

# CHOICES in EDUCATION

**CAREER GUIDANCE**

**ONLINE FAIR LETS  
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**TEST PREP**

**TOP TIPS FOR  
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—Dr. Linda Sax, UCLA, Women Graduates of Single-Sex and Coeducational High Schools: Differences in their Characteristics and the Transition to College



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of girls' school grads say they were offered **greater leadership opportunities** than peers at coed schools and **80% have held leadership positions since graduating** from high school.

—Goodman Research Group, The Girls' School Experience: A Survey of Young Alumnae of Single-Sex Schools



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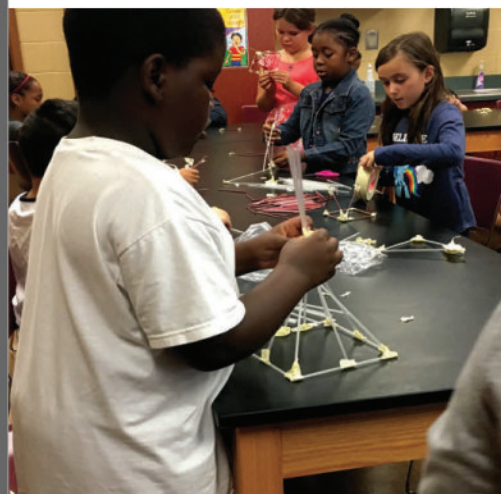
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Connor Juretich, a 2020 graduate of Macomb's Cybersecurity program and past president of its Cybersecurity club, credits faculty for making his program: "challenging, practical and competitive," preparing him for transfer to Walsh.

"The objectives of Macomb's professors aren't to drown the students in countless hours of homework," said Juretich. "The objective is learning what matters."

And studies show that what matters most at community colleges is providing students with the skills they need to succeed in the classroom and in the workforce.

Based on one study conducted by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, *Forbes Magazine* reported in its Jan. 30, 2019 issue that: "Community college students who transfer to selective four-year schools perform as well as – or even better — than their peers who come directly from high school." According to that study, community college transfer students are even slightly more likely to complete their bachelor's degree. Many educators point to the additional two years of academic preparation students receive at a community college coupled with more personalized attention because of the smaller class sizes as contributing factors.

Dave Tramontozzi, Macomb chemistry professor, is definitely in that court. Prior to joining Macomb's faculty, he taught at a university and lectured from a stage in a 400-seat auditorium. He left disheartened that he could rarely match a student's name with a face.

"One of the things I like about Macomb is I get to really know my students and they get to know me," said Tramontozzi, who holds a Ph.D. in chemistry and biochemistry from the University of Windsor. "The greatest compliment is when a student comes back to tell me: 'I took my Pharmacy College Admission Test and scored a 95 on the chemistry part.'"

For Tod Hardin, director of operations and communications for Plastic Oceans International, a Malibu-based international conservancy organization, it was his engagement with faculty that stands out the most when he reflects upon his experience at Macomb.

"I had two Macomb professors who were my educational mentors," says Hardin, who transferred from Macomb to Wayne State University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in political science and international relations. "I loved going to school there."



Photo caption: Professor Dave Tramontozzi prefers to teach at Macomb rather than at a larger university because the smaller class sizes mean he can know and mentor his chemistry students.

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Shane Szeszycki,  
Macomb grad and lead  
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## CAREER GUIDANCE

# Online career fair gives students opportunities to explore future

By Terry Jacoby

For MediaNews Group

We could all use a little inspiration right now — and even some excitement about the future. And while the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a significant impact on students from learning to career exploration, Junior Achievement of Southeastern Michigan (JASEM) is stepping up to help with an innovative program called “JA Inspire.”

The new virtual opportunity for eighth- through 12th-grade students will take place March 15-June 13, 2021. Through an online portal, students will enter a virtual exhibit hall and check out a wide variety of career opportunities with dozens of local businesses. All it takes is a few simple clicks.

Students will be able to download career information, videos and steps to take to pursue various careers in different industries. Educators, students and their parents can access the portal and information any time, from the comfort and safety of home. And the program is available at no cost to school systems or youths serving community-based organizations, and it's also adaptable for in-class or remote learning. Interested students may register at [jamichigan.org/inspiremi](http://jamichigan.org/inspiremi).

Sydney Lee, 15, who lives in Southfield, is excited about discovering what opportunities might be out there waiting for her.

“I will be participating in the career fair, which is where kids can go and try and figure out what profession they want to be in, so I'm excited to go and learn about different professions and which ones I might be interested in when I grow up,” says Sydney, a sophomore at Birmingham Groves High School. “Right

## FYI

The new virtual opportunity for eighth- through 12th-grade students will take place March 15-June 13. For more information, visit [jamichigan.org](http://jamichigan.org).

now I'm interested in psychology.”

Sydney likes that the career fair will be online because it will be more accessible to more students, and instead of running for just one or two days, it's for three months.

Sydney's brother, Jordan, 13, also plans to participate in the career fair.

“I'm looking forward to exploring the different options of what I might want to do in life,” says Jordan, who is in eighth grade at University of Detroit Jesuit High School.

Sydney and Jordan's father, Jason D. Lee, is the president and CEO of Junior Achievement of Southeastern Michigan and helped organize JA Inspire.

