

COVID-19 is
disrupting our lives.
But guess what?
You and your
children have
what it takes to
make the best
of a tough
situation.



Your love and support are invaluable to your children.

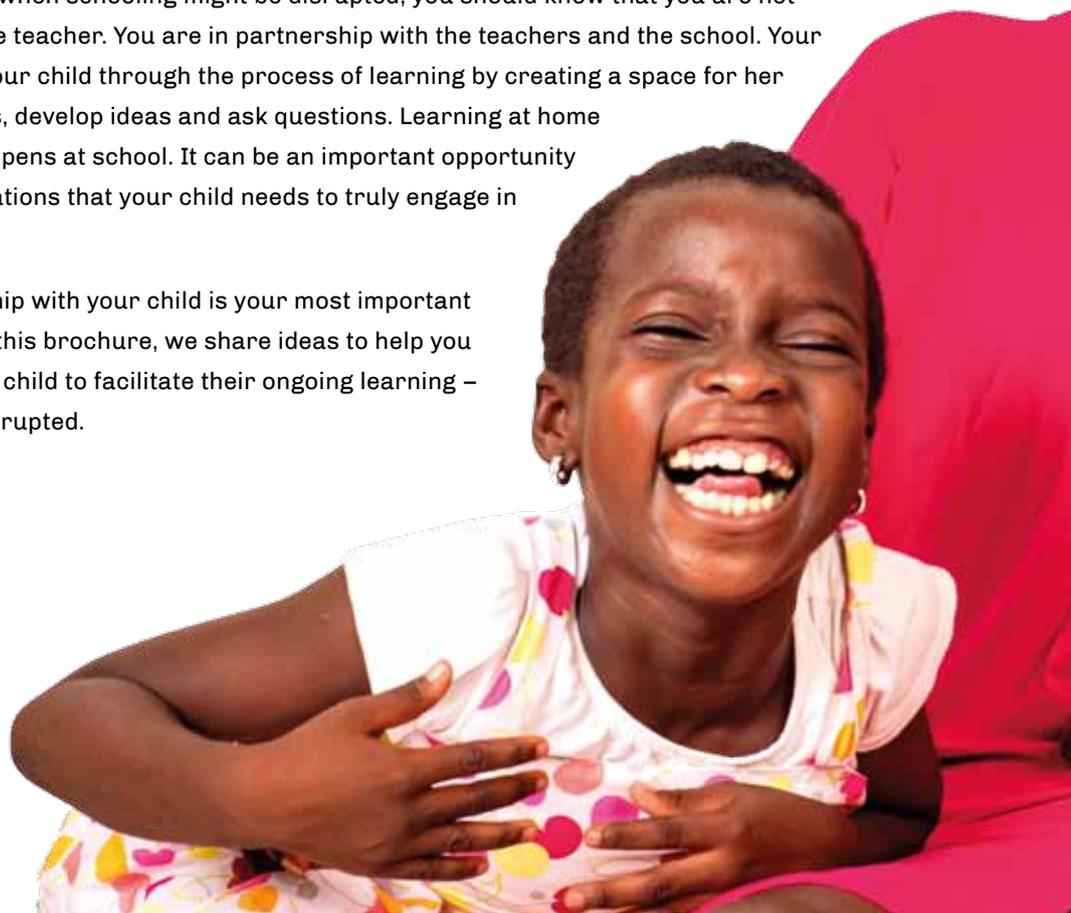
As a parent or primary caregiver, you are the first educator of your child. Whether you have formal education or not, you are the most important adult in your child's life. You know a lot about your child; like their favourite foods, toys and games. You know what makes them scared and how to comfort them. You love and care for them and together you have built the foundations enabling them to go out into the world.



Caregivers can play an essential part in a child's school career, whether or not they are the child's biological parents. Researchers' have found that having at least one caring supportive adult has a significant impact on a learner's academic potential.

During the COVID-19 epidemic, when schooling might be disrupted, you should know that you are not expected to become a substitute teacher. You are in partnership with the teachers and the school. Your role as a parent is to support your child through the process of learning by creating a space for her or him to explore their interests, develop ideas and ask questions. Learning at home will be different from how it happens at school. It can be an important opportunity to reinforce some of the foundations that your child needs to truly engage in meaningful learning at school.

