

A Working Parent's Guide to Virtual Home School Success

Together, we can do it!



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As parents who are working from home, attending school, or returning to work, we are stressed with the prospect of the upcoming 2020-2021 virtual home school year. With limited information or in some cases too much non-specific information, we may feel lost and confused. We find ourselves asking:

- How do I teach/prepare/monitor/support my children while attending school or working from home?
- How do I prepare my students for success?
- How does "school-in-my-home" look?
- What technology requirements do I need to provide?
- How do I create opportunities for enrichment offerings that have been eliminated due to COVID-19?

Here are some ideas that can serve as a "Roadmap to Virtual Home School Success". It has become our jobs to turn our homes into schools. With that as our focus, we must set the climate and create the culture our students will need to do well.



Determine the location in your home where virtual school will take place.

- Establish a clear delineation between "home" activities and "school" activities.
- This space does not need to be large; it simply needs to be functional.
- Create different seating options with bean bags, comfortable pillows, a desk station, or a stand-up station.

Create a workstation that can remain intact or if space is limited, can be packed away with little effort.

Compile a list of items you will need to purchase/procure for our "new home virtual school".

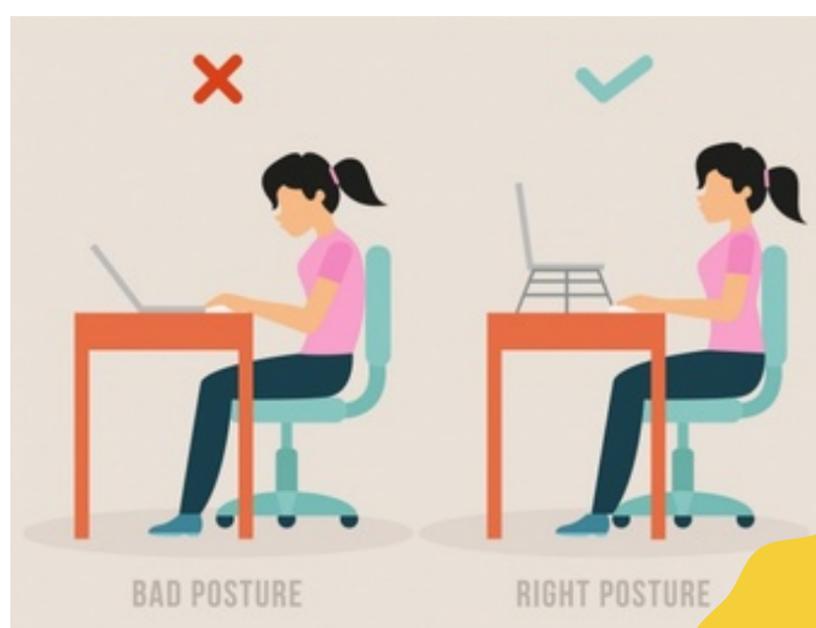
Divide your list into school operations and design elements.

- What is needed for school operations?
- What is needed for school design elements?

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Create a morning routine that includes breakfast and morning mindfulness activities.

- Encourage your students to wake up early enough to get dressed in traditional school clothes (not pajamas), eat breakfast, and have morning conversations with family.
- Make time for them to prepare their workstation, gather supplies, and possibly troubleshoot log-in problems.
- Take your dog for a morning walk with your children to get some fresh air.
- If you don't have a dog, embed simple chores into the morning routine such as taking out the recycling or trash.
- Be calm and at peace during start of each day.
- Don't be a "helicopter parent" for older students. Allow the teachers to monitor their log in times throughout the day.
- Encourage your student to go outside during the day, either for lunch or for one of their classes, if possible.
- Mix-up the monotony of schooling at home. Change the posters, background banners, and reading areas, etc.
- Monitor the mental health of your student. If your student has social-emotional problems, call your doctor or the Regional Alliance for Healthy Schools (RAHS Clinic).



Technology List

Laptop

- If you are a University of Michigan staff, student, or faculty you can purchase technology from UM's Computer Showcase. If you are a staff or faculty check the website regarding the use of payroll deduction.
- Mobile camera for computer (optional) and power strip

Microphone

- For stylish reasons only, earbuds are probably best for middle/high school age students while over the ear headphones are best for elementary students.
- Do not underestimate the importance of headphones. You may not want to hear all the bells, dings, and whistles from online learning tools used by elementary students. Headphones are a must.

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Large Monitor

- If students must strain to see the screen or do not have enough space to move tasks around on the screens, it can become stressful. Even the smallest strains over time are unhealthy and will lead to eye, back, and neck problems.

Docking Station

- They have smaller portable “cube” docking stations that only require a USB port. These small docking stations can be found retail for about \$35 and will allow connection to monitors from Chromebooks, Apple, and most personal computing devices.

Wi-Fi Router

- Call your internet service provider to ensure the speed and strength of your connection is sufficient for the number of devices that will use your signal at once.
- Don't forget about the “silent devices” that use Wi-Fi signals, such as gaming systems, cell phones, Alexa devices, cell phones, television apps-Roku, FireTV stick, home monitoring systems, printers, thermostats, digital cloud picture frames, smart home refrigerators, stoves, and smart appliances, streaming music, etc.



