

Creating Systems and Best Practices for Back to School Virtual Learning
 Presented by Sheri MacGregor
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Background:

- Classroom teacher for over 15 years
- Software trainer and mentor for educational administrators for 10 years
- ELA & Math curriculum coach and designer
- Piloted 1:1 programs for Apple and Microsoft in the classroom
- [Professional Member of NAPO - National Association of Productivity & Organizing Professionals](#)
- [All Paper Certified Organizer through Organize 365](#) with in person training and mentoring from Lisa Woodruff
- HIPAA Certified

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Objectives:

- Organize physical environments for virtual learning
- Streamline workflow processes for parents and kids (Managing digital input- Zoom links, Google meets)
- Individualize and organize environments for families with special needs



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Imagine it's 2019, and you are going to send your children to their first day of school...



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It would likely have looked something like this:



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Fast forward to 2020...

 **Ashley in the OR**
@ashwee356
"Alexa, homeschool the children."

 **shonda rhimes**
@shondarhimes
Been homeschooling a 6-year old and 8-year old for one hour and 11 minutes. Teachers deserve to make a billion dollars a year. Or a week.
10:12 AM - Mar 16, 2020
592.9K likes 99.5K people are Tweeting about this

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 **Nikki Norris**
@norriskiki
Today's homeschool lesson was apparently Fine Arts. My kids get an A for creativity and collaboration on their project!



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Many families are overwhelmed...

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“What teachers and families are experiencing is crisis learning...”

Leslie Josel



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There is a difference in learning from home, due to a pandemic, versus homeschooling.

Leslie Josel explained...

Homeschooling is a planned choice. Great thought and care go into this type of learning at home.

Crisis learning is when teachers and children didn't plan to be home, but circumstances dictate that regular classroom instruction is paused, or given a hybrid or virtual option.



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Families are seeking solutions to organize their physical spaces and workflows.

Many resources exist these days, but it can be hard to pull it altogether.

A professional organizer can shine in these times!



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To create best practices and systems for virtual learning environments:

- Physical space
- Workflow
- Client’s unique situation

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Using best practices to organize the physical space

Organizers will not be able to replicate the classroom experience, nor should they, but they can bring *order, structure, and efficiency* to the setting. This helps families and children regulate their home during constant changes.

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Consider the primary classroom...

It’s an organizer’s dream...

Everything is

- Labeled
- Zoned
- Visually appealing
- Tidy...

And has a home!



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Even the supplies look inviting to use



Photo source: <http://simplysweetteaching.blogspot.com/2012/06/classroom-supplies-organization.html>

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Set up a learning structure that demonstrates “school is in session”

Ergonomic desk and chair is best, but a table and chair can work

Having a designated zone / location to work in the home will allow kids to engage with school and disengage when done. Homework could even be done in a different location.

We still want home to feel like home!

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Work Space MUST HAVES

- Desk or table with ergonomic chair
- Sitting upright increases young attention spans for active learning time
- Supplies should be in reach (caddy, pencil boxes, or hanging)
- Lighting should be inviting
- Power charging access for devices
- Technology should be placed ergonomically, being mindful of keyboarding and viewing levels.





www.woodandstyleinthehouse.com

Some virtual home environment desk set-ups

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Portable Homework Stations



<http://organizingmadefun.blogspot.com/>



<http://tickledpinkmandy.blogspot.com>



<https://organise-my-house.com/>



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Study Carrel Ideas

- Trifold boards or file folders stapled together can make a great focus area for some children
- File folders can be stapled or taped together to make mini-offices between siblings if needed



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How do teachers create best practices within a physical space?



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3 Things have been proven to increase academic performance, in general, by 16% in the classroom physical space:

- Naturalness
- Stimulation
- Ownership



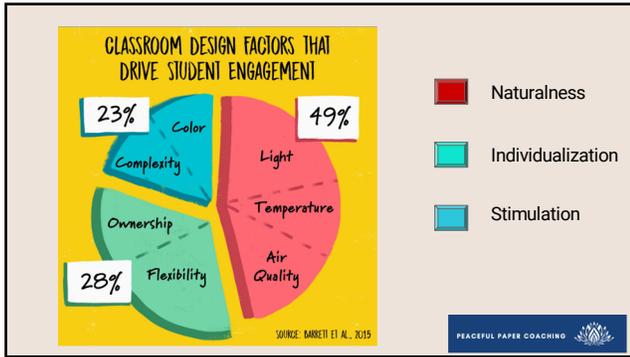
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Even more amazingly, these adjustments improved academic performance by up to 73% for high anxiety subjects like math!

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5394432/>



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Naturalness

- Lighting
- Temperature
- Air Quality
- Acoustics

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Naturalness in the classroom and home

Lighting

Sunlight - Direct v. indirect

Type of lighting - fluorescent, v. incandescent, overhead v. table lamps, warm v. white

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Questions to Ask Clients Regarding Lighting Preferences:

What kind of lighting helps you focus?
What kind of lighting energizes you?
Is there a type of lighting that helps you relax?



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Lighting



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Naturalness in the classroom and home

Acoustics

Auditory processing needs - volume
Background noise



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Questions to Ask Clients Regarding Acoustic Preferences:

What is the optimal acoustic environment for your child?
What is their sensitivity to noises?
Does your child prefer sounds or music in the background?



