

# Guidelines for Nations' Parents

The transition to distance learning is challenging for families. Parents need to think differently about how to support their children, how to create structures and routines that allow their children to be successful, and how to monitor and support their children's learning. Some students thrive with distance learning, while others need more support. The guidelines provided below are intended to help parents think about what they can do to help their children be successful in a distance learning environment.

## Establish Routines and Expectations

From the first day School of the Nations implements its Distance Learning Plan, parents need to establish routines and expectations. Just as is the case at school, your child is used to having set routines for lessons, classes, and lunch. School of the Nations encourages parents to set regular hours for their children's schoolwork. We suggest students begin their studies at 7:45 a.m. in Middle School and High School and 8:00 a.m. for Early Childhood and Elementary School, just as if they were on campus.

Keep regular bedtime routines for younger children and expect the same from your Middle School- and High School-aged children (do not let your children stay up late or sleep in). We strongly encourage families to set these routines as soon as distance learning is implemented.

## Define the Physical Space for Your Child's Study

Your child may have a regular place for doing homework under normal circumstances, but this space may or may not be suitable for an extended period, as is the case with the Distance Learning Plan. Giving students a dedicated workspace helps them stay organized and reinforces that they are in school mode. Ensuring the workspace is in a quiet environment will help your child focus; music, television, and other children can cause unnecessary distractions. It should be a place that can be quiet at times and has a strong wireless Internet signal, if possible. Above all, it should be a space where parents are present and monitoring their children's learning when feasible.

A challenge for families with multiple children is how to manage all their children's needs, especially when those children are different ages and have different needs. There may be times when siblings need to work in different rooms to avoid distractions. Parents may even experiment with noise-canceling headphones to minimize distractions.

## Monitor Communications from Your Children's Teachers

Teachers will communicate with parents through email, when and as necessary. The frequency and detail of these communications will be determined by your children's ages, maturity, and their degree of independence. School of the Nations recommends parents contact their children's teachers, if necessary, during school hours. Please remember that teachers will be communicating with dozens of other families, so please keep communications brief and limit them to what is essential.

## Begin and End Each Day with a Check-In Routines

Parents are encouraged to start and end each day with a simple check-in. In the morning, ask your child;

- What are you learning today?
- How will you spend your time?
- What materials do you need?
- What help do you need?

This brief grounding conversation matters. It allows children to process the instructions they have received from their teachers. It helps them organize themselves and set priorities. Older students may not want to have these check-ins with parents, which is normal, but they should. Parents may consider co-creating a visual checklist that includes checkboxes and should establish these check-ins as regular parts of each day. Not all students thrive in a distance learning environment; some struggle with too much independence or lack of structure. These check-in routines need to be established early.

## Take an Active Role in Helping Your Children Process and Own Their Learning

During a regular school day at School of the Nations, your child engages with other students or adults dozens, if not hundreds, of times each day. These social interactions and opportunities for mediation include turning to a peer to exchange a thought or idea, participating in small or large group discussions, asking questions for clarification, collaborating on group projects, and countless other moments. Asking your child questions about their schoolwork is a great way for them to process, extend, and consolidate their learning while staying involved during their distance learning. Studies show that students learn more when they talk about or explain what they are learning. Letting them explain it to you is an opportunity for your child to build confidence in what they have learned. Here are some examples of questions you might like to ask your child:

- What is one interesting thing you learned today in [math, English, more]?
- Can you show me how you solved your most challenging activity today?
- What do you need help with today?
- What is one thing that you know today that you didn't know yesterday?
- How did you collaborate online today?

However, it is important that your child complete their own work; **do not complete assignments for them**, even if they are struggling. This is part of the learning process.

## Encourage Physical Activity and Exercise

In school, your child has natural breaks between classes, which is why reminding them to take breaks between assignments is a great idea. Make sure your children remember to move and exercise regularly. This is vitally important to their health, wellbeing, and will enhance their learning. School of the Nations' physical education team will recommend activities or exercises, but it is important for parents to model and encourage exercise. Break-times are a perfect time to be physically active; encourage your child to stand up and stretch, take a walk outside, or play ball for 15 minutes. It can do wonders in maintaining academic focus. You may even want to consider planning extra time outdoors in the evenings.

## Remain Mindful of Your Child's Stress or Worry

It is imperative for parents to help their children manage the worry, anxiety, and range of emotions they may be experiencing. Although challenging, do your best not to transfer your stress or worry to your children. They will be sad or confused, whether they admit it or not, and need as much normal routine as parents can provide.

## Keep your Children Social, but Set Rules for Their Social Media Interactions

The initial excitement of school being closed will quickly fade when students start missing their friends, classmates, and teachers. Social interaction is an important part of your child's wellbeing, and during distance learning, they will experience less interaction than normal. Please remind your child to reach out to their classmates and friends from school. Even though you will be working to balance screen time with school and social interactions, reaching out by phone, video chat, or email are ways for children to stay socially connected with friends and classmates.

Remember to monitor your children's social media use, especially during extended school closure. Remind your children to be polite, respectful, and appropriate in their communications and to represent your family's values in their interactions with others. A student's written words and tone can sometimes offend or cause harm to others.

## Monitor How Much Time Your Child Spends Online

School of the Nations does not want its students in front of computer screens for 7 to 8 hours a day. We ask parents to remember that most teachers are not experts in distance learning and that it will require some trial-and-error before we find the right balance between online and off-line learning experiences. Principals or teachers will periodically check in with you to assess what you are seeing at home and what we need to adjust. We thank you for your patience and partnership!