“Students will essentially have a one-stop shop where they can learn about different career pathways available throughout the region,” Lee says. “It's a virtual showcase that we hope will inspire and prepare young people for future success locally with Michigan companies. We want to keep our best and brightest students here.”

Participation in JA Inspire is open to companies and students in Wayne, Oakland, Livingston, Monroe, Washtenaw, Genesee, Lapeer, and St. Clair counties, and North Central Michigan. As many as 20,000 students are expected to participate.

Lee says the online event is urgently needed during COVID-19 because student internships, job shadowing, field trips and other onsite

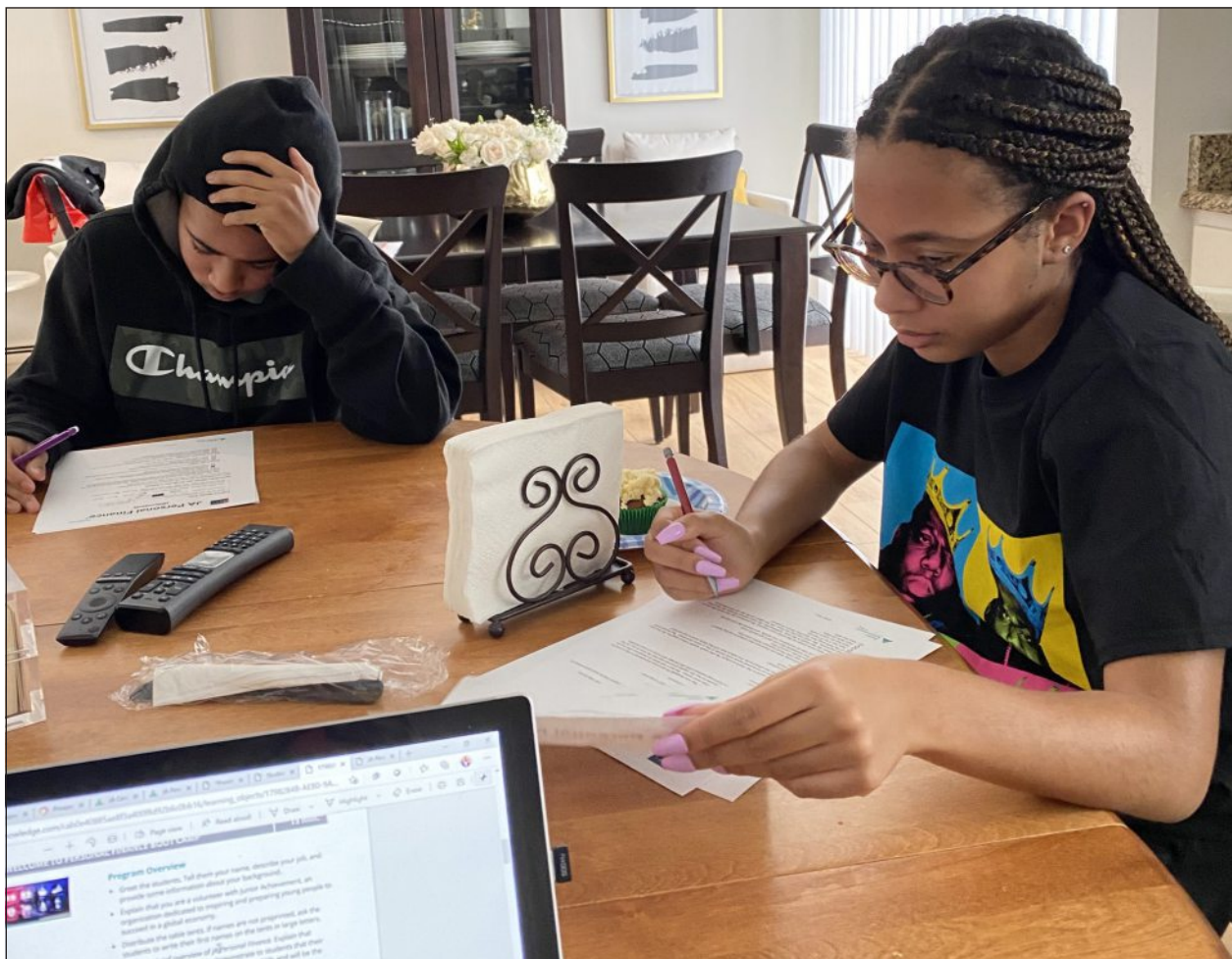


PHOTO COURTESY OF SHAWN LEE OF SHAWN LEE STUDIOS SOUTHFIELD, MI

Jordan Lee, 13, and his sister, Sydney, 15, of Southfield plan to participate in the JA Inspire career fair running March 15-June 13.

**“This is an area of passion for us — around entrepreneurship, supporting the next generation workforce, and equity and diversity in the workplace.”**

— Scott Mullan, JASEM vice chair

workplace learning experiences have largely been suspended due to the pandemic.

Gina Coleman, chief sales officer for MassMutual Great Lakes and JASEM board chair, says the mission at Junior Achievement of Southeastern Michigan is to inspire and prepare young people to succeed in

a global economy.

“That's exactly what JA Inspire is designed to do,” she says. “We encourage as many students, schools and businesses as possible to take advantage of this unique opportunity.”

