Giving them a resource that feels familiar to them may help draw them closer to math.

SPEED AND ACCURACY » There is no doubt that actually understanding how calculations are arrived at is fundamental, and this means some initial learning will need to take place

calculator-free. This is especially true when a student is first grasping basic arithmetic. However, once a student has attained a certain skill or understands the reasons why a particular equation is needed for a given problem, there is no need to deny them a tool they would have access to "in the real world." Having a calculator on-hand can help them apply their knowledge, contributing to a broader understanding of math and enabling them to quickly check their work.

EXPENSE AND VALUE » Calculators range widely in price, and you may balk at

the price tag on some of today's models. However, there are many high-quality options that can be obtained affordably. For the best value, consider a calculator that grows with your student, supporting learning over a number of years and grade levels. For example, the graphing calculators from Casio, have all the mathematical functions a student would need starting in grade school up through college. What's more, the brand has created an online calculator tool, ClassPad.net, which features the same wide range of functions and can be used for free on any device.



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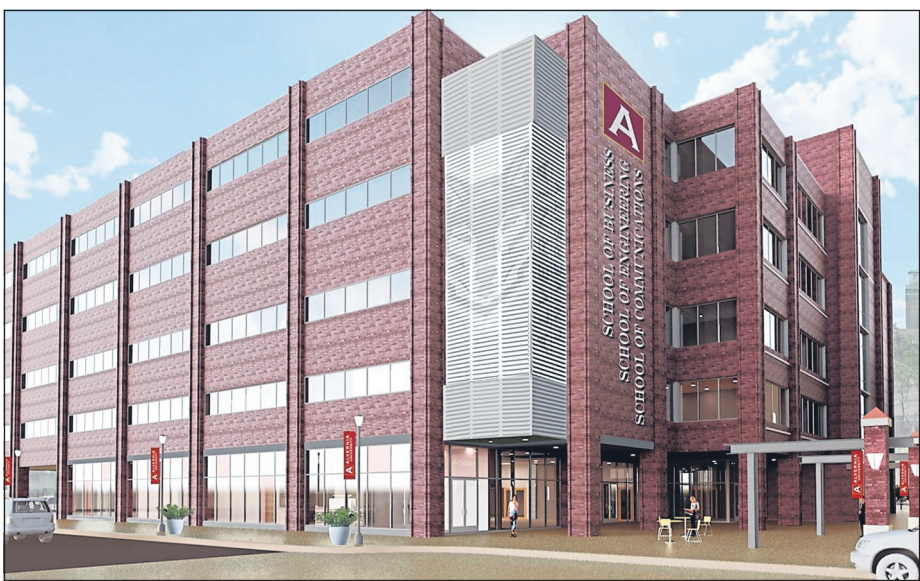
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EDUCATION



COURTESY OF ALVERNIA UNIVERSITY

A rendering of the Alvernia University's downtown Reading campus.

Colleges receive state grants

Albright and Alvernia will receive a combined \$5 million

MediaNews Group

Albright College and Alvernia University will receive a combined \$5 million in state grant funding.

Alvernia will get \$4 million to assist with its Reading CollegeTowne initiative, which will see the school open a downtown Reading Campus.

Albright will receive \$1 million to renovate its Gingrich Library.

The money is being provided through the Pennsylvania Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program.

The program is administered through the Office of the Budget for the acquisition and construction of regional economic, cultural, civic, recreational and historical improvement projects.

The local grant recipients were announced Wednesday by state Sen. Judy Schwank, an advocate for both projects.

"These are two great projects that will bring immediate jobs to Berks in

terms of construction, and, long-term, these projects will have a tremendously positive impact on Reading and the greater Reading area," she said.

Reading CollegeTowne promises to be a boon to downtown Reading, she said.

"These funds are an incredible boost for downtown Reading and our efforts to revitalize Penn Street," Schwank said. "I am beyond pleased to see Alvernia making such a

bold move to locate part of their campus in downtown Reading.

"I'm equally grateful to Gov. Tom Wolf who has been so supportive of the economic development projects in the city."

The Albright project will bolster another section of the city.

"These state funds will help Albright remain an anchor in Northeast Reading and allow the institution to transform Gingrich Library into a state-of-the-art learning facility that will benefit both college students and the community at-large," Schwank said.



READING EAGLE

Albright College's campus in Reading.

ST. TERESA OF CALCUTTA EDUCATION CENTER



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St. Teresa of Calcutta Education Center is a valuable environment for learning

St. Teresa of Calcutta Education Center

St. Teresa of Calcutta Education Center has remained committed to academic excellence while offering an environment with a foundation based on Mother Teresa's teachings of love, service and kindness. Now more than ever, the commitment to a safe environment is essential for the children and families in our community. Our loving and faith-based environment for learning is valuable for the emotional and intellectual advancement of our students.

Decades of teaching experience, technological advancements and strong parental partnerships have allowed our school the ability to adapt during this pandemic and continue to provide excellent educational and social experiences for our students.