Believe it or not, your relationship with your child is your most important asset to help him/her learn! In this brochure, we share ideas to help you use your relationship with your child to facilitate their ongoing learning – even while their schooling is disrupted.



Your relationship with your child is the key!

Your relationship with your child nurtures their physical, emotional and social development.

From the day you brought your child home with you, you have worked on this relationship. As your child grows, your relationship will also change.

In fact, at some stage, all parents will face challenges requiring them to put in extra effort to strengthen the bond.

During the COVID-19 epidemic — a time during which we are encouraged to stay at home with our families as much as possible to avoid infection — you have a great opportunity to build your relationship with your child.



You can use the relationship you have with your child to help them develop positive attitudes and behaviours towards school. If you show interest in their feelings towards school and what they have learnt, or are learning, it demonstrates to them that schooling is important. Your thoughts and opinions matter to your children and you are their first role model. Try to be positive when discussing school and teachers. Your attitude to learning will play a big part in shaping your child's success at school!

Helpful steps to develop a strong relationship with your child



Build trust

- Try to always be as **honest** as possible at a level that is appropriate. For example, the COVID-19 epidemic may be a scary time for children. Help them to understand the situation and explain what we need to do to stay safe from infection. Don't trivialise their concerns.
- Be as **consistent** as possible when it comes to rules and home routine. Boundaries and routine make children feel safe because it helps them to know what to expect from their environment.
- Children sometimes talk non-stop, but it is important that you make it a priority to **listen**. Set aside 10-20 mins every day to really listen to your child - give them your undivided attention and try not to be the one talking.
- As always, show your **affection, love and care**, to make your child feel safe and cared for.



Communicate

- When it is not your dedicated time to 'really listen', try to make communication a **two-way process**, with both of you listening and talking to each other.
- One of the best ways to do this is to **talk** to your child about the things that are important to them.
- Allow them to ask **questions**. If you don't know the answer, try to find it together.



Highlight the positive

- Give your child simple chores to help the family to make him/her feel important and build their **self-esteem**.
- **Congratulate** and praise your child when he or she performs a task well.
- **Reassure** them when they are struggling. Make sure that they know, we all learn by repeatedly trying and failing. In stressful situations, young children may experience regression e.g. bedwetting and temper tantrums. Just be patient, don't shame them.



How to support your child's ongoing learning without feeling overwhelmed

Your child has a right to quality basic education, no matter what school they go to and whether you are paying school fees or not. If you are worried that your child is not getting the support they should be getting from their school during the COVID-19 lockdown and beyond, you have the right to ask questions and propose solutions. The School Governing Body (SGB) is there to represent you as a parent body, so it is important to raise concerns with them. You should also discuss these concerns with your children's school and teachers. You have the right to demand high-quality education for your children!



One of the best ways to equip yourself to support your child's ongoing learning is to ask your child and his/her teacher questions. This will give you the opportunity to understand where your child is at – both academically and emotionally. Ask your child open-ended questions about school, such as...

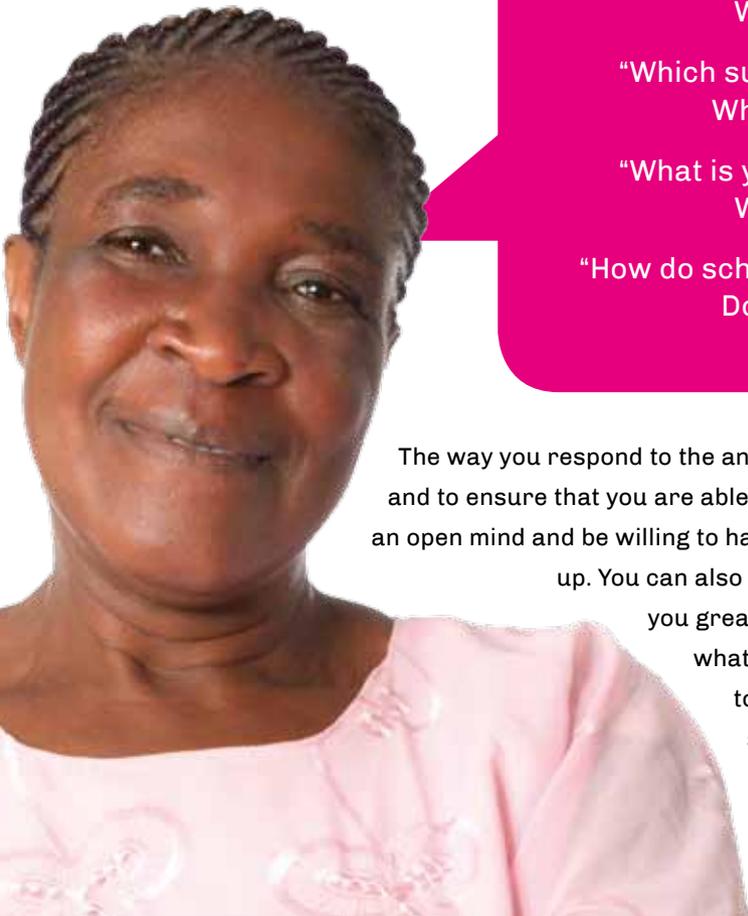
"Which subjects do you enjoy at school?
What do you like about them?"

