

keeping learning going...

how can parents be great support teachers
to primary students?



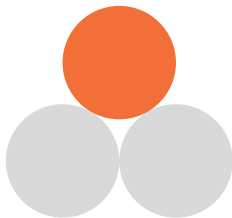
why is this important?

There is an art and science to supporting great learning, and even for experienced educators our skill in this art and science is constantly evolving. Teachers know that great lessons are a moving target, and that an approach that worked brilliantly one week, may fall flat on its face the next. The reason for this is that children are stunningly sophisticated creations; their brains are literally growing in front of you and their needs, desires and engagement levels are always in flux.

Parents, are you intimidated by becoming a stay at home support teacher?

Well you shouldn't be. You have done a stunning job raising your children this far, and with a few tips and tricks that we want to add to your repertoire with this kit you are going to be even better today, and a little better still tomorrow! Let's get into it.

key ideas in this kit



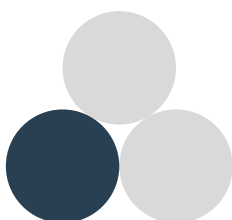
defining your role

Understanding your role in supporting the learning from home.



what's important?

A quick up-skill on the most important teaching tools (without needing a Masters of Teaching!).



motivation

Avoiding the monotony of learning from home and keeping your kids motivated.

defining your role

reflection

Parents, sometimes you are going to feel like you are a master instructor (think Mr Miyagi in the Karate Kid). But other times, when there has just been a huge tantrum, there are papers all over the floor and nothing is making sense (and that's just you, let alone the kids!), then things can feel a little rotten.

Before we start, take a moment to reflect on the best experience you and your child have had so far together with them learning at home, and also take a moment to smile at the worst (and forgive yourself). In fact if you want to share these on twitter you can with #keepinglearninggoing.

tools

So what can you do in your home to foster learning?

- **Parent as teacher:** The best teachers are never those who know the most content or who have the best planned lessons. Instead, they are the individuals who work hard to create great connections with each of their students and foster their best learning. As a parent, this is a good way to view your role. You should strive to create positive connections with your child. Give them praise when they persevere with a difficult task, have great conversations about their current topic, role model how you learn, and make sure you listen actively and carefully to what they are saying (ie making sure you put your phone down or close your laptop if you are focusing in on them).
- **Talk to your school:** Most schools believe strongly in the notion of parents as partners and they work hard to foster these relationships. In fact as teachers we get a huge kick out of seeing engaged parents reach out to us. So, make a deliberate effort to communicate with your school and in particular your child's teachers and don't just rely on what they are sending out to you. Seek clarity, ask questions, turn to the teachers for advice and actively learn more each week about what you can do to best support your child at home. If you are the kind of person who likes to dig further, head on over to <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/> to see what the Australian government thinks your child should be learning at their year level.

defining your role

- **Go with your strengths:** Whilst we did say that you are not expected to be the only teacher of your child, by no means are we suggesting you can't teach! You will have skills and knowledge that will support the learning that has been assigned to your child and quite possibly take it in a direction that their teachers may not have thought about. This can be a good thing, but we would suggest that you perhaps take a few steps off the path, rather than creating your own route! If you do feel strongly about a new route, then check in with your child's teacher, they are professionals!
- **Be the parent:** As parents we all know that kids are far more sophisticated and intelligent than most people give them credit for. If you try to suddenly change your personality and act like the teacher, they will see right through you. It is still your home and you are still the parent, so go with what works in your house. Yes, things are different, but the fundamentals stay the same, and you can keep a whole bunch of behaviours and routines that have proven to work for your little team.

action

Do you need to schedule in some time to chat with your child's teacher? What are some questions that you can come prepared to ask when you are able to connect?

what's important?

reflection

Whilst the world is strange right now and we all face some big changes, there are a whole bunch of approaches in education that we already know work. So we do not need to reinvent the wheel! Good learning is good learning and we are confident that you would have experienced it yourself before.

Take a moment now to reflect on how you like to learn, and consider whether this approach could be helpful with your children.

tools

What are some good learning approaches you can try?

