

keeping learning going...

how can parents be great support teachers
to secondary students?



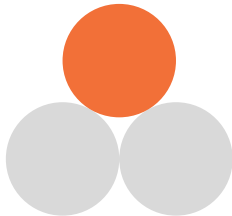
why is this important?

There is an art and science to supporting great learning, and even the most experienced educators know that their skills are 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 teenagers are stunningly sophisticated creations; their brains (and bodies) 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 teachers?

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

key ideas in this kit



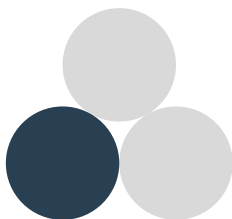
defining your role

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 teenager 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

You have a key role to play to support your child's learning at home. Here are a few things to think about!

- **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 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. make 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 and quite possibly take it in a direction that the teachers may not have thought about. If you have experience in an area, share it! One of the best ways to help is with editing essays and assignments (but don't do the writing for them!), and finding time to talk about what they are learning (never underestimate the power of a great conversation for learning). Keep these chats brief and informal, let your teenager do most of the talking, and if they start to sour, just let them go.
- **Be the parent:** Teenagers are much 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. So be yourself! Keep the same routines that you would normally have in your house and try to maintain the same behavior standards that you would normally expect. If you are trying to work from home, role model good learning yourself and show empathy by sharing your struggles and successes.



action

Do you need to schedule in some time to chat with your child's teachers? 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 faced 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 teenagers.

tools

There is a lot that goes into teaching, but here are the big ticket items you should prioritise!

- **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 had 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, 'How is school going?', or 'What did your teacher send you today?', ask, 'What is going to be the most time today?', or 'How can I best support you today?'.

what's important

- **Look at things from different perspectives.** There is an opportunity to get creative with learning during this time. So rather than asking your Year 10 student to retell the plot of a novel or write a book review, talk to them about the characters they loved and why. See if they can write a piece about the times we are in using the author's style. If you have the time, you can read the book yourself and launch a family book club so you can have some really great conversations over a hot chocolate!
- **Add to what you see your child learning.** Most learners, most of the time, like to see and learn things in multiple ways. This doesn't mean you need to know everything about the topics your teenager is learning about, but you can always add value. Could you find them a relevant podcast to listen to as they go for an evening walk, or does Khan Academy have some great videos you can watch together to quickly upskill on an topic?



action

Have a chat with your teenager to look ahead at their next week of learning, and set a target of finding one way to add some value to their learning!

motivation

reflection

It is worth noting early in this section that keeping motivation levels high all day every day is just not possible. All teenagers will have their ups and downs and mood swings. Indeed, during these strange times the roller coaster will be even steeper. Even if they don't give you much back, teenagers love to know that you are on their side, so keep being supportive, respectful and try to see things from their viewpoint where you can.

tools

There is a lot that goes into teaching, but here are the big ticket items you should prioritise!

- **Give choice.** Make sure you find opportunities to offer choice whenever you can. This includes letting them define how they want you to work with them, rather than you setting the agenda. Remember that every time you give choice there is a far greater likelihood of them taking ownership and getting the work done! They are capable of doing lots of things on their own (Greta Thunberg led a global climate change movement as a 14 year old), so support them by allowing them to direct their own learning and schedules where possible.
- **Make it purposeful.** Teachers are reporting that with online learning, kids now more than ever are wanting to know the purpose of what they are learning. If kids don't see the point in something they won't want to do it (or they may just do it out of compliance). But, the problem is that it slowly chips away at motivation, draining the passion out of learning. This is when you can contact the school and find out more about the topics they are learning about. This can help you to put things in a real life context or show how it could work in other areas of life. It could be as simple as loving learning about something that they are passionate about (that is a great purpose!).

motivation

- **Build mastery:** Young people want to learn new 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. 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 teenager. Practically, this means suggesting or being open to ways that they can connect with their teachers, their friends, and their mentors (if they are lucky enough to have some!). 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

Perhaps have a chat with your teenager at dinner about setting up some times that they can connect with some important people in their life (either on school work, or just purely to connect!).

thank you for all you do to educate our children

the EC crew



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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.