Junior Achievement is seeking participation from at least 100 businesses showcasing careers, train-

ing resources and post-secondary opportunities in Michigan and nationwide. Companies that have already reserved online booths include title sponsor Delta Dental, AAA, Delta Air Lines, DTE Energy, EY, Henry Ford Health System, McDonalds of Michigan and many others.

“This is an area of passion for us — around entrepreneurship, supporting the next generation workforce, and equity and diversity in the workplace,” said Scott Mullan, JASEM vice chair. “JA Inspire is a way to show all of these students a wide range of opportunities that they're not going to be ex-

posed to on a day-to-day basis and help to influence their future career choices as well as our own recruiting.”

Founded nationally in 1919 and locally in 1949, Junior Achievement is the world's largest organization dedicated to educating students in grades K-12 about financial literacy, work readiness and entrepreneurship, reaching more than 10 million students across the globe. Sponsorship fees for participating businesses start at \$500 and support the operating costs of JA Inspire and JA's work in the region. For more information, visit [jamichigan.org](http://jamichigan.org).



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## RESOURCES

# Ace the spring semester with the following tools and strategies

Maintaining a passion for school can be tough during the spring semester, particularly during an unusual academic year. Here is a round-up of tools and strategies to help motivate students and facilitate their success:

- **Outside counsel:** Now is a great time for students to meet with their academic advisor or counselor. Doing so can expand a student's knowledge of current and future opportunities and serve as a temperature check on their progress toward degree completion. Plus, talking to someone invested in one's success can provide the push needed to keep up the good work.

- **Advance calculations:** To solve the most challenging equations and embrace the actual theory of mathematical concepts, it's important to be equipped with an easy-to-use graphing calculator possessing all the latest functions. Boasting an advanced Computer Algebra System (CAS), Casio's fx-CG500 is good example of a reasonably-priced next-generation graphing calculator helping students enrolled in advanced math and science courses. Clear visuals are especially important for distance-learning, and this model's high-resolution, color, touchscreen LCD conveys a Natural Textbook display. Drag-and-drop functionality enables students to quickly and intuitively pull information from one representation into another. Meanwhile, split-screen functionality allows simultaneous viewing of functions and graphs.

- **Mobile hotspot:** A mobile hotspot can be a lifesaver, making remote-learners impervious to internet outages or bandwidth demands from other household members or roommates, helping ensure that



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

A mobile hotspot can be a lifesaver for remote-learners.

they never miss a lesson or pop quiz.

- **Eliminate a common headache:** Students writing term papers can easily get bogged down in the tiring logistics of creating a bibliography. And while this task is necessary, it's unlikely to further a student's knowledge of a subject. Fortunately, there are apps available that automatically create bibliography entries in the style of a student's needs when they scan a book's barcode. Simplifying this task will free up much needed time and energy for students to research and actually write their papers.

With the right tools and mindset, every student can have a strong spring semester.

*Story courtesy of StatePoint Media*



PHOTO COURTESY OF KZENON / ISTOCK VIA GETTY IMAGES PLUS

With the right tools and mindset, every student can have a strong spring semester.



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Students writing term papers can easily get bogged down in the tiring logistics of creating a bibliography.





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## PARENTING

# Growing up on screens: How a year lived online has changed our children

By Heather Kelly  
The Washington Post

Like many parents just trying to get to the other side of a pandemic in one piece, Iris Lowenberg-Lin doesn't have the bandwidth to micromanage screen time for her two older kids. She and her husband are essential medical workers in the Bay Area - she's a nurse practitioner and he's an emergency room doctor - and 18 months ago, they welcomed their "surprise" third child. By giving up some, but not all, control, they've been able to see firsthand the good and bad of letting kids lead the way with their own technology usage.

Her 6-year-old middle child adapted quickly. He successfully learned how to read during first grade, even though most of his classes have been on Zoom. He's keeping in touch with friends over FaceTime and the video game Roblox, taking drum lessons online, watching some shows he likes, and still going outside for bike rides and to play near their home.

The adjustment has been harder for her third-grader, who misses his friends. When he started getting more migraines in the fall, she realized his similar online diet was having a physical impact on him. He's still allowed to spend time on computers, but his parents make sure he takes more breaks outside and avoids migraine triggers like hunger, dehydration and lack of sleep.

"For the older kids, they seem to be having a really



PHOTO BY MELINA MARA — THE WASHINGTON POST

Iris Lowenberg-Lin, a nurse practitioner at San Francisco General Hospital, helps her son Elliott, 6, with his homework while his 9-year old brother, Isiah, takes a virtual piano class and sister Daphne starts to cry.

hard time because they remember what school was really about, and now they're allowed to do whatever on screens," said Lowenberg-Lin, who thinks it has been easier for her younger children. "Because they were young enough, they just took to it. They don't know anything different."

"Screen time" - as a concept to track meticulously, to fret and panic about, to measure parents' worth in - is no longer considered a valid framework in a pandemic world, where the way we live our lives has been completely redefined.

Since U.S. schools began closing down roughly a year ago, the country's children have been adapting, learning and getting

creative with how they use technology. The realities of their day-to-day lives vary wildly, as have their relationships with screens. For some, technology is a savior - the lifeline keeping them in touch with friends and helping them maintain social skills; a welcome alternative to in-person school. For others, it's a failed promise - unable to make up for the gaps in their education, their parents' lost wages and their own mental health.

