

Partnering Effectively with Schools During the COVID-19 Pandemic



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Introductions: **Linda Alpert-Gillis, Ph.D.**, Clinical Psychologist

Panelists:

Laura Arrington, Family and Youth Education Coordinator from Starbridge

Sherri Armstrong, Parent Representative

Aliyah Patterson, Mental Health Clinician

Bill Hurley, School Representative

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We Are *(still)* In The Midst of a National Crisis

"Kids have not been distance-learning – they are (still!) home during a crisis trying to learn."

"Parents have not been working from home – they have been at home during a crisis, trying to work (and parent, and teach, and cook dinner, and stay relatively sane and. . .)






"Teaching and learning during this coronavirus pandemic is so far from typical.

It's literally nothing school systems have ever done before."























Return to School: COVID-19 Edition

Sample Plan

H I G H L I G H T S		Most students will attend school in-person two days each week, and participate in virtual learning from home three days per week.
		A health screening process will be implemented and proper hygiene practices will be taught at school.
		Face coverings will be required any time six-foot distancing can't be maintained. This includes buses and hallways. Most classrooms are being designed so face coverings do not need to be worn during much of our instructional time.
		All classrooms and common areas will be cleaned and disinfected daily.
		Buses will operate at a reduced capacity to allow for distancing. Typically, there will be one person per seat. Students living in the same household are encouraged to sit together.

SCHEDULE FOR GRADES K-12

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Group 1	 SCHOOL	 HOME	 HOME	 SCHOOL	 HOME
Group 2	 HOME	 SCHOOL	 HOME	 HOME	 SCHOOL
Group 3	 SCHOOL	 SCHOOL	 HOME	 SCHOOL	 SCHOOL
Group 4	 HOME	 HOME	 HOME	 HOME	 HOME

