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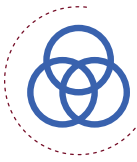
PBIS

Positive Behavioral
Interventions & Supports

**REMOTE LEARNING
FOR FAMILIES: KEEPING
IT ACCESSIBLE,
KEEPING IT POSITIVE**

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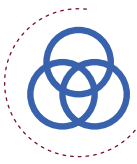


Remote Learning for Families: Keeping it Accessible, Keeping it Positive

Author Heidi von Ravensberg, JD

Introduction

The nation is in the midst of the largest change to education that's happened in recent memory. The 2020 pandemic, along with schools giving technology to families prompted a learn-from-home movement. Families may find that learning from home presents exciting yet stress-filled opportunities.



Together, families and schools have been thrust into creating what remote learning should look like as it is happening. Wherever learning takes place, accessibility should be a core principle of education, and the positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) framework can be used to support accessibility. Accessibility and PBIS can guide how things are done whether at school or at home.

So, what does accessibility look like within a PBIS framework? What are the important things to consider? And, how do we do remote learning from a good practice standpoint?

Keeping It Accessible

Twenty-one million U.S. households have at least one member with some type of disability. Families understand that remote learning can be a powerful tool as long as it is accessible. Accessible means that individuals with disabilities must acquire the same information, engage in the same interaction, and enjoy the same programs and activities with substantially equivalent ease of use as those without disabilities. Accessibility extends to both students and family members who are supporting their learning or communicating with the school.

Tip: Use Zoom

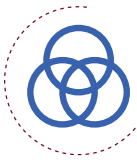
For a parent-teacher conference or an online class, Zoom can handle a variety of accessibility needs. For example, there are keyboard shortcuts for parents or students who cannot use the mouse, there is a captioning feature for hearing impaired and emergent bilinguals (i.e., English Learners), and the video is



good for viewing an ASL interpreter. One limitation, at this writing, is Zoom's Screen Share cannot be used by individuals who are blind/visually impaired. For them to have access to Screen Share materials, those documents must be sent by email or other means before the scheduled meeting or class time.

Tip: Notify the School

Testing the accessibility of activities and online content is ongoing. There's no getting around this hurdle for families or schools. A professional access tester is not required. However, parents will need to notify the school which activities or website content isn't accessible. Members of the family who don't have access will need to work with the school to troubleshoot access issues. Support from an adaptive technology specialist may be needed to achieve accessibility.



Tip: Contact the Office of Civil Rights for Help

Families can always encourage their school to reach out to the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) with accessibility questions. Let the school know that the OCR understands that many educators are new to online learning and the field is evolving because increased need for remote learning. Additionally, the OCR welcomes educators with questions to contact their Web Access Team.

Tip: Volunteer for Research Studies

Families can contribute their personal experience to research and online application development to improve the accessibility of digital information. For example, [The Center on Inclusive Software for Learning](#)¹ is looking for parents and students to co-design with them.

Keeping It Positive: Accessibility, Behavior, and Academic Achievement are Linked

When learning takes place online at home, a parent might notice a child engage in unwanted behaviors that didn't occur at school. Parents should ask "is the inaccessibility of the online learning triggering my child's behavior?" and "is inaccessibility of online learning at the root of a decrease in my child's academic engagement or performance?" Family members may need to find ways to make online learning less distracting, more effective and efficient to meet the student's identified needs, or to address a student's previously unidentified needs.

Tip: Counterproductive Behavior Could be a Sign of Technology Hurdles

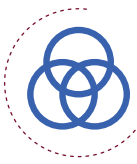
Learning a new technology or app can be physically or emotionally exhausting. Is your child frustrated, easily distracted, or noncooperative? Your child could be using behavior rather than words to communicate that he/she needs a break from the activity or needs more instruction in how to use the new technology.

Tip: Adjust the Accessibility Settings of your Child's Device

Reading and learning online and electronically can be much different than reading hard copy in class. Did your child do well with learning in class but finds doing it online a struggle? Today, many tablets, laptops, and apps have built-in accessibility features that allow the user to adjust settings to make it more usable. Is your child avoiding, squinting, putting their nose to the screen, or moving the screen around in order to read? It could be the size of the text is too small or large, there needs to be more contrast between the text and the background, or the screen needs to be brighter or dimmer. Perhaps your child would do better listening to built-in speech reading the text for some or all of the time. As the parent, you can help by finding the accessibility settings that are best for your child's needs.

Tip: Explore Specialized Technology, Apps, and/or Training

It's possible the standard technology that the school provided to all students can't meet your individual child's needs. It's also possible that the training on how



to use the technology provided is insufficient for your child. As a result, your child may display avoidance, distraction, or frustration. These behaviors may signal the need to try specialized technology, apps, or training. For example, maybe your child is having difficulty tracking the text while reading. Apps like Kurzweil 3000 can highlight text as it is being read, which could help your child focus.

Tip: Explore the DIAGRAM Center Resources

The DIAGRAM Center is a group of experts and end users working to meet the accessibility needs of students with disabilities. The Center provides concrete technical resources and assistive technology tools for students with disabilities and those who support them. For information and resources geared toward parents of students with disabilities from Pre-K through higher-education, [visit the DIAGRAM Center website for parents.](#)²

Using PBIS at Home with Distance Learning

To adjust to distance learning, the Center on PBIS has published new briefs to guide families through the changes.