The conundrum has also splashed cold water on some tech industry promises of what can be accomplished with devices and the Internet, which overlooked the reality of living in the midst of overlapping

crises.

In conversations with over a dozen families and child-development experts, the consequences of this unintentional screen-time experiment are still murky, and the effects may take years to understand.

A year of everyone turning to technology has shown us that the worth, or danger, of devices has less to do with the glowing screens themselves, and more to do with how they are used. What appears to matter most is the support systems that children and their parents have available to them.

Experts on screen time have been stepping back from terms like "addiction" and from framing it as an-

other moral panic, the kind that seems to accompany any new technology that impacts children. The shift comes at a time when allowing more screen time isn't a choice, but a necessity for families.

Throughout the past year, people of all ages have spent significantly more time living through their screens. Many of the country's largest school districts are still closed or offering a hybrid of in-person and remote learning, and kids with device access are using phones, school-issued computers and tablets in more ways and for longer hours.

Monitoring company Bark, which parents and schools use to track over 5 million kids' Internet usage, found a 144% increase in the number of messages children sent and received online in 2020 compared with the year prior. That includes messages on social media sites, Gmail and more.

Meanwhile, a Pew Research Center report from October found that 63% of parents with school-age children were more concerned about screen time now than before the coronavirus pandemic. More than half of the parents surveyed were also worried about their children's ability to maintain friendships and other social connections and about their emotional well-being. The families most likely to be concerned about all those extra hours on computers and mobile devices were upper-income households.

Parents have spent the past year largely in a state

of emergency, just trying to get through days without in-person schools or, often, any child care at all. Families started using screens more to stay in touch with family members they couldn't visit, introducing babies to their grandparents, and giving kids their only interaction with friends. Experts initially agreed it was not the time to stress out about too much video game time but for everyone to do their best and go easy on themselves.

Things changed when the fall semester rolled around, and, for many, virtual school began in earnest. Many schools were all or partially remote, with children meeting new teachers and classmates over videoconferencing apps like Zoom. Early research suggests going remote will hurt all kids, but to varying degrees. A December study by consulting firm McKinsey & Co. estimates that last year's switch to remote school in the spring set White students back by one to three months in math, and students of color three to five months back.

"Covid has been a cascading catastrophe for education, and in particular for disadvantaged kids, but where would we be without the possibility of learning online or even entertainment?" said Ann Masten, a professor of child development at the University of Minnesota who studies risk and resilience in children.

She says screens aren't inherently good or bad, but it's what they're being used





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## What's new for 2020-2021

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- The 2020-21 school year brings the opening of the “new” Romeo Middle School. The district is moving to one comprehensive middle school for all 6th-8th grade students.
- The 2016 Bond has provided 10 million dollars in new renovations to improve student experiences including renovated classrooms, gymnasiums and an updated Media Center with large group, small group and individual learning spaces.
- Redesigned academic curriculum and expanded elective offerings to enhance student learning with new courses and programming.
- A Student Advisory Program focusing on social emotional learning and improving student outcomes in academics, character development and social growth.
- Increased security measures for student safety including new high definition cameras inside and outside of the building along with a new secured entrance.
- Additional extracurricular opportunities offered to students through interscholastic athletics, a robust intramurals program, extracurricular clubs, and activities.
- The school is grounded in an interdisciplinary teaming model that focuses on enhancing the student and teacher relationship.



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## Screens

FROM PAGE 12

for and what they are replacing that matters. In the past year, she says, screens have made things possible, like education and communication, that have been important for getting people through a period of isolation.

She's worried, however, the pandemic will worsen disparities for kids who were in difficult situations before the schools shut down. Those whose parents lost jobs or homes, who struggle with food insecurity or who are dealing with racism. Or for kids whose needs cannot be met remotely.

In San Francisco, where public schools are still entirely remote and there's no set date for reopening, parents of kids with special needs say they are overwhelmed and underserved. One mother, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because she feared her child would face stigma for his diagnoses, is at home with her three kids all day, trying to usher her middle child with neurological differences through remote learning.

Bright and curious, her 8-year-old son struggles with emotional regulation and social interactions, but he was making progress before the pandemic. He had a full-time paraprofessional and speech-services at his school, and he was making friends with other kids for the first time. He had even been invited to some birthday parties.

Now he is regressing and "falling off a cliff," said his mom. He refuses to attend online-speech sessions after failing to connect with the new teacher. He sometimes thinks other children in class are staring at him. And his older sister has started mimicking some of his coping mechanisms, like high-pitched screaming.

"They cannot access the services properly over the computer - it literally doesn't work," said his mother.

There is only so much teachers are able to do over screens, says Kristen Hawley Turner, a professor and director of teacher education at Drew University. Turner has been working with educators throughout the pandemic on in-



Elliott Lin, 6, and Isaiah Lin, 9, play a game as a break after doing their on-screen homework at their home in San Rafael, Calif.

PHOTO BY MELINA MARA — THE WASHINGTON POST

creasing engagement with their students.

"It has been hard since Day 1, and it is increasingly hard to deal with student engagement through a screen. It takes an enormous amount of planning to keep students engaged in the content," Turner said. "We are reverting back to ways we know in education research are not the best way to learn."

For many kids whose parents aren't able to stay at home, watching and guiding them, remote school has been far from adequate.

While Telanda Ridley was working full-time as a housekeeping supervisor at an Atlanta hotel, her five children, ages 10 to 17, were in charge of themselves and one another.