In June, St. Teresa of Calcutta Education Center established a Pandemic Response Team, which developed the safety guidelines that made it possible for our doors to reopen in September to provide in-person learning. Virtual learning is also an option to provide flexibility and a level of comfort to our families.

Our beautiful campus in Limerick Township, Montgomery County, consists of a magnificent church, a state-of-the-art education center for students kindergarten through eighth grade and a child care center for children 6 weeks of age to preschool 4. At St. Teresa of Calcutta, we strive to provide a place of sanctuary and spiritual growth for the entire family.

Over the past three years, St. Teresa of Calcutta Education Center has made tremendous strides in advancing our technological capabilities. Every classroom is equipped with an interactive whiteboard, HP Chromebooks are available for every student, teachers are trained to use the Google Classroom platform, and we are staffed with an information specialist.

These advancements have allowed our teachers to develop a strong partnership with our parents and prepare our students for the challenges of the 21st century.

St. Teresa of Calcutta Education Center has been recognized nationally and locally with prestigious awards for its exceptional academic achievements. In 2017, it was the recipient of the National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence,

which places it in the top 15 percent of schools nationwide.

In 2019, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia recognized it as a School of Distinguished Instruction for the students' high achievement in the Terra Nova standardized testing program. Most recently, the community voted for the education center and child care center to receive the 2020 Mercury Reader's Choice Award.

The faculty and staff are committed to setting a solid academic foundation in each student to develop future leaders of our community that are confident, responsible and compassionate.

The best way to experience St. Teresa of Calcutta Education Center is by visiting the campus, located at 256 Swamp Pike in Schwenksville. Private and virtual Zoom tours are available by appointment only. Contact the admissions office at 610-287-2500, ext. 3004, or via email to steadmissions@school.stteresacalcutta.com today. Visit www.stcschool.com to view a virtual tour and access more information.

Registration for new families is open on Feb. 1. Early registration is highly recommended, limited spaces are remaining in select grades.xx

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ST. MARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL AND AGNUS DEI ACADEMY

Providing excellence in a Catholic education and delivering results

St. Mary Catholic School and Agnus Dei Academy

At St. Mary Catholic School (K-8) and Agnus Dei Academy (3- and 4-year-old program), creating a safe and flexible learning environment was made possible after months of coordinated planning.

From the start, our single goal was to welcome back our most precious treasures (our students) for in-person learning for the 2020-21 school year.

Our St. Mary Catholic School Reopening Plan used a comprehensive guide developed by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia — Office of Catholic Education (OCE) Task Force in coordination with federal, state and local health agencies.

At St. Mary Catholic School, we are blessed with a truly dedicated Board of Limited Jurisdiction; a new principal, Phil Repko, who has over 37 years of experience in education; and dedicated teachers, staff and parents who worked together to customize OCE's plan to fit the nuances of our daily school operations.

The time and hard work in creating our reopening plan came to fruition, and prayers were answered when on Aug. 31, buses and parents began to drop off their students for in-person learning. COVID protocols were in place and classrooms prepared to offer virtual instruction as an option for our school community.

Throughout the challenges presented by the pandemic, St. Mary Catholic School remains focused on providing excellence in a Catholic education and delivering results. A good measure of a school's academic success is the annual



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ST. MARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL



Above: St. Mary Catholic School fifth-graders perform "Silent Night" with sign language. At left: St. Mary Catholic School Celebrates the Opening School Mass outdoors.

dents achieve this distinguished honor and have been awarded \$429,000 in Neumann Scholarships. This year our students have received \$99,000 in scholarship money and counting!

Chart the course of your child's future at St. Mary Catholic School.

Your journey of a lifetime begins at Agnus Dei Academy that is designed specifically to meet the needs of children ages 3 and 4. From the beginning, St. Mary Catholic School partners with parents to inspire their children to grow spiritually, emotionally and academically. Classes are in-person, with a team of compassionate and experienced Catholic educators.

Agnus Dei Academy's is purposely designed for a child:

- To master skills
- To inspire and nurture their innate curiosity for learning
- To find fun and joy in learning
- To become creative and independent thinkers
- To satisfy the need for clear limits and goals

Agnus Dei Academy's outcome is a child well prepared to become a successful student and ultimately a life-long learner.

Your life journey then continues to St. Mary Catholic School, grades K-8. These years are the most crucial part of your child's education. They are

Your life journey then continues to St. Mary Catholic School, grades K-8. These years are the most crucial part of your child's education. They are the foundation upon which all future understanding is based."

the foundation upon which all future understanding is based. We help them do this by providing learning opportunities which motivate students to achieve their greatest potential.

We're committed to providing instruction, learning support and enrichment that engages students in active learning, allowing them to discover their unique God-given gifts through a wide variety of opportunities. We encourage our students to be courageous leaders and independent thinkers.

At St. Mary Catholic School we offer a challenging program of instruction that will leave your child with a strong academic background for their high school years and beyond. Our academic program is complemented with a unique fine arts program, offering theater, voice, music instruction and performance opportunities.

The Makers Space is another program unique to St. Mary School that was designed to encourage collaboration, innovation and creative thinking in the students. Recently, the school invested in a kiln for pottery, which has become a popular aspect of our art classes.