**Design
List**

Desk and Work Table

- Students may need space to do hands-on activities. A work table will be helpful to switch between drawing, writing, coloring, and typing with minimal disruption.
- Place workstations by windows or in well lit areas with cool backgrounds, and school banners.

Workspace Comforters

- Use fur rugs to help with fidgeting, tactile desires, and attending issues. Some kids like to rub their feet in furry rugs to stay relaxed or calm & the coziness of it will help your students who are schooling without socks.

School Decorations

- Create a school atmosphere to look and feel like school. Their work environment has to look and feel like school and have grade-level “wall posters”.
- Add grade-level posters, school spirit and extracurricular banners.
- If you do not have a poster, decorate the walls with a school or sports shirt.

Central Supply Station

- Keep the home supply station well stocked.

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Local Thrift Options

- **Ann Arbor PTO Thrift Shop**
2280 S Industrial Hwy, Ann Arbor, MI 48104
(734) 996-9155
<https://www.a2ptothriftshop.org/>
- **St. Vincent De Paul Thrift Shop**
1003 Broadway St, Ann Arbor, MI 48105
(734) 761-1400
<https://www.svdpusa.org/>
- **The Salvation Army Store**
1621 S State St, Ann Arbor, MI 48104
(734) 332-3948
<https://satruck.org/>
- **University of Michigan Property Disposition**
3241 Baxter Rd, Ann Arbor, MI 48109
(734) 764-2470
<http://procurement.umich.edu/>

Self-care & Support



Zoom Fatigue

- Ensure your student utilizes the different workstations you designed.
- Tell your child's teacher if you think more "brain breaks" should be provided
- Encourage your child to use the 20-20-20 rule to prevent eye strain. The rule says that for every 20 minutes spent looking at a screen, a person should look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.
- Allow your child to turn off their camera so they can relax a little without the whole class watching them.
- Choose "speaker view" in Zoom so that the one person who is speaking is the only person you see. Visually tracking all of the faces on the screen can be exhausting.

Enrichment Activities

- Create a COVID-19 compliant bubble with other parents and community members.
- Check with your local community recreation and education departments.
- Go to your local Farmer's Market or community garden.
- Hunt for Champion Trees in Ann Arbor.
- Map all of the playgrounds and parks in your area and visit one each week.
- Take a Virtual Tour of Ann Arbor's Champion Trees
- Take a virtual Road Trip! Tour museums in other states and around the world.

Student Advocacy

- Ask the Parent Teacher School Organization (PTO/PTSO) to host a virtual "parent mixer" to allow parents to meet and connect.

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- Attend parent/principal meetings, PTSO and teacher conferences. Communicate clearly about the needs of your student and follow-up in writing.
- “Be With” children and “Be Curious”. Ask questions and validate their feelings.
- Contact school leadership, provide examples of problem areas, offer possible solutions.
- Watch your child for signs of anxiety and depression. Kids may show anger, opposition, disruptive behavior, sadness, and withdrawal from others.
- University resources: Wellness Office - Family Care Resources, www.wellnessoffice.med.umich.edu

Self Advocacy

For information about mental health, workplace wellness, flexible work options, and general job related or instructor related concerns, the following offices may be able to help.

- **Human Resources / Working at UM - Faculty and Staff / Flexible Work Options**
4005 Wolverine Tower
3003 South State Street
Ann Arbor MI 48109-1281
(734) 615-2000
sharedservices@umich.edu
- **UM office of Ombuds - dispute resolutions**
6015 Fleming Administration Building
503 Thompson Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1340
(734) 763-3545
umstudentombuds@umich.edu
- **Faculty and Staff Counseling Consultation Office (FASCCO)**
Central Campus Office
1009 Greene St. (Near U of M Football Stadium)
2076 Administrative Services Building
(734) 936-8660
fascco@umich.edu
- **Wellness Office - Family Care Resources**
5100 Medical Sciences Building I, C-wing
1301 Catherine Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-5603
(734) 232-9380
wellness-office@med.umich.edu
- **Areas of Student Life**
6015 Fleming Administration Building
503 Thompson Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1340
(734)764-4636
info@umich.edu

Source Citations

1. **Computer Ergonomics: How to Protect Yourself from Strain and Pain**
<https://uhs.umich.edu/computerergonomics>
2. Digital Eye Strain 20-20-20 Rule <https://www.umkelloggeye.org/conditions-treatments/digital-eye-strain>
3. **SEEN Magazine Covid, Kids, and Mental Health Webinar**
<https://seenthemagazine.com>
4. **Katherine Rosenblum, Ph.D., ABPP | Psychiatry | Michigan Medicine**
<https://medicine.umich.edu/dept/psychiatry/katherine-rosenblum-phd-abpp>
5. **Sheila Marcus, MD | Psychiatry | Michigan Medicine | University of Michigan**
<https://medicine.umich.edu/dept/psychiatry/sheila-marcus-md>
6. **Suzanne Dawid, M.D., Ph.D. | Microbiology & Immunology | Michigan Medicine**
<https://medicine.umich.edu/dept/microbiology-immunology/suzanne-dawid-md-phd>
7. **Eva Feldman, MD, PhD | Neurology | Michigan Medicine**
<https://medicine.umich.edu/dept/neurology/eva-feldman-md-phd>
8. **Time To Move: 30/3 rule** <https://hr.umich.edu/benefits-wellness/health-well-being/mhealthy/faculty-staff-well-being/physical-activity/time-move>