"It was horrible because my kids never made an F in school. Then, they made Fs," Ridley said. "I was getting a phone call every other day: One wasn't logged in, another was asleep. It was just because nobody was home to watch them."

She made sure they had what they needed. When the pandemic began, Ridley upgraded their home Internet speed to handle

the simultaneous video classes. The district issued her laptops, but they were restricted to schoolwork only, so Ridley got refurbished computers through a local nonprofit organization called InspirEDU so they could do more on them while home all day. She taught them how to responsibly use social media and not talk to strangers online, and the computers have been key to keeping them occupied and in touch with friends.

Ridley and most of the kids were thrilled when their school district started in-person classes again in mid-February, even her 10-year old daughter who used to hate getting up for school. Her oldest son, who is 17, has decided to keep doing school remotely to be safe.

In December, the American Academy of Pediatrics warned of vision problems from staring at screens too long, or too close, but said building in breaks and other precautions could help. The group had previously warned of other health effects of too much technology, like obesity. While many children have replaced some of their social interactions with online substitutes, it doesn't

entirely replace the kind of social and emotional learning that they would get in person.

Emily Dobson isn't worried about screens being bad for her daughter. She has noticed a massive change in 9-year old Luna after pulling her out of the local school's remote option and switching to an online homeschooling system. Freed from a rote scheduled curriculum, Luna is thriving while still learning over her computer, her mom said. She's more interested in following her interests, like Zooming with experts around the world including a family friend in Japan who does painting classes with her twice a month. She even looks healthier, Dobson said.

Even in the best-case scenarios, a year in the life of a child can seem impossibly long. Their brains are still developing, and they're learning key social skills in addition to school subjects. But technology is letting kids find new, creative ways to forge friendships and create social groups. Douglas Downey, a professor of sociology at Ohio State University who has studied the ways children learn social skills online, is optimistic they're still

getting some of that through social media and phone calls and games.

"There's another dimension of social skills that are emerging and becoming important - the digital ones - and it's possible that this generation is better at them," Downey said.

Fifteen-year old Sophia Morabito's parents have given her a lot of leeway with how much time she has on her computer and phone. Sophia, a high school freshman in Howard County in Maryland, says she prefers attending school remotely. She has fallen out of touch with her school friends, but she has a vibrant social life on the group-chat app Discord, where she talks regularly to friends she has bonded with over their favorite video games.

"They game and they have fun and they joke and relieve so much stress for each other that my husband was like, you know what, we're all in for whatever lets everybody be mentally healthy," said her mother, Jennifer Morabito.

Educators and researchers won't know the full impact of the past year on kids until schools are fully open again. Schools are already concerned about missing students who haven't been logging on at all to remote classes, and whom the schools haven't been able to track down. The past year could result in a higher-than-usual drop-out rate when districts open up full-time, in-person schooling.

But some families will choose to keep letting their kids learn from home. Wendy Jackson, a mom of three from Dallas County in Texas, tried remote Zoom school last spring. By May, the hospice nurse and former teacher, and her husband who is a middle school teacher, decided to try home schooling their 13-year old and 9-year-old children. She quickly found that it cut out a lot of the filler in their day and improved their moods and academic performance. They have plenty of time to play video games and watch TV, but Jackson isn't worried about them. She says they eventually get bored with their computers and will switch to art or playing the piano or guitar.

"I would rather teach my children how to utilize tech to their advantage rather than limit it. It's not going away," she said.



