

How Can I Work and Manage My Child's Education?

Working parents face more challenges when educating their children at home. Juggling the demands of your job with the needs of your child can be tricky, but not impossible. Using some of the tips in this article and some advanced planning you can successfully manage both responsibilities.

Flexibility has been mentioned in previous articles both as benefit of homeschooling and as a factor to keep in mind to meet the needs of our children. Working parents particularly need to embrace flexibility. This school year is going to look quite different for students across the country, from changes to in-person classrooms to the new distance learning models. As such, everyone involved – teachers, parents, and students will have to adapt.

The first consideration is any specific time requirements of either your job or your child's school – any meetings or classes that either of you must attend. Block out time for those first. Even if it is the middle of a traditional school day, your child can do something else while you're occupied with a meeting; depending on their age they may be able to do a lesson independently or younger kids can color, look at books, watch a video, or play a game.

Depending on how much flexibility you have with your work schedule you may be able to start your day earlier and then do lessons with your child after your work day is over, or vice versa – start lessons early with your child and then start your work day later. Another possibility is blocking out some time in the middle of your day to work with your child.

For those who do not have much flexibility in their work schedule, you may need more assistance. One possibility is to have someone watch your child while you are working – perhaps a relative, babysitter, or respite worker (contact your child's state case worker to ask about eligibility). You can then choose if you want that person to work on lessons with your child, or if you want to do some or all of your child's lessons with them when you are done with work. Many homeschooling families have grandparents or nannies who are in charge of supervising lessons while the parents work and then the parents may do some lessons with their children in the evenings or weekends.

Another strategy is to form an education pod with a few other families. In a pod a few families agree to the same safety protocols to prevent Covid and meet regularly to do lessons together. This is similar to the educational co-ops that many traditional homeschoolers have done for years. You can work while your child is working on lessons with other trusted families.

Some homeschooling families utilize learning centers for some classes; perhaps for subjects the parents don't feel confident in teaching or just so the child can enjoy some fun classes. Evolved from co-ops, think of learning centers as community colleges for kids; you get to pick classes based on interest and schedule. Classes are small, a class limit of around twelve students is typical, and the environment is more relaxed. Many classes are taught by homeschooling parents or even recent homeschool

graduates. If in-person classes are allowed in your area, this may be a viable option for working families who choose to homeschool to cover some or all of your child's needs.

No matter what strategy you use to complete lessons, it will be important for both you and your child to schedule your time. You will both feel more at ease if you know you have set blocks of time for both work and school. Also, keep in mind that not all lessons have to be done in a formal manner. Learning can take place anytime and anywhere. There is a lot of learning that can be done by reading books, playing games, or having discussion over dinner or on a weekend walk around the neighborhood. Give yourself some permission to relax. If you are overly stressed because you're trying to fit too much into your day between work and lessons, your child is going to pick up on that stress and that will make school work even harder fueling the cycle of stress.

Remember that most schools that are using a distance learning model or a hybrid model will have less time with students to deliver curriculum content; material is going to be reduced out of necessity. Teachers will focus on the highlights and most important concepts. You can do the same. Review your state's grade-level standards, which should be available on your state's department of education website. Make sure you are covering the main ideas, which as mentioned above can often be mastered in alternate ways than just the standard school curriculum. For those opting out of traditional school and choosing to homeschool, you have even more freedom to be creative about how concepts are taught. The more alternative or fun ways you can find to deliver lesson content your child the easier it will be for you to get work done knowing that they are engaged.

One final point to remember about the education system is that topics repeat themselves. Over the thirteen years children go through Kindergarten to Twelfth grade they cycle through many of the same topics several times. As they get older the lessons become more complex as they explore ideas in more depth, but don't feel like your child is going to suffer permanently if every single idea isn't taught this year.

This year has thrown everyone into changes they never imagined, forcing families to juggle demands in new ways. With planning, having realistic expectations, and finding creative ways to engage your child, working parents can have a successful school year.