



Value of in Person Learning

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It goes without saying that the start of this school year is unlike any that we have experienced in our lifetime. It is fraught with many questions and concerns. Parents, teachers, students and other school administrators and government officials are anxiously awaiting the start of school. Everyone agrees that it is imperative to balance the safety of the students, teachers, extended family members and other school employees, for example, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and custodians, against the value of in-person learning. Consequently, many schools are starting the school year with online instruction until it is safe to begin in-person classes.

Everyone agrees that our children must begin school as soon as possible and under the best conditions as possible so that their educational development is not further eroded. Most educators agree that many of our students of color, Black students, have fallen further behind in their educational development. This is of concern to Black parents and those concerned about the education of the Black youth of New Mexico.

According to the A KIDS COUNT Special report on the Well-Being of Black

Children in New Mexico released in 2018:

“The state of Black children in New Mexico is a reflection of the value we, as adults, place on them and our understanding of their unique challenges, needs, and strengths. Just as important, Black children deserve to feel a sense of pride in their culture and a belief in their potential. They need to feel loved, protected, and uplifted taught by example and history that they do matter.”

Given all of the concerns and fears that parents have regarding the coronavirus pandemic, deciding whether they want their child(ren) to take on-line or in-person classes, and juggling work and child care responsibilities, proving to our Black children that they really do matter is a challenge that parents, school teachers, administrators and support staff along with the community leaders must undertake every day. In short, it takes a village to raise a child and provide them with the confidence, tools, skills, and resources that they need to prepare for and succeed in life and in their chosen profession.



As we start the school year, many parents may have one or more of the following questions:

- What do I do if I don't have internet service?
- Where do I go for help if the child's Chromebook is having technical difficulties?
- Is the parent required to supervise the student when he or she is taking a test?
- How do I keep my child physically active? How will they meet their?
- Physical education requirements?
- How will the teacher keep me informed of my child's progress?
- What resources are available to parents to assist students with their lessons and homework?
- Will my child have more than one teacher? If so, how do I communicate with him or her?
- Will my child have a lunch break?
- Who will watch my child when I am at work?
- Do I have the option of keeping my child at home all year?
- If my child wants needs extra support are there resources to help him or her Learn outside the classroom.

Action in the Classroom

First, get to know your child's teacher or teachers. Get their school and home contact information. Even though teachers are working from home, I know that there will be some teachers who will be reluctant to give out their personal phone number, so ask for their home email address instead. Contact by email is important because you can have a record of your contacts with the teacher and their responses to your questions.

Second, keep an email record of your contacts with the school administration, because you can rightly expect, given all of the changes and parents' concerns, the principal and assistant principal will be deluged with calls from parents, therefore, they may not be able to get back to you in a timely manner. Again, communicating by email will enable you to refer back to your emails and the administrator's responses when and if necessary.

Third, check the district and school websites for the information you need. Start with the Student, Parent Service Center website if your school has one. If you don't find the information that you need there, then contact the principal or assistant principal.

If you have time, sit down with your child for 5 or 10 minutes when he or she is doing the online class assignments, so you know what subjects and topics your child is working on. Consequently, you will be the first to know if your child needs help.

Lastly, be patient! Recognize that the first several weeks of the school year will be stressful for everyone involved in the education of your child. Things are new and different for all of us. Hopefully, as the school year progresses, there will be a greater degree of clarity of what parents can expect the remainder of the year to look like. Remember you are not alone.

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