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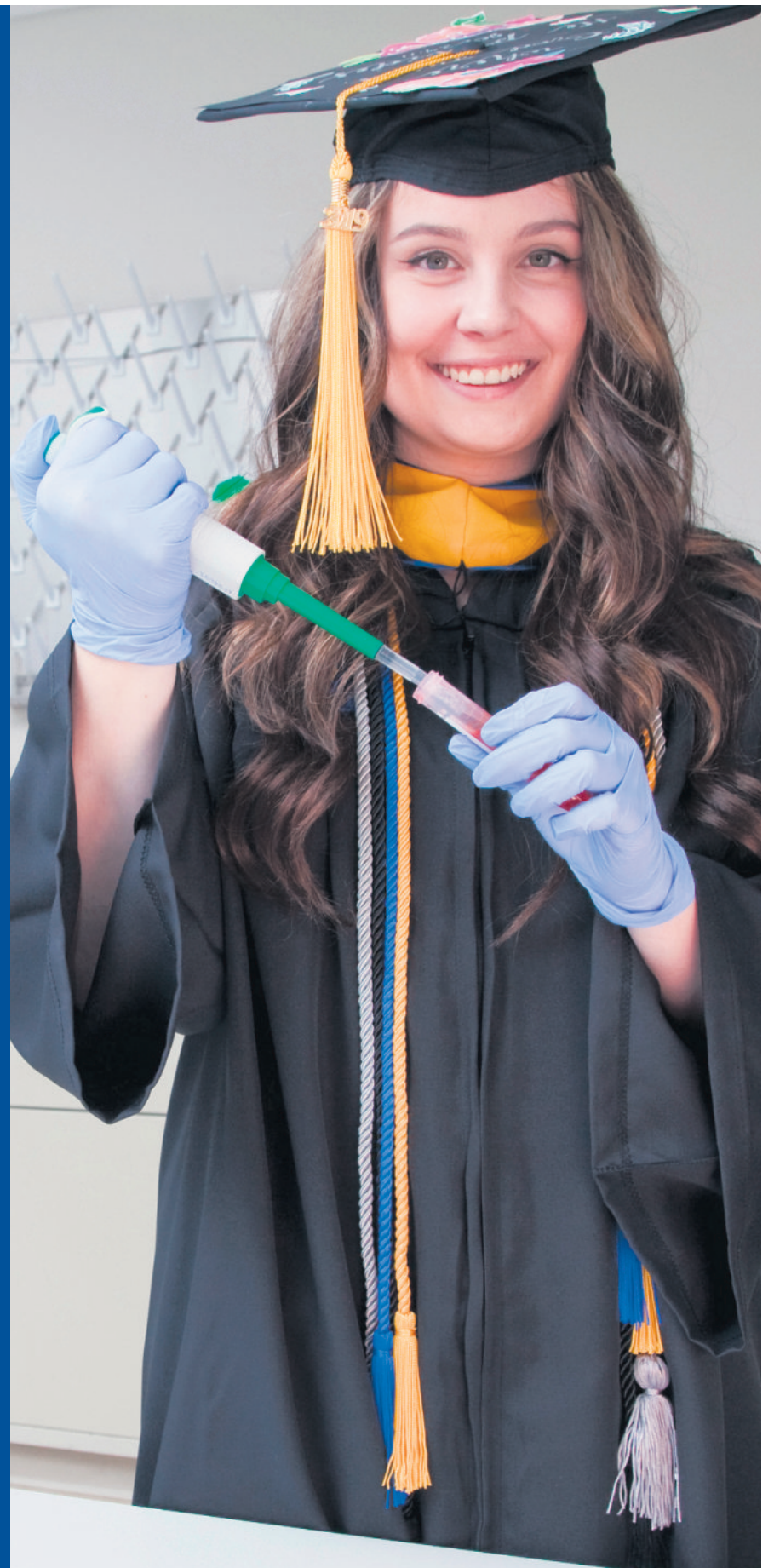
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## COMMUNITY

# Keeping the lights on for afterschool programs



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

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.

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.

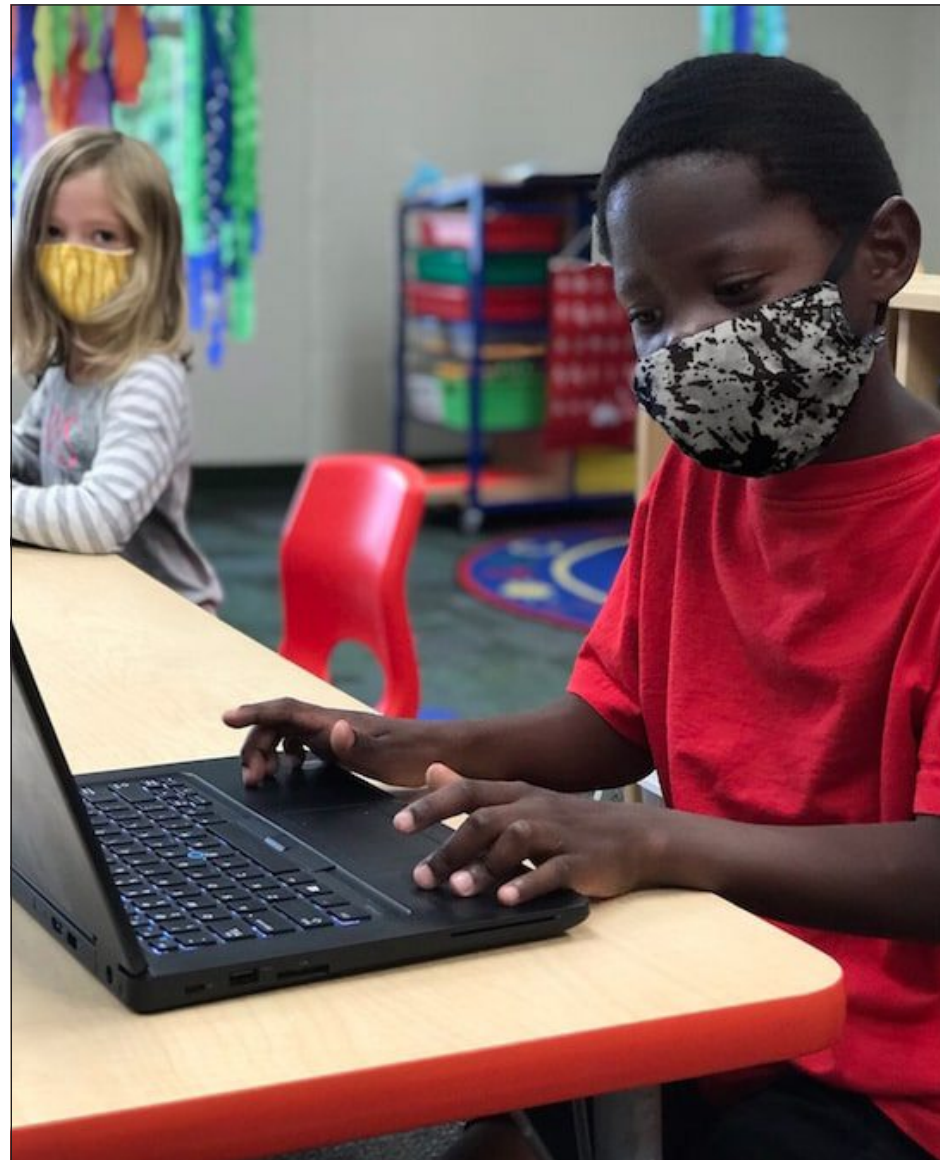
Programs across the country have stepped up in the pandemic, providing virtual educational activities, delivering meals and enrichment kits, helping families bridge the digital divide, connecting people to social services, and continuing in-person care for the children of essential workers and first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



Afterschool programs play a critical role for students, families, and communities whom may be struggling.

tion, mental and physical health, and more.

