



How to Work Remotely and Teach Your Child During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

By Educator Barnes – March 14, 2020

Parents are stressed and panicking as schools across the nation close for weeks. The governors of Indiana's neighboring states (Illinois and Michigan) have closed schools across their entire state. Indiana Governor Holcomb decided to offer schools a wavier of 20

instructional days instead of mandating a statewide school closure. If school leaders decide to close schools, they do not have to worry about making up days to meet the minimum 180 instructional day requirement. Shortly after this announcement on Thursday, March 12, a press conference was held stating all schools in Indianapolis would be closed from Monday, March 16 with students returning to school on Monday, April 6. However, many schools closed sooner on Friday, March 13.

Not every school is taking the waiver option during the closure. My school has decided to have students complete work packets at home. As an administrator, I reported to work yesterday to print off packets that teachers submitted to me electronically. Then, I helped distribute the packets to parents when they came to school to pick them up yesterday afternoon.

In my role as a parent, I am in a different situation. I live in Washington Township, and the district is using the waiver. I don't have the luxury of a work packet (not that I want worksheets for my sons to complete). They sent this following guidance yesterday:

Q: What should students do at home during the closure and will there be eLearning days?

A: As you are aware, the Governor stated on March 12th that school districts are able to waive up to 20 missed instructional days due to Coronavirus. Due to this announcement, March 13 through March 27 will be 11 waived instructional days. WT values continued instructional activities, however, and will designate these days as At Home Learning Days for our students. These will not be designated eLearning days, so the Indiana requirements for eLearning days do not need to be followed.

The guidance continues and states, "Your child's teacher(s) will communicate at home learning opportunities by Wednesday, March 18."

Luckily, my husband is a Senior Database Analyst – Team Lead for the state of Indiana in the Indiana Office of Technology. In this role, he can work remotely. He does this a few times a month. Typically, he works remotely alone or works remotely because one of our sons is at home sick. There is a difference between working at home while a sick child is lounging on the sofa versus working at home with children who are active. When I came home from work yesterday, my husband looked exhausted. He said, "What are we going to do with them for

the next three weeks?" I think his exhaustion made him forget that he is married to an educator, and I already have plans for meaningful activities for the next three weeks.

Below, I have included some suggestions. This is not an all-inclusive list, but hopefully, this will help parents maintain their sanity during these troubling times.

Before I get into suggestions, let me address how I am setting up these recommendations. The reality is that each family that has children at home has different levels of access to materials and resources. Keeping this in mind, I am including activities that do not involve the internet or television. I also want to note that Comcast and Spectrum are offering free internet during school closures.

Secondly, teaching means involvement. I would not give children a list of activities and walk away. I suggest that parents schedule break times into their day while working remotely to do some activities with their children. In the schedule template, I include at the end, parents can determine which activities they will do with their children and which activities they will have their children complete independently or with siblings.

Let's get into what people came to this page to read!

Reading

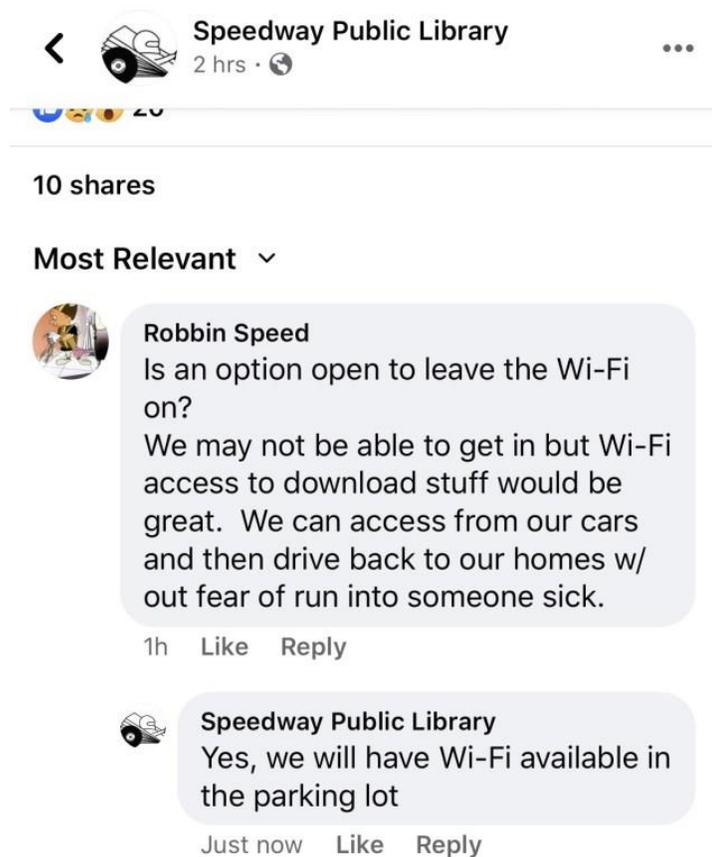
The public libraries in Indianapolis are also closed. Fortunately, my children checked out some library books recently. Since many libraries across the nation are closing temporarily, parents can order books online to be delivered to their homes if they can afford it. Below are some other options to get children reading.

Hard copy text – This option has been around for ages. Students can read books, magazines, comics, newspapers, etc.

The following includes online reading resources:

- Scholastic Learn at Home – Scholastic has provided free resources online, separated by grade, for students to complete.
- Scholastic Early Learners – This webpage contains books for kindergartners. At the end of each book is a quiz. There are books about jobs in the community. Children could read those books for social studies or read animal books for science.

- [Newsela](#) – This site is offering free access to leveled articles for the rest of the 2019-2020 school year. Parents should email their child’s teacher if they do not know their child’s reading level.
- E-books – E-books can be purchased online or downloaded for free through public library websites. Parents who have devices, but do not have internet, can download books on their devices in the library’s parking lot. I actually sat in the Pike library parking lot inside my SUV with the vehicle on and heat on high during the blizzard of 2014 to check and respond to email because our cable and internet were out for days. The library in Speedway, Indiana confirmed you can do this in their parking lot on their Facebook page.



- Audiobooks/read-alouds – Parents can read to their children, have them listen to audiobooks, or watch other adults read books online. The list included below, I already had posted on my personal website, <http://www.edcuatorbarnes.com>, before this pandemic.
 - [Animated Fables & Beginning Readers](#) – ABC Mouse provide fables for young children to watch.
 - [CBS 4 Reads](#) – On this YouTube channel, local community members in Indianapolis, including yours truly, are reading books! Click [here](#) to view my video!

- [Grammy's Book Nook](#) – This YouTube channel provides stories and songs.
- [Just Books Read Aloud](#) – This website provides 730 children's books read aloud.
- [Bluford Series Audio](#) – The *Bluford High* series is a popular urban teen book series. Children can listen to the books online.
- [Lit 2 Go](#) – This is a free resource of non-copyrighted literature online with audio. There are plenty of classic texts on this site.
- [Storyline Online](#) – This website has celebrities reading children's literature.
- [Storynory](#) – This website provides free audio stories with text.
- [Unite for Literacy](#) – This website provides non-fiction picture books with audio.

Writing

Students can write at any time during the day, but I suggest having students complete writing after reading, so they can write about what they read.

Book summary – Children can use [Reading Quest's lesson closure summary](#) to summarize what they read.

Writing Prompts – A writing prompt is simply a way to get a child to answer a question in written form. Parents, with multiple children, could have each child come up with five questions. Then, one could be picked each day to answer. Also, I have a [list of writing prompts](#) on my website. I will add any cool writing prompts shared with me to the list!

Reflection journal – Students can create a primary source documenting how they feel about what is happening each day during the coronavirus pandemic.

Math

Flashcards – Parents can buy, make, or have their children make flashcards to practice math fact fluency.

Recipe doubling – If parents have recipe books in their home, they can have children take a book and figure out the math to double or triple recipes. This a good way to practice work with fractions.

Shapes hunt – Younger children could go on a scavenger hunt to find shapes around their homes.

Geometry – Have children use a tape measure to measure items. Then have them calculate the area.

Online math – Below are a list of activities students can do online:

- [Brain Genie](#) – Students can practice math skills such as fractions, place value, ratio, time, and more.
- [Counting Songs](#) – Students can learn to count and skip count to music with Jack Hartmann.
- [Creature Capture: Fraction Games](#) – Students can play math games to help understand fractions.
- [Get the Math](#) – This is an interactive website to help middle and high school students learn math through real-world problems.
- [Learn Zillion Math](#) – This website provides over 1,000 free math instructional videos.
- [Multiplication](#) – Students can master multiplication facts through games and activities.
- [Multiply by Music](#) – Students can master multiplication facts through music with Jack Hartmann.
- [Khan Academy](#) – Students, K-12, can practice math (this site also covers other subject areas).
- [XtraMath](#) – Students can practice math and parents can track the progress.

Science

Cooking – This is a perfect time to teach children how to cook. Mixing ingredients together is science. Children will also be able to use math, and maybe even learn grandma's recipe.

Moon journal – Students can record a drawing of how the moon looks each night.

Here are some electronic science resources:

- [Mystery Science](#) – This website has provided mini-lessons and full lessons, grade K-5, for free.
- [The Cornell Lab: All About Birds](#) – The name says it all.
- [Smithsonian Ocean](#) – Students are provided with opportunities to learn about aquatic life.
- [Animal Diversity](#) – This is a zoology resource from the University of Michigan.
- [San Diego Kids](#) – Students can watch animal videos and complete activities, and games from the San Diego Zoo.
- [Walking with Dinosaurs](#) – Students can view six dinosaur video clips and read dinosaur information cards.
- [National Geographic Animals](#) – Students can explore animal pictures, videos, and articles.
- [Mineralogy for Kids](#) – This is a resource from the Mineralogical Society of America
- [NASA Science: Space Place](#) – Students can play space-related games and activities and watch videos.

- [NASA Science: Space Place Español](#) – This is the resources above but in Spanish.
- [Ology](#) – This is a science resource from the National Museum of Natural History.

Social Studies/History

Discuss family history – Get out a photo album and share stories about your family or even yourself.

Biographies/Autobiographies – Children can read biographies, autobiographies, or memoirs. They could also call a relative and interview him or her and write the relative’s biography.

Here are some online social studies resources:

- [History for Kids](#) – This online resource provides information about various historical topics. There are even quizzes and worksheets.
- [Census Coloring Book](#) – Count Me INdy has posted a coloring book about the census. Even if your child does not want to color, he or she can read the information.
- [This Day in History](#) – This website provides information about what happened on different dates in history. As a bonus, children could write their own ‘this day in history’ about the coronavirus.
- [Government Career Videos for Kids](#) – This website provides videos of different jobs.

Art

Think outside the box – The art teacher at my school does think outside the box Thursday every Thursday. Students get a picture of a shape with the line, “This is not a (fill in with the name of the shape).” The students are tasked with taking that shape and making it something else. The last one I saw was a shape that looked like a shark’s fin. The paper said, “This is not a fin. Think outside the box.”

Visual journal – Children can draw pictures to express how they are feeling while at home instead of writing about it.

Paper airplanes – Children could make paper airplanes and have a contest with their siblings to see which one flew the furthest.

Coloring sheets – If you Google coloring sheets, there are tons online that could be printed to color.

Other

Learn a new chore or perfect an old chore – Let's keep it real! Kids can be messy.

Now, they have plenty of time to contribute to housecleaning.

Learn or practice typing – Check out [Typing Club](#), [Turbo Typer](#), or [Nitro Type](#).

Learn or practice a language – [Duolingo](#) is a good resource, and [Mango Languages](#) is making its resource free.

Break

This is a time for your child to have a choice. Disney is even providing [Frozen 2 on its streaming service](#) three months early.

- Eat
- Play with toys indoors
- Play outdoors or go to a park for a walk
- Exercise
- Listen and/or dance to music
- Nap
- [Go Noodle](#) – This is a free website where kids can dance or complete calming activities
- Watch television or stream a show
- Social media – Older kids with cell phones will want to chat with their friends or classmates. Parents should monitor social media usage.

Schedule

Children need routines. Parents need to create a consistent schedule for their children to follow. This is a sample schedule we plan to use with our sons on Monday. Please note: I included a couple of activities not listed above that they have access to through their school.

Time	Subject	Activity	Independently or with siblings	With adult
8-8:30	Break	Eat breakfast		X
8:30-9	Other	Chores	X	
9-9:30	Reading	Read a book	X	
9:30-10	Writing	Complete writing prompt		X
10-10:30	Break	Snack & TV show of choice	X	
10:30-11	Science	NASA Science: Space Place	X	
11-11:30	Science/Math	Help make lunch