"Which subjects do you find more challenging?
What is challenging about them?"

"What is your favourite time of the school day?
Why do you enjoy it so much?"

"How do school rules differ from our rules at home?
Do you think the rules are fair?"

The way you respond to the answers your child gives is very important for building trust and to ensure that you are able to support him/her if they are struggling at school. Have an open mind and be willing to have a discussion with your child about the issues that come up. You can also try to **connect with your child's teacher**. She/he can give you great advice on the types of activities you can do to reinforce what your child already knows. Many teachers are finding ways to support their learners during the COVID-19 epidemic, and some are using WhatsApp to communicate with parents.



Practical steps to initiate communication with your child's teacher, school and school community:

1. If you have not had any communication from the school, they might have an outdated number for you or may have lost your number. Contact them to correct this if possible.
2. If you cannot get hold of the school or the teacher, do you know other parents at the school? Reach out to them to find out the phone number or email of the teacher teaching your child.
3. Once you have the correct contact details, find out what communication and arrangements the school have put in place around the COVID-19 epidemic.

Tips for learning in the home environment

Regular school might get disrupted during the COVID-19 epidemic. When supporting your child at home, the types of activities you do will be different from the formal learning that she/he does at school.



For children aged 3-6, it is important to...

- Create a **routine**. This routine will be different from when your child goes to school, but it will help make you and your child feel secure and in control.
- Focus on trying to build your child's **vocabulary** through reading, storytelling and talking to them about the things that you are doing together throughout the day.
- Try to keep your child **active** and have them do activities that use both their big muscles and small muscles, this helps to develop their gross and fine motor skills. Big muscles are responsible for running, jumping, and throwing; small muscles are mostly in the hands and fingers.

Early learning specialists, SmartStart (www.smartstart.org.za), has data-free resources to help you develop a routine, as well as activities you can do with your child. This is for children younger than 7 years old and is available at: <https://smartstart.datafree.co/everyweekcounts/>



For children in primary school, it is important to...

- **Contact your child's school** and find out what it is doing to support learners during this period. Some schools already have plans in place, but if yours does not, **focus on practising reading and mathematics**.

ClickMaths created a database with data-free resources to assist children, both with mathematics and reading. These resources are available at <https://clickmaths.org>

- **Create a routine** that creates time for learning and play.
- If there are children of different grade levels in your home encourage them to **read and work together**. This not only helps your younger child, but also assists in reinforcing the foundational learning of your older child.