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Acoustics



<https://www.asha.org/public/hearing/Classroom-Acoustics/>



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Naturalness in the classroom and home

Temperature

Too cold or too hot

Sudden changes

(Students keep layers in backpacks)



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Questions to Ask Clients Regarding Air Quality & Temperature Preferences:

Does your child prefer to be indoors or outdoors?
Does he or she get cold or hot when studying?



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Individualization

Ownership

Flexibility



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Individualization: Ownership & Flexibility

If possible, include children in the design process

Allow a theme or special color if possible

Using some portable items, mini offices, study carrels, a child can include their personal tastes, but parents can store away if they need a more normalized area

Allow children flexibility in their downtime

Choose a designated area for online learning that is just theirs

For pre-teens and teens, keep in mind that working next to mom or dad may be counterproductive, and even uncomfortable when online with peers. Allow autonomy if appropriate in these situations

Perhaps seated at a table works best for online learning, but homework could be done on the floor, a coffee table, etc.



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Stimulation

Color
Complexity



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Stimulation

Color	Complexity
Muted tones with no more than one accent color have been shown to provide a balanced amount of stimulation. An overly busy environment can cause distraction	Visual clutter can be distracting for children Clear surfaces, organized supplies and papers, and orderly areas help children keep their mind on the learning tasks



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Workflows



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Set up Schedules

Because children function best with a certain degree of structure, maintaining as much of their preexisting routine will be incredibly helpful.
-Tara Martello, M.S.



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Sample Schedule

7am - 8am morning routine and breakfast
8am - 9am exercise and playtime
9am - 11:30am lessons and quiet work time
11:30am - 1pm recess and lunch
1pm - 3:30pm lessons and quiet work time
3:30pm - 4:30pm free time
4:30pm - 5:30pm guided activity time
5:30pm - 6:30pm dinner
6:30 - 8pm family and chill time
8pm nightly routine and bedtime

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Centers for Virtual Home Learning

Computer (times here)	Seatwork (times here)	Learning Games (times here)
Child 1	Child 2	Child 3
Child 2	Child 3	Child 1
Child 3	Child 1	Child 2



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Digital meeting information

Create a parking space for all Zoom meeting links, Google Meet links, etc.

Evernote, Trello, or Google Keep are some digital options

Create a printed schedule so your child knows what, when, and where

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Digital files on Computers

Create a cloud backup folder and document folder on the local hard drive for each child

Most students are using a service like Google Classroom, Canvas, or Blackboard and files are cloud based

For important projects, download a copy and name it

When naming files, be consistent with categories, date, etc. for ease of location

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Adjusting for Special Needs of Children

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Ergonomic adjustments: Wiggle seats

Wiggle seat Cushions



Wiggle Seat Stools



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Movement while seated

Resistance bands for chair legs



Fitness ball seating



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Time



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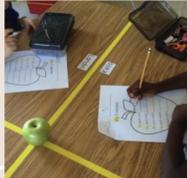
Weighted Blankets and Vests



NEW! 8 lbs
TRANQUILITY
WEIGHTED BLANKET
6 lbs
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Washi tape to divide work spaces for multiple children



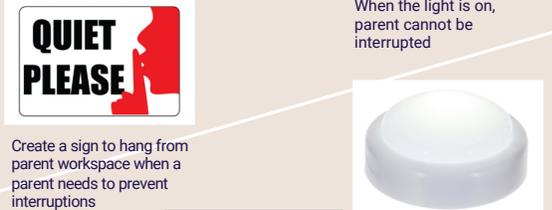
Young children often do not have the self-awareness to regulate themselves spatially.

Washi tape or masking tape can give them a visual boundary for a work space if needed, when working alongside another child.

mrspauleyskindergarten
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Preventing Interruptions



QUIET PLEASE

When the light is on, parent cannot be interrupted

Create a sign to hang from parent workspace when a parent needs to prevent interruptions

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Dividing Spaces



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Being willing to pivot and being flexible are the key to working with clients in these changing times

Professional organizers and productivity coaches are up to the task of helping our communities!

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Case Study #1

You have been hired by a young female executive who is now working from home, due to COVID restrictions at work. She is a single mom struggling with managing her two elementary aged children and their learning time and physical space. She works concurrently during the time her children are in virtual classes. She seeks help organizing their learning space, schedules, papers, and digital classroom information. The family is currently working out of the family room and office, but she is open to repurposing rooms.

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Case Study #2

You have been hired by two retired grandparents who have been asked to help with elementary, junior high, and high school grandchildren during the pandemic. The grandparents' home will now be used as the virtual learning space during school hours and is limited to a kitchen table and office desk that can be used for studying. How can an organizer help facilitate a working system for this multi-generational family?



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Credits

- <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/heavily-decorated-classrooms-disrupt-attention-and-learning-in-young-children.html#comment-page:1>
- <https://www.edutopia.org/article/flexible-classrooms-research-scarce-promising>
- <https://www.edutopia.org/article/flexible-classrooms-research-scarce-promising>
- https://www.paths.com/mag/courses/18862_ATP_Coronavirus_Crash_Course_Helping_Clients_Create_Effective_At-Home_Learning_Environments



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