General Ed, 504 Plans, ICOT,
CT, RSO

Districts; IEP Special Class, NYSAA

Urban Districts, Parent Choice

Potential Impact of COVID-19 on Kids and Teens

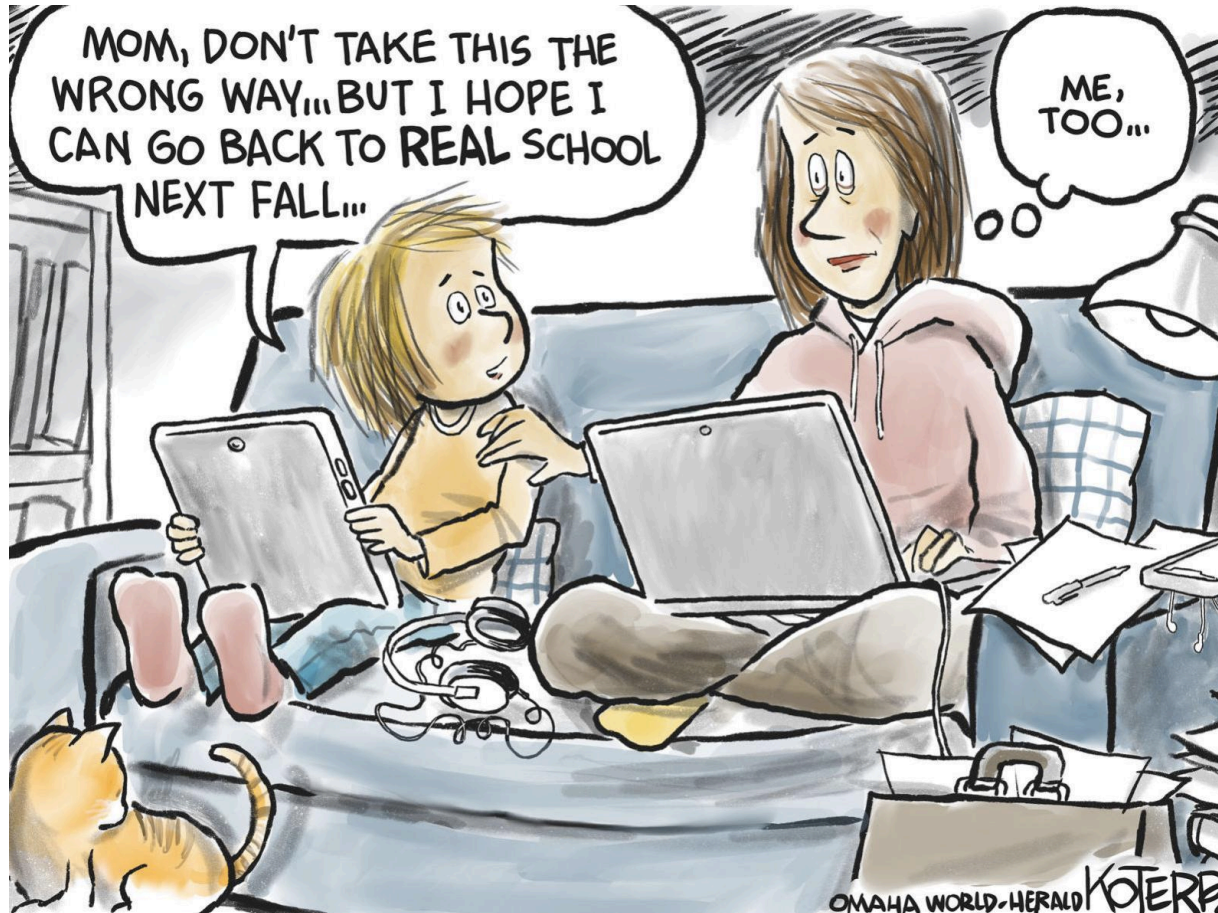


Flight	Fight	Freeze	Doin' OK!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawing • Avoiding work • Avoiding others • Skipping 'zoom' class • Daydreaming, zoning out • Seeming to sleep • Hiding or wandering • Becoming disengaged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting out • Behaving aggressively • Acting silly • Exhibiting defiance • Being hyperactive • Arguing • Screaming/yelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Who cares” “What’s the point” • Having trouble thinking • Trouble completing work • Having trouble participating • Giving a blank look • Feeling unable to move • Numbness, disconnection • Refusing to answer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerating return to school • Socializing, from a distance • Largely engaged and participating • Likely has some mixed emotions and frustrations • Derives <i>some</i> pleasure from returning

Normalize these emotions











Impact of COVID-19 on Parents/Families/Educators



THE INVISIBLE LOAD OF MOTHERHOOD: DISTANCE LEARNING EDITION

@_HAPPYASAMOTHER

			
HAVE THE EQUIPMENT	MANAGE KIDS IN DIFFERENT GRADES	TRY TO KEEP UP WITH ALL THE ASSIGNMENTS	DO IT ALL WITH OUT A BREAK
			
REMEMBER ALL THE LOGINS	SUPPORT CHILD TOO YOUNG TO LEARN INDEPENDENTLY	TRY NOT TO LOSE YOUR COOL	BE PATIENT
			
KEEP UP WITH YOUR OWN WORK	COORDINATE WITH TEACHERS	PRESERVE PARENT CHILD RELATIONSHIP	MANAGE CHILD'S LEARNING NEEDS

What support services are school mental health providers offering for students?

What kinds of IEP or 504 accommodations can be expected?

How can we encourage our kids to continue engaging in extra curriculars? What's even offered??

We have a million questions.

What support resources are available for families who are navigating different learning situations?

Online learning is really tough for my work schedule...
What can we do??

Online and hybrid learning is really tough on my kids.
... What can we do??