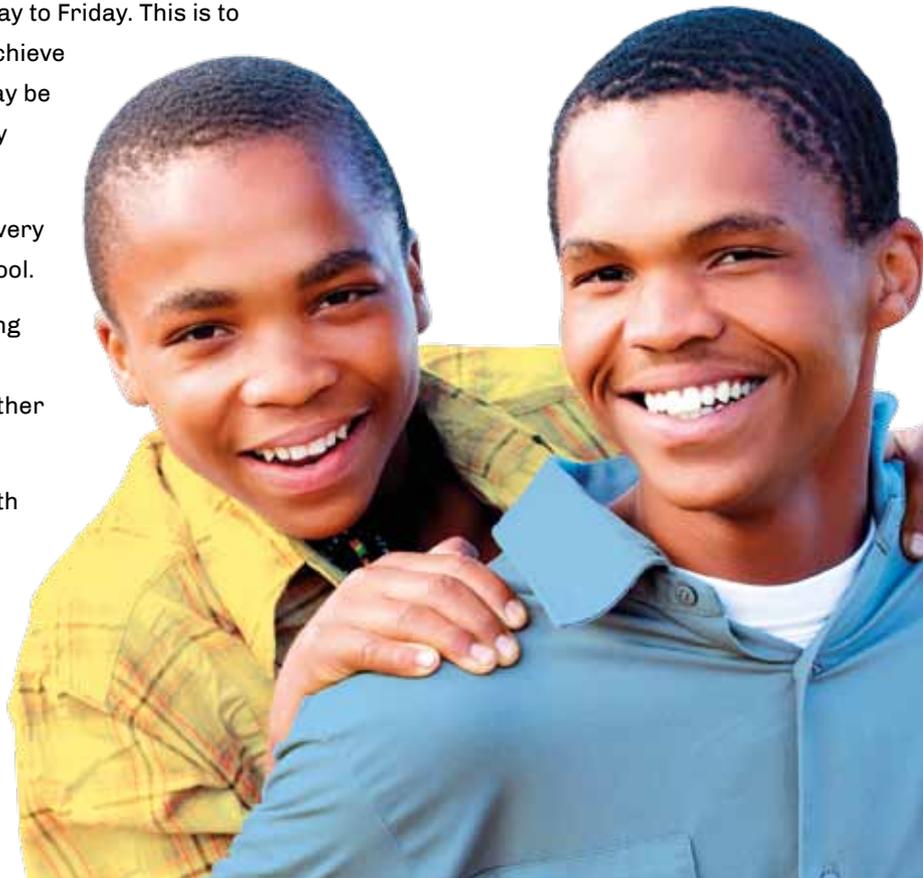


You can also now reinforce the values that you feel are important for your child to engage with the world and others in a positive way.



For children who are in high school, it is important to...

- Sit with them and understand **how much time** in a day they need to be able to do their schoolwork. Set realistic goals.
- Help them draw up a **timetable** from Monday to Friday. This is to give them enough time each day to try to achieve their learning goals. Bear in mind that it may be necessary to revise the timetable once they have tried it out.
- Ensure that your child has **enough sleep** every day, just as you would when they go to school.
- Ask your child about what they are learning in each of their learning areas. This is not about you helping with the content, but rather **showing interest in their schooling**.
- **Encourage your child to communicate** with classmates and his/her teachers. Many high school teachers are currently using WhatsApp as a tool to reach their learners. The Moya Messenger app for Android phones is a data-free option.



Selfcare is important

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted our daily lives and changed the way we do things. It is a difficult time for everyone, and if you don't protect your own mental health you can't take care of your children. Build a community with other parents who are going through similar experiences. Create a WhatsApp group/Moya Messenger group where you are able to check in on each other, discuss your challenges and successes.



Be flexible, if a particular approach to home learning does not work for your family, try something else. And if the only thing you can do is to show your affection, love and care – that is enough. Children are incredibly resilient and they can catch up on schoolwork, especially if they know you are there for them.

COVID-19

Coronavirus hotline: 0800 029 999 / WhatsApp 060 012 3456
www.sacoronavirus.co.za / <https://coronavirus.datafree.co>

MENTAL HEALTH

South African Depression and Anxiety Group hotlines: 0800 21 22 23 /
0800 456 789 / 0800 20 5026 / 0800 70 80 90 www.sadag.org

POSITIVE PARENTING

Parent Centre: www.theparentcentre.org.za / 021 762 0116

LITERACY CATCH UP SUPPORT

Reading for Meaning: You can find Reading for Meaning stories and activities on WhatsApp by typing "hello" to +27 600 54 8676 and following the Zero Dropout Campaign menu.



**DG
MT**

**ZERO
DROP/OUT**

 **PUBLIC SCHOOL
PARTNERSHIPS**

Parent Power is an initiative by the DG Murray Trust (dgmt.co.za). It is aimed at galvanizing a constituency of activated parents in South Africa who are empowered to act as champions for their children's education. This booklet was developed with input from the Zero Dropout Campaign and Public School Partnerships.