

March 2020

# Supporting Digital Learners





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# Introduction

VirtualSC's mission is to provide South Carolina students with flexible and rigorous online learning opportunities that will help them acquire the knowledge, skills, and characteristics necessary for college and career readiness.

Students in virtual classrooms have many of the same needs as students in face to face settings. Students need reliable technology, clear expectations, and frequent communication. The resources included in this guide can help parents provide support to students as they participate in digital learning experiences.

# Best Practices in Supporting Your Digital Learner

Parental support of students is critical to their success as digital learners. Below, you will find some tried and true practices that lead to increased positive student outcomes in the online classroom.

## Active Involvement

Opportunities exist for parents to be involved in their student's digital learning experiences. When parents are engaged, students know that their education is a priority. This often results in higher student achievement and increased self-confidence.

What are some ways that you can be involved in your student's digital learning experience?

- Develop a working relationship with your child's teacher.
- Contact the teacher periodically via email, phone, text, Skype, etc, or via the teacher's preferred communication method.
- Talk to students about what they are learning and working on in class.
- Encourage students to contact teachers as course-related questions arise.
- Ask students to show you evidence of their progress.
- Share information that may affect your child's performance (illness, vacation, etc.) with the teacher.
- Encourage students to review work before submissions.
- Have students show you what they are working on in class.
- Encourage students to review comments (feedback) teachers make about their work; have discussions with students about the feedback and how they will use it in completing future assignments.

# Technology Access

In order for students to thrive in a digital learning environment, access to reliable technology is crucial. Parents should consider whether or not students have access to a strong and consistent wi-fi network. Although some coursework may be accessed from and completed on smart phones, there may be limitations that necessitate the use of a laptop or desktop computer. Additionally, some teachers may create lessons that require students to use a particular software program. Parents should keep these things in mind as they work to support their digital learners.

What can I do to help ensure my child has access to the technology needed for the digital classroom?

- Create a back-up plan for students to complete coursework in the event that they encounter technical difficulties.
- Visit the local library or another available community site to use computers or other resources as needed.
- Have students report problems with coursework access to their teachers.
- Provide peripherals (headphones, webcams, etc.) that support student focus and that allow full participation in online activities.
- Explore options for stable internet service.
- If your child receives special education services, then contact the appropriate school support personnel for assistance with assistive technology and software to support learning.

# Consistency

In the digital learning environment, there is more flexibility in where and when students complete their work. Therefore, it may be beneficial for them to develop a schedule to help keep them on track.

What are some ways that I can help my child practice consistency?

- Help students develop a daily/weekly plan to study and complete coursework.
- Review course syllabus with students and help them create reminders for course deadlines.
- Encourage students to actively use a digital or paper calendar to record their schedules.
- Work with your child to set goals.
- Determine a daily time for coursework.
- Game plan for every day, develop a schedule to include breaks, lunch, where they will work daily, etc.
- Help students stay organized.

# Learner Environment

In all learning environments, including online, students benefit from having a dedicated space to study and complete coursework. This space should be comfortable and should indicate to students that they are expected to focus on their schoolwork.

How can I create a learner-centered environment for my child?

- Provide a consistent place for students to work.
- Help create a workspace that closely matches the student's learning style.
- Ensure students have all needed supplies nearby.

# Student Motivation

In the online environment, students sometimes feel disconnected from their teachers and peers. They also may fail to see the true value of the coursework they are given. Parents have an opportunity to fill the voids left from students not learning in the physical classroom.

How can I motivate my child to work hard and participate in digital learning experiences.

- Encourage students to participate in all class activities, including live sessions, discussions, one-on-one teacher-led meetings, etc.
- Establish checkpoints for students to discuss their progress.
- Reach out to teachers to discuss possible ways that you can support and motivate your child if you sense disengagement.
- Acknowledge your child's academic growth.
- Determine possible incentives for performance.
- Insist upon excellence!

# Best Practices for Supporting Early Literacy at Home

VirtualSCPD's "Supporting Early Literacy at Home: A Parent's Guide" is a free online resource, designed to provide information for parents and caregivers so that they can support their children's early literacy development. The resource, which is divided into age groups, provides information and tips (strategies) that will arm parents/caregivers with tools to support children from birth through the beginning years of school.

[Parent Resource guide for ages 0 to 7 years Supporting Early Literacy at Home](#)

## Digital Resources Shmoop

VirtualSC offers test preparation free-of-charge to any public, private, or home school student in the state of South Carolina whether they are enrolled in a VirtualSC course or not.

Shmoop offers over 400 online courses, 10,000 videos, test prep programs, and more to ensure students don't skip a beat.

[Free Shmoop for Students](#)

For more information on Shmoop please contact [virtualsc@ed.sc.gov](mailto:virtualsc@ed.sc.gov) or (803) 734-8039.