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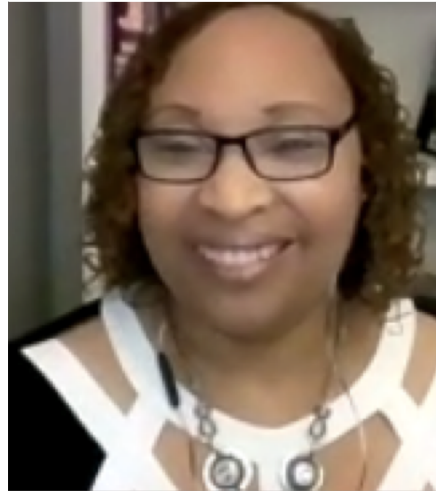
Expert Panelists to Help



Bill Hurley, LCSW
Coordinator, Behavioral
Health Services Monroe
BOCES



Aliyah Patterson, LMHC
Pediatric Behavioral
Health & Wellness
UR Medicine



Sherri Armstrong
Parent of Teens
Parent Advocate



Laura Arrington
Family & Youth
Education Coordinator
Starbridge Assoc.



Melissa Heatly, Ph.D.
Director, Expanded
School Mental Health
UR Medicine

My Task: Best Practices in Partnerships



Communication is Key

What Does This Mean?

COVID-19 has disrupted our traditional modes of communication – namely, face-to-face conversations during pick-up and drop-off. Starting now to establish new avenues for **two-way communication is critical.**

What Can I Do?

- **The 101 of Your Child's Team**

- Names, roles, frequency that your child connects with them
- Who are the best people to contact, and for what?
- What's the best way to contact? E-mail, phone, app, text?

- **The 101 of Your Family**

- You have the information teachers need: your child's strengths, struggles, and worries.
SHARE IT!

Communication

Type of personnel/name	Contact information
Homeroom or main teacher:	Email:
	Phone, ext.:
Principal/vice-principal:	Email:
	Phone, ext.:
Guidance counselor:	Email:
	Phone, ext.:
Social worker:	Email:
	Phone, ext.:
Case manager:	Email:
	Phone, ext.:
School nurse:	Email:
	Phone, ext.:
School psychologist/behavioral specialist:	Email:
	Phone, ext.:
School district curriculum coordinator:	Email:
	Phone, ext.:
Head of the child study team: (may also be called the student services coordinator, head of special education, etc.)	Email:
	Phone, ext.:
Athletic/activities director:	Email:
	Phone, ext.:
Afterschool program supervisor:	Email:
	Phone, ext.:

Distance learning

My child's experience with distance learning last spring was (check all that apply):

Mostly positive Manageable Done independently Engaging
 Mostly negative Stressful Done with lots of support Boring
 Other: _____

Video lessons helped my child learn. Yes No Not sure Other: _____

Other comments? Questions? _____

Strengths and challenges

My child is good at or enjoys (reading, science, art, etc.) _____

My child needs help or has a hard time with _____

Challenging behaviors I've noticed recently in my child (check all that apply):

Angry outbursts Worrying a lot Stomachaches Crying
 Refusing to follow rules Trouble focusing Headaches
 Trouble wearing a mask Trouble sleeping Other: _____

Other comments? Questions? _____

Recent events

With all that's been happening recently, it's important for my child's teacher to be aware that _____

Other comments? Questions? _____

Get Organized

What Does This Mean?

Students and schools are being asked to learn in new and different ways, while also navigating a number of new schedules, routines, ways to track and turn in assignments, etc.

What Can I Do?

1. Get the Details

- Ask for a clear explanation of the schedule and expectations
- Ask how assignments will be communicated

2. Prepare your space

- Make lists of the school schedule, expectations
- Make and post lists of different platforms, logins, and passwords
- Identify an optimal learning space

3. Explore Together

- Take some time to explore any websites or programs the school is using *with your child*

4. If you don't understand something, reach out and ASK FOR HELP



Foster Relationships



What Does This Mean?

- Warm and trusting relationships with adults are the foundation for learning, motivation, and resilience
- Friendships are also important for learning and development, and kids thrive on social interactions with their peers

What Can I Do?

Help Teachers get to know your child

- What COVID-19 was like for your child
- Identify child's strengths, challenges, and strategies

Regular temperature-checks

- Share observations you have of their child as he or she navigates this new normal; Ask teachers to share their observations with you as well

Share ideas for how teachers can best support your children during this transition

Strategies
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

ARE THERE ANY OTHER CHALLENGES THAT YOU OR YOUR STUDENT ARE EXPERIENCING THAT YOU THINK WE SHOULD BE AWARE OF TO BETTER SUPPORT YOU?

Lay the Groundwork for Solid Collaboration

What Does This Mean?

Stay in touch with your child’s teacher, and work together to proactively address issues should they come up – and before they become large problems.

What Can I Do?

Now: Let your child’s teacher *and team* know about the highs- and lows of their experiences this spring

Now: Discuss their strengths and challenges, as well as strategies to overcome, given the current learning scenario

Now: Discuss concerns and questions you may have, and what concerns and questions your teacher may have

Later: Continue this process of collaborative discussion –
Ask to bring in other school partners if needed

Writing down an agenda helps

Area to discuss	✓	✗	Notes/ways to help
Homework			
Understands assignments			
Finishes on time			
Turns in completed work			
Class participation			
Arrives prepared and on time			
Listens and follows directions			
Follows class rules			
Academics			
Makes progress in key areas			
Knows when to ask for help			
Doesn't give up too easily			
Social/emotional			
Gets along with other students			
Gets along with the teacher			
Can handle frustration			

Focus on Your Child's Needs

What Does This Mean?

Advocating for the support your child needs during remote learning is important, but you're more likely to receive additional accommodations if you're reasonable with your requests.

Before a meeting, carefully consider what 2 – 3 additional supports are most necessary for your child's learning.

What Can I Do?

Work with your team to identify ways to support your child

- **Emotional Support:** Counselors, coping strategies, managing remote meltdowns/refusals
- **Organizational Support:** Help writing down assignments, using online agendas, password keepers, etc
- **Learning Supports:** E-mailed copies of notes, recording lessons, questions provided ahead of time
- **Managing Screen Time:** Printable worksheets? Adapted time on screen?
- **Extra services and resources:** Distance learning plans, resource room, special assistance

Be Patient, but Also Persistent

What Does This Mean?

Teaching and learning during this coronavirus pandemic is so far from typical. It's literally nothing school systems have ever done before. Many educators are juggling steep learning curves, new instructional strategies, and family demands. Parents may have to be even more proactive and persistent than usual.

What Can I Do?

- ***Be understanding, Patient, & Kind:*** Most educators truly want to help your child - Expressing understanding, empathy, and kindness goes a long way.
- ***Focus on your child's goals:*** If something's not working, make sure people know it. Ask for help.
- ***Keep records and notes:*** This helps everyone stay on the same page, collects data, and allows you to advocate for additional resources if needed.

School communication log

Date:		<input type="checkbox"/> Phone	<input type="checkbox"/> Email	<input type="checkbox"/> Letter	<input type="checkbox"/> In person
Who initiated:	Who participated, received, or attended:				
What prompted the communication:					
What was discussed:					
What was decided:					



Use Your Resources



What Does This Mean?

- **You are not alone!** There is a whole community holding you in mind and wanting to share how much we care about the unique experience you are having right now.

What Can I Do?

- **Talk it out:** Colleagues, school mental health staff, and community mental health staff are here for you
- **Understood.org** has a lot of resources to help families collaborate effectively with schools
- **ChildMind.org** offers excellent articles and resources for parents, school teams, and mental health teams
- **[UR Medicine Pediatric Behavioral Health & Wellness](#)** has a variety of tools for families
- **[Kids Thrive585](#)** offers family-friendly links to a wide variety of community resources.
- **[United Way/211](#)** can provide school teams with personalized support in navigating these many resources

More resources

- <https://www.starbridgeinc.org>
- [Mood App: Journal App](#)
- [Laws and regulations related to special education and Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Information about Special Education Law and Advocacy for Children with Disabilities](#)
- [Special Ed in Plain Language](#)