



Every child, every day, without exception!

10 Digital Learning Guidelines for Catoosa County Public School Parents

The transition to distance learning can be challenging for families. Parents will need to think differently about how to support their children; how to create structures and routines that allow their children to be successful; and how to monitor and support their children's learning. Some students will thrive with distance learning, while others may struggle. The ten guidelines provided below are intended to help parents think about what they can do to help their children find success in a distance learning environment.

1. **Establish routines and expectations**

From the first day Catoosa County Public Schools (CCPS) implements the Extended Closure Plan (ECP), parents need to establish routines and expectations. We encourage parents to set regular hours for their children's work. Have the same start time each morning if possible. Keep normal bedtime routines. Your children should move regularly and take periodic breaks as they study. It is important that parents set these expectations for how their children will spend their days starting as soon as distance learning is implemented, not several days later after it becomes apparent a child is struggling with the absence of routine.

2. **Define the physical space for your child's study**

Your child may have a regular place for doing homework under normal circumstances, but this space may or may not be suitable for an extended period of time. We encourage families to establish a space/location where their children will learn most of the time. This should be a public/family space, not in a child's bedroom. It should be a place that can be quiet at times and have a strong Internet signal, if possible. Above all, it should be a space where parents/guardians/caregivers are present and can monitor student learning.

3. **Monitor communications from your children's teachers**

Teachers will communicate with parents through email weekly and in some cases daily. The frequency and detail of these communications will be determined by your children's ages and their degree of independence. CCPS wants parents to contact their child's teachers. However, we ask parents to remember that teachers will be communicating with many other families. Please utilize email communication as much as you can for basic inquiry questions or details.

4. **Begin and end each day with a check-in with your child**

You are encouraged to start and finish each day with a simple check-in. In the morning, ask what is your child learning today? How will they spend their time? What resources do they require? What support do they need? This brief grounding conversation matters. It allows children to process the instructions they've received from their teachers. It helps them organize themselves and set priorities. Parents should establish these check-ins as regular parts of each day. Not all students thrive in a distance learning environment; some struggle with too much independence or lack of structure. These check-in routines need to be established early, before students fall behind or begin to struggle.

5. **Take an active role in helping your children process and own their learning**

In the course of a regular school day, your son or daughter engages with other students or adults dozens if not hundreds of times. These social interactions and opportunities for mediation include turning to a peer to exchange a thought or idea, participating in small or large group discussions, asking questions for clarification,

collaborating on group projects, and countless other moments. While some of these social interactions will be re-created on virtual platforms, others will not. Human beings learn best when they have opportunities to process their learning with others. Beyond the check-ins recommended at the start and end of each day, parents should regularly circle back and engage with their children about what they're learning. However, it's important that your child own their work; don't complete assignments for them, even when they are struggling.

6. Establish times for quiet and reflection

A huge challenge for families with multiple children will be how to manage all their children's needs, especially when those children are different ages and have different needs. There may be times when siblings need to work in different rooms to avoid distraction. Parents may even experiment with noise-cancelling headphones (no music necessary!) to block out distractions.

7. Encourage physical activity and/or exercise

Make sure your children remember to move and exercise. This is vitally important to their health, well-being, and to their learning. PE teachers will recommend activities or exercises each week, but it is important for parents to model and encourage exercise! Think also about how your children can pitch in more around the house with chores or other responsibilities. Don't let your children off the hook- expect them to pitch in!

8. Remain mindful of your child' stress or worry

One thing is for certain; Catoosa County Public Schools will only implement this ECP if a serious emergency has occurred or instructed to do so by local, state and federal health agencies. Should this happen, it is important for parents to help their children manage the worry, anxiety, and range of emotions they may experience. Difficult though it may be, do your best not to transfer your stress or worry to your children. They will be out of sorts, whether they admit it or not, and need as much normal routine as parents can provide.

9. Monitor how much time your child is spending online

We do not want students staring at computer screens for 5-8 hours a day. We ask that parents remember most teachers are not experts in distance learning and that it will require some trial-and-error before we find the right balance between online and offline learning experiences. Schools and teachers may periodically check-in with you to assess what you're seeing at home and what we need to adjust. We thank you in advance for your patience and partnership!

10. Your children will miss their friends, so try and keep those social connections but with limits

There's always excitement when we close school for snow days, flooding, etc. If CCPS implements this ECP, the initial excitement of school being closed will fade quickly when students start missing their friends, classmates, and teachers. Help your children maintain contact with friends and see them in person when circumstances permit. You can utilize phone calls, Facetime, Skype and other online communication resources to stay connected. Depending on your child's age and the digital resources you allow your child to use, please monitor your child's online social communications (i.e. email, text, social media), especially during an extended school closure. Remind your children to be respectful and appropriate in their communications and to represent your family's values and their school's values in their interactions with others.