As proud as we are of students' achievements, we seek more than academic success. Catholic values and truths in faith, knowledge and service are the pillars of our beliefs. These pillars help build a stable, unshakeable foundation for a lifetime.

We invite you to learn more about St. Mary Catholic School and Agnus Dei Academy. To arrange a private tour, contact Suzette Moyer at smoyer@smsk-8.org or call 610.287.7757, extension 244. We are located at 40 Spring Mount Road in Schwenksville, Montgomery County. Come see us. School tours are scheduled for after-school hours and are conducted with COVID safety protocols.

SAINT MARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

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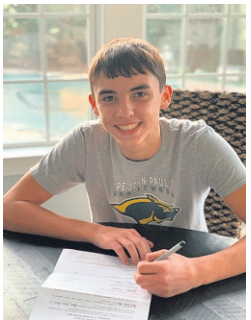


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EDUCATION



STATEPOINT

Afterschool programs across the country have stepped up in the pandemic, providing students with a variety of services.

Keeping the lights on for afterschool programs

StatePoint

Afterschool programs help students succeed in school and in life and provide invaluable support to communities. As we've seen this year, these programs play an especially important role when students, families and communities are struggling.

Programs across the country have stepped up in the pandemic, providing virtual educational activities, delivering meals and enrichment kits, helping families bridge the digital divide, connecting people to social services and continuing in-person care for the children of essential workers and first responders.

Unfortunately, a large majority of afterschool programs that were open in the fall of 2020 report they are straining to meet the needs of the students and families they have long supported.

National surveys of parents and afterschool providers conducted by Edge Research for the Afterschool Alliance, a nonprofit awareness and

advocacy group, find that programs and parents are challenged by virtual learning; program budgets are inadequate to address new safety protocols and students' emerging needs; and students from low-income families are now less likely than others to have access to afterschool programs.

To underscore the value of afterschool programs and the need to invest in them, the Afterschool Alliance recently organized the 21st annual "Lights On Afterschool," the only national rally for afterschool.

It took place throughout the fall and included local, state and national events — many of them virtual this year — showcasing the skills students hone and talents they develop at their afterschool programs.

From virtual STEM fairs and art contests to car caravans and letter-writing to isolated nursing home residents, events focused on academics, civic engagement, STEM education, social and emotional well-being, bullying prevention, mental and physical health

and more.

"The strength and resilience afterschool programs demonstrated in 2020 was remarkable," said Jodi Grant, executive director of the Afterschool Alliance. "Despite scarce resources, programs found ways to help students through what has been, for many families, the hardest of times."

"However, there aren't nearly enough afterschool programs to meet the need, especially now, with so many schools functioning virtually and with school schedules changing without warning. We need to invest much more in afterschool and summer learning programs."

To learn more about the Afterschool Alliance and "Lights On Afterschool," which will next be held on Oct. 28, visit afterschoolalliance.org.

"In normal times, afterschool programs help students succeed by keeping them safe, inspiring them to learn, and by supporting working parents," Grant said. "During a pandemic, the support they provide is even more essential."

EDUCATION



METRO CREATIVE CONTENT

Virtual home instruction may become a large part of the educational landscape even after it's no longer a social distancing necessity

The new ways of learning during a pandemic can benefit children

Metro Creative Content

The validity of the adage "necessity is the mother of invention" was on full display during the COVID-19 outbreak. People quickly had to learn to adapt to a new way of life, including an educational system that was transformed dramatically by social distancing guidelines.

More than 76 million students are enrolled in United States schools, per the latest Census Bureau information.

In a matter of days, millions of students who once attended classes in person were forced to transition to virtual learning instruction. The process showed just how flexible learning systems can be, and how virtual instruction may become more than an emergency protocol in the future.

Schools utilized systems like Google Classroom, Canvas and virtual meeting apps to connect and learn. While in-class lessons

provide the socialization and one-on-one interaction that can be vital for students' academic success, there are many different reasons why virtual instruction can be a key component of learning models as well.

When virtual learning is used in conjunction with traditional teaching, students may have a more well-rounded experience. Here are some potential benefits that may unfold as more data is collected.

PACE » Virtual learning affords students the chance to work on lessons at a pace that fits their individual needs. Students can go back and re-read or re-work problems until they're satisfied they have learned their lesson. Lessons can be slowed down or sped up depending on proficiency, creating a customized educational experience.

NO MORE WEATHER DAYS » Many school districts include snow or extreme weather days into their cal-

endars, adding on extra days at the end of school year to meet the specified number of educational days. Remote learning can take over in these times and keep school districts from having to pad calendars.

CONVENIENCE » The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that middle and high schools start at 8:30 a.m. or later to provide students the best chance to get the amount of sleep they need. Still, most adolescents currently start school before 8:30 a.m. Remote learning enables students to complete their assignments when it works best for them. This may help them get more sleep, too.

APPS » Learning apps are a new wave of educational tools that have helped buoy virtual instruction. Primary school students or those with individual education plans may benefit the most from reinforced app skills that match their learning pace in fun ways.



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