- **Feedback:** Imagine you are trying to improve your tennis game. You have one coach who just gives you a book to read and wishes you the best of luck. Another coach actually gets on the court with you and every session is there to suggest, evaluate and call out adjustments to your swing. The second coach is not scripted, or formal, or the same for every player, but they are very effective. As educators we know that when feedback is timely, relevant and has a personal connection it is much more likely to make a difference. Your role as a parent teacher should be in finding the specific things that you have noticed your child is doing well. Don't just say well done, instead say, "I noticed how hard you keep trying on that maths problem. The way you persevered was really great." Then you can check in with them to see how they felt whilst they worked through the problem (self feedback is great!).
- **The questions you ask:** An oldie but a goodie in every teacher's toolkit is the ability to ask really great open-ended questions. Asking, 'How was your day', gives a one word response (we've all got that thrown back at us at the dinner table!). Instead asking, 'What was the best/most challenging/interesting/funny part of your day?', gives scope for a much more in depth and interesting response. Or instead of asking your child to retell the story of Ned Kelly, it is much more interesting to ask, 'Can you explain why Ned Kelly could be seen as a hero or a villain?'. By asking 'I wonder' questions like, 'I wonder what we can do with this?', we can open up a whole new world of responses.

what's important?

- **Look at things from different perspectives.** Rather than asking a Year 2 student to simply detail the characters in Little Red Riding Hood, have them retell the story from the Wolf's perspective. Can your child paint the wolf in a good light, show him sympathy, or talk about his difficult upbringing? Shifting perspective like this works on all sorts of topics and is an easy way to build depth of knowledge, foster empathy and challenge thinking. Perhaps tell the story of Australia's colonisation from a First Australian's perspective, and then from an early settler's point of view (this is much more interesting than having them make a poster about the First Fleet).
- **Add to what you see.** Most learners, most of the time, like to see and learn things in multiple ways. Let's say the unit of work is on democracy. Don't just show your child how parliament works, instead find great stories about the times democracy really worked in Australia. For example, the story of Vincent Lingiari is a much more interesting way of talking about democracy than trying to regurgitate facts and figures. The easiest way to add layers to topics is to tell stories (or get the grandparents to do a video call to tell some!).



action

Over the next week set a goal of adding one thing a day to the learning that your child's teachers are sending through. It can be as simple as a question, and as expansive as a project you work on together for the next year!

motivation

reflection

Alright, let's start this page with a reality check. As good as you are, you will probably not be able to be like Tony Robbins and keep your children hyper-motivated all day, every day. They will have moments of feeling flat, bored, confused and frustrated. That is normal and expected.

Maybe keep a journal throughout the day of the times they seem the most and the least engaged (and be sure to jot down the activities they were engaged with during the good times!).

tools

How can you help to keep your children motivated across the day.

- **Give choice.** Throughout the learning day, try to find opportunities to offer choice when you can. Practically, this could see you co-creating timetables and timelines, giving moments for daily or weekly goal setting, giving choice on the methods of presenting their work, or negotiate the right amount of play (or even computer gaming time). Rather than setting the agenda entirely yourself, work together to plan out the day, fostering ownership and helping them to see things on their own terms.
- **Make it purposeful.** We are seeing that with the explosion of online learning, kids are more eager than ever to know the purpose of what they are engaging in. If your child doesn't see the point in an activity, they won't want to do it or may just do it out of compliance, a trick that chips away at motivation and drains the passion out of learning. For example, if there is a lesson on the sun and the moon, don't just read facts off a screen, but instead grow some sprouts on a window sill, or try to catch a sunset or moonrise that week!

motivation

- **Build Mastery:** Kids want to learn things and will want to build on what they know. This means that as they get better at something they will want to learn even more - think of a kid who learns to ride a bike, and then quickly copies their older sister doing jumps in the driveway, or their brother doing skids! A great spin off from this motivation to learn is that they will ask deeper questions around the topic and be able to critique and analyse things far better than they would with limited understanding. For example, the better you get at learning the guitar the more you want to find out and the more motivated you will be to improve. So foster their growing energy for a topic by making quizzes, telling stories to put things in context, showing relevant video clips or news articles, or hook up some video interviews with some experts rather than just resorting to google to find new information.
- **Keep connections:** Meaningful relationships are always important, but now more than ever with the isolation we are all facing, try to foster positive connections for your child. Practically, this means suggesting or being open to ways that your child can connect with their teachers and their friends. This is not the time to be spending the whole day working alone, but rather they should be chatting productively (or sometimes unproductively), working in teams, and bouncing ideas off each other, either through video or by collaborating on documents. Just lean in every now and then to make sure there is a purpose to the communication and that they haven't descended into sharing TikToks!

action

Talk to your child about the things that they are most excited about learning at the moment and see if you can find other ways to add to this!

thank you for all you do to educate our children

the EC crew



**education
changemakers**

**professional learning +
support that changes schools**

Education Changemakers is an organisation founded by teachers, for teachers. We have a range of resources you can draw on from podcasts to videos, and books to workshops. If you would like to read more about how we may be able to partner with your school, head on over to educationchangemakers.com.