

The importance of structure during one's school day at home

Welcome - This is **Cup of Sunshine** – your Friday Podcast brought to you by the Phoenix Centre Team of the Deutsche Internationale Schule Johannesburg.

I'm Chrissi Giessen-Hood, the psychologist for the Kindergarten, Vorschule and Grade 1 to 4s at the DSJ. Today I will be sharing some tips on how your child **can structure their school day, to maximize learning, whilst learning at home.**



Maintain a consistent bedtime and a consistent wake-up time. Have your child get dressed, brush their teeth, comb their hair, go for a walk or a bike ride, and do any typical chores or activity before the start of their school day. Wearing pajamas signals to a child that their day hasn't started yet, that they are on holiday and not ready for their school day.

Maintain consistent meal times so that your child's body and brain will function the best. Try to avoid big and heavy meals at the start of the school day. These can affect your child's focus and can make your child feel sluggish and lazy.

Create an environment that breeds creativity and productivity. Encourage your child to find a quiet place somewhere at home where they can concentrate on their schoolwork. Lying in bed with their laptop or working in front of the TV is not a good idea. Encourage your child to remove all distractions from their work desk. Your child's desk should be organized, clean and tidy, with only the materials needed for each lesson. And remember this includes all stationary material as well.

Tune out distractions. If you find that your child needs to tune out the noise being made by others around your home, give them some headphones. Some children may also benefit from listening to some study music to cancel out unwanted noise as well as providing motivation for studying.

Set a reasonable schedule that mimics the school day. Since school closure all DSJ teachers and staff have scrambled to make e learning possible. In the Kindergarten and Vorschul Section of the DSJ weekly plans focusing on language development, creativity, experiments, story times and You Tube Videos are sent out. Plan your week by following the guidelines that are given by your child's teacher on which tasks should be completed each day. A week chart or a day chart may be useful in helping you and your child plan these activities. It also sets up structure, predictability and security.

In the Primary School Section (Grade One to Grade Four) week plans are sent out over the weekend. These week plans are further broken down into specific day plans. Before the start of each day, set some time aside with your child to go over the day plan, so that your child knows

what is expected of them. Remind your child of any WhatsApp calls or MS Team meetings that they may have. Break school tasks down into manageable portions so that your child does not feel overwhelmed with their work. Hold motivation levels for learning high by allowing for frequent breaks. Provide small incentives/rewards for work well done. These could include a special treat such as a small chocolate, playing a game together after school work has been completed, reading a book together or collecting tokens for a small toy. Don't be afraid to contact your child's teacher during school hours, if your child needs extra help in understanding a task. Your teachers are there to help.

From Grade Five onwards week plans are sent out on a Sunday or Monday morning. Encourage your child to work according to their weekly school timetable. Let them either pack their schoolbag the evening before or take out all the books, workbooks, files needed to complete their schoolwork during the day. On a week calendar, let your child write down when they are expected to attend a MS Team Video Call with their class and/ or their teacher and when assignments have to be handed in. On a month calendar your child could jot down when projects need to be handed in. If your child is stuck on a task, encourage them to WhatsApp call a friend to ask for help. This promotes connectedness and social bonding during this time of isolation. Of course your child is also encouraged to message their teacher should they need extra help.

Be sure that your child sets realistic goals, goals that can be achieved.

Across all age groups allow for frequent break times during your child's school day at home, to replenish energy, increase productivity and focus. Make sure that during "break" your child is not trading one screen for another.

The best breaks involve movement. Get up, move around, go outside, have a snack, toss a ball, make a paper airplane, fold the laundry or have a pillow fight. Remember your child is used to structured activity at school with social interaction. This is not the time to tell your child go play outside without providing some suggested activity. Take a break with your child. You will find that your focused work time is more productive too.

That's all for today. I hope you'll join us next week for more helpful hints and tips for managing life during the times of Covid-19.

Thank you for listening.