Tip: Discuss Positive Expectations or Values at Home

Families can adopt their school's PBIS expectations, like "Be safe, be respectful, be responsible" and discuss what they look like for remote learning and accessible technology. Or, your family can work together to come up with its own set of positive expectations or values.

Tip: Create a Routine for Technology or Accessibility Frustrations

Create a routine for how your children can handle technology or accessibility frustrations. Some examples include the following:

- Tell your parents there's a problem and what you are going to do about it.
- Give it three tries before quitting.
- Take a 3-minute break before trying again.
- Put your frustrations down in writing or in a voice recording – tell what works, what doesn't work, and what needs to change.
- Organize your complaint into a 10 second, 30 second, and 1-minute speech.
- Search online to see if there's a solution.
- Explore settings for what can be adjusted.
- Seek out more training from a teacher or school specialist.

Tip: Expect Problems

Expect problems to keep popping up. You can remind your child there's a routine. If the same problem keeps happening, it could be time to set aside the routine and try something new.

Tip: Positively Acknowledge Working Through Hardships

Acknowledge, praise, and reward your child for giving the technology a try, for working through an issue, for reporting an issue to you. Sometimes it's difficult to ask for help so it's important to positively acknowledge effective requests for assistance.



The Family-School Partnership

Some of the remote learning issues that families and schools must tackle together are accessing the technology, learning how to set it up and use it, along with discovering it doesn't meet the need and locating technology that does.

Tip: Include Everyone in the Discussion

All key decision-makers should be part of the discussion about remote learning and accessibility. Families and even schools can't know everything about technology and accessibility. Families, schools, and technology accessibility experts must listen to each other with focus on shared learning.

Tip: Stay Focused on Solutions

Keep communications positive and focused on solving the accessibility issue. Remember that the right to an education, including the accessibility of that education, can be an emotional topic for all involved. Give yourself and others permission to take a break. Then, come back and refocus on the issue of accessibility once emotions are calmed.

Tip: Bring in the People that can Help

When issues persist, bring in facilitative perspectives. Discussions can stall if there doesn't seem to be an answer to an issue or those present can't make the decision needed to move things along. In these situations, ask "Who isn't at the table who needs to be?" "Who can answer the question or make the decision?" and "What does that person need from us to help move things forward?" Given the nature of technology, bringing new people into the discussion



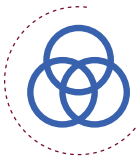
can be an effective way to resolve the issue.

Tip: Reach out to Your Local Parent Center

Reach out to your local Parent Center. There is at least one in every state. You can find information about special education, trainings, and local resources. Find [the Parent Center nearest you by visiting the Parent Center Hub website](#).³

Communicate

Your child's school, district, state, and even the nation are all early on the learning curve of remote learning. Issues are bound to come up. To resolve them, families need to keep communicating with their school and school leadership.



Tip: Be Patient

Be patient. Many educators are new on the learning curve of communicating while exercising social distancing. We need to be patient with ourselves and each other while we figure all this out. Most importantly, we need to keep communicating.

Tip: Make a Call or Send a Letter

Although it's easy for families or schools to fall into the belief that all have access to the latest and greatest technology, the reality is that not all families or schools do. It might take using what are considered outdated or alternative modes of communication. Use the telephone. Send a printed letter. Send an email. It might even require face-to-face or drive-by visits with social distancing and face masks.

Resources

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (March 17, 2020). Responding to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak through PBIS. University of Oregon. www.pbis.org.

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Center for Parent Information & Resources (March, 2020). Supporting Families with PBIS at Home. University of Oregon. www.pbis.org.

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (April 14, 2020). 4 Tips for Your Families Trying PBIS at Home. University of Oregon. www.pbis.org.

Tip: Talk about a Timeline

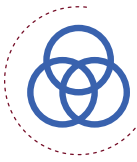
It can be anticipated that some form of remote learning will continue in the future. Parents need to be clear about which time period is being discussed and which goals or status are tied to it. Was your child doing better before the pandemic? Is your child doing better now (i.e., during the pandemic stay-home remote learning period)? Or, do you anticipate future issues?

Conclusion

Together, families and schools are in the midst of building what remote learning should look like. Accessibility should be a guiding principle, and, families can use the PBIS framework at home to support accessibility. Families benefit by knowing what accessibility and PBIS look like and how to do remote learning from a good practice standpoint.

U.S. Department Of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. [Supplemental Fact Sheet: Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Schools While Serving Children with Disabilities.](#)⁴ March 21, 2020.

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. [Webinar: Online Education and Website Accessibility.](#)⁵ March 17, 2020.



Embedded Hyperlinks

1. <http://cisl.cast.org/>
2. <http://diagramcenter.org/community-resources.html#parents>
3. <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center>
4. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/frontpage/faq/rr/policyguidance/Supple%20Fact%20Sheet%203.21.20%20FINAL.pdf?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=
5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCMLk4cES6A>

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