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

October 28, 2021, visit [afterschoolalliance.org](http://afterschoolalliance.org).

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

*Story courtesy of StatePoint Media*





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## EARLY EDUCATION

# What to look for in an infant day care

It can be challenging to raise a baby even in the best of times, but many parents need additional support for the education and care of their young children amid the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor, both parents work in nearly two-thirds of families with children. The number of working single parents is even higher.

However, as long as teachers and staff follow rigorous health and safety practices, day care centers are among the safest places for children right now.

“More than ever before, families are struggling with balancing the need to return to consistent routines with concerns about the possible health risks to their children,” said Dr. Elanna Yalow, chief academic officer of KinderCare Learning Centers. “Our rigorous safety protocols give families confidence they can count on our programs when traditional support systems may not be available.”

Although the decision to place your baby in someone else’s care can be difficult, the benefits of day care can be significant, especially for children who start a program as babies. Consider these important factors when choosing an infant day care.

## Exceeding Recommended Guidelines

Parents will want to make sure their day care center follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Academy of Pediatrics and local health department guidelines. These include masks and social distancing, restricted access to classrooms, consistent grouping of children, health screenings upon entry, handwashing throughout the day and frequent cleaning and sanitizing. In addition to knowing the steps teachers and staff are taking to keep children safe, ask about staff training and the checks and balances the center has in place to make sure written policies trans-



PHOTO COURTESY OF FAMILY FEATURES

As long as teachers and staff follow rigorous health and safety practices, day care centers are among the safest places for children right now.

late into best practices in classrooms.

## Teachers Who See Each Baby as an Individual

Responsive, caring teachers tend to each baby’s specific needs. From the moment you meet them, they’ll ask what your baby enjoys, what comforts him or her, what milestones your baby is working on and so forth. The best teachers see each baby as a unique person and work to meet your child

wherever he or she is, whether that’s watching for signs of tiredness and holding him or her or responding to your baby’s babbling and coos as signs of early language development.

## Strong Communication

Trusting someone else to look after your bundle of joy is a tremendous leap of faith for many parents, particularly as safety-conscious providers are limiting access to their classrooms and parents may not be able to go any

further than the front door. That leap is easier if you know you’ll receive updates about your child throughout the day. Whether you want videos and photos, phone calls or texts, or short notes about the things your child is doing while you’re at work, talk with your potential provider about how often you want updates and what kind of information is most meaningful to you. While it’s natural to feel a twinge of nervousness when you get a phone call from your child’s day care, you should

also be contacted with good news and friendly reminders.

For many parents, the most important thing is that their baby is safe, happy and flourishing in a loving, caring and engaging environment. Once they find this, they can rest assured they made the best decision for their family. Find more information and tips to find the right center at [kinder-care.com](http://kinder-care.com).

*Story courtesy of Family Features*





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## READING

# How kids benefit from being read to

Reading aloud to children is one of the joys of parenting. All children, whether they're infants, toddlers or school-aged, can benefit from being read to, and parents whose youngsters have grown up often look back on story time as some of their favorite moments as moms and dads.

Reading aloud to children is about more than just establishing a bond between parent and child. According to Reading Rockets, a national public media literacy initiative, children as young as infants can benefit from being read to. Infants can look at pictures as their parents point to them and say the names of the various objects within them. By drawing attention to the pictures and associating words with them and real-world objects, parents are helping infants learn the importance of language.

Kids of all ages can benefit from being read to, even after they learn to read on their own. The following are a handful of ways that reading aloud to children can benefit them.

- Reading to children dramatically expands their vocabulary. A 2019 study published in the *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics* found that young children whose parents read them five books a day enter kindergarten having heard roughly 1.4 million more words than kids who were never read to. The disparity is even significant when comparing kids who are periodically read to each day with kids who are read five books per day. Children who are read to daily may hear slightly less than 300,000 words prior to entering kindergarten, while those read

five books per day will hear more than 1.4 million words.

- Reading to children expands their imaginations. The Northern Virginia Family Services reports that research has shown that children who activate their imaginations through being read to develop higher activity in the area of their brain that's responsible for cultivating mental images and deciphering and comprehending verbal cues. That heightened activity bolsters youngsters' imaginations and instills in them a greater fondness for reading.

- Reading can help kids learn to focus. Parents of young children no doubt know that such youngsters rarely sit still for any significant length of time. However, when being read to, young children, even those who are initially reluctant to engage in story time, will learn to sit still for the duration of the book. That can help them learn to focus, a benefit that will pay dividends when children begin school.

- Reading to children can speak to children's interests or emotional needs. Reading Rockets notes that children's favorite stories may speak to their emotional needs and interests. That's why so many youngsters insist on reading a favorite book over and over again. Though that's often boring for parents, it can benefit youngsters, who will eventually move on to other books.

Reading to children can benefit them in myriad ways and provide a great way for parents to bond with their youngsters.

*Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection*

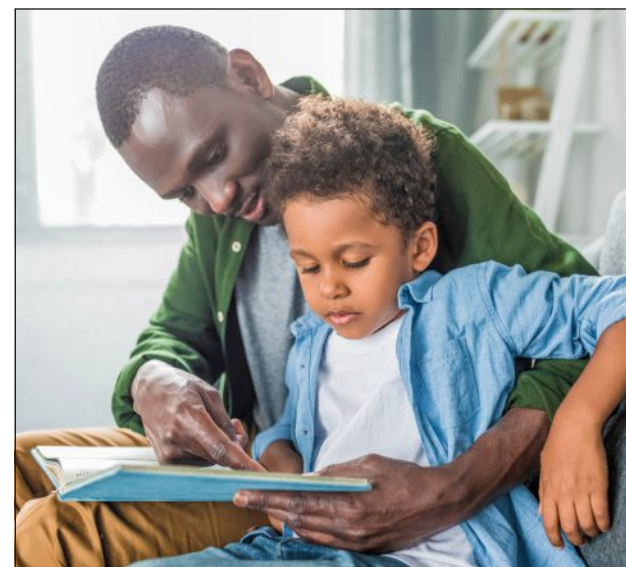


PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

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## COMMUNITY

# How parents can utilize their local library



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Finding productive ways for their children to fill their time has been an ongoing issue for parents since the pandemic began.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging for everyone. As the world adjusted to lockdowns, school closures and remote working, parents have been faced with especially unique challenges, and many of those challenges were still present a year after lockdowns began.

Finding productive ways for their children to fill their time has been an ongoing issue for parents since the pandemic began. School-age children may not be going to school for full days, and many virtual learning programs also end around lunchtime. But a familiar local resource may be just what parents need to keep their kids occupied at home on weekday afternoons.

Local libraries are invaluable community resources, and that value has become even more apparent during the pandemic. Parents can utilize local libraries in various ways, each of



Parents can utilize local libraries in various ways, each of which can help fill youngsters' time during those hours when school is not in session.

which can help fill youngsters' time during those hours when school is not in session.

- **Online story time:** In normal times, many libraries host in person story time sessions for young children. Many libraries have been unable to host in person story time since the start of the pandemic. But those same libraries may have

transitioned to online story time. For example, the New York Public Library in New York City hosts weekday story times through its website. During such sessions, librarians read books, sing songs and even share literacy tips. An archive of story times is available at [nypl.org/education/kids/story-time](http://nypl.org/education/kids/story-time), and many local libraries offer similar services.



Local libraries are invaluable community resources, and that value has become even more apparent during the pandemic.

- **Craft sessions:** Some libraries even offer free craft projects to members. Supplies can be picked up at the library on predetermined days of the week, and then families can work on the projects together at home or with other families through Zoom calls hosted by library employees. Parents can inquire with their

local libraries to see if such programs are available in their communities.

- **Academic support:** Some local libraries even offer academic support, which can be especially valuable in the era of virtual learning when kids have little one-on-one time with their teachers. Tutoring services may be available via a lo-

cal library, which also may supply supplemental materials like interactive learning tools that can bring lessons to life.

Local libraries can help families confront the academic and social challenges posed by the pandemic.

*Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection*





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## TEST PREP

# Top tips for college entrance exam success



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Get a leg up by ensuring you're well-equipped and ready to succeed on test day.

College entrance exams remain important, even in these unusual times. Fortunately, there are many ways you can help ensure you're ready for test day. Here are a few tips to consider:

- **Know the test format:** Be sure you understand the basic format of the test and the types of questions that will be included so you don't waste precious time on test day managing surprises. By using an up-to-date study guide, you won't encounter any curve balls.

- **Get comfortable with your calculator:** During your preparations and practice tests, be sure to use the same calculator you'll be bringing with you on test day. Getting familiarized with the tool's full functionality will help you be speedy and accurate when it matters most. When the clock is ticking, it's best to be holding a calculator with an easy-to-use interface, intuitive icon-based menu and natural textbook display, such as the scientific and graphic

calculators available from Casio.

To ace the science and math portions of the test, your pre-test preparations can also include checking out the webinars and resources available on the Casio education site: [casioeducation.com](http://casioeducation.com).

- **Find study buddies:** You don't need to feel alone during test preparations. Remember, your friends are going through the same thing as you. Consider getting some pals together for a series of remote study sessions.

Your group can work together to address lingering questions and concerns, share test-taking strategies and more. You may also want to consider signing up for a virtual test prep courses or getting paired with a remote tutor.

- **Read as much as possible:** While memorizing vocabulary lists is one strategy for pulling out all the stops on the humanities portions of the test, the best way to adopt good grammar, boost reading comprehension and

hone writing skills is to be an avid reader. This is especially effective if you select a range of reading materials, including fiction, biographies, journalism and more.

While a lot has changed about education this past year, much about college entrance exams has stayed the same, and you can still get a leg up by ensuring you're well-equipped and ready to succeed on test day.

*Story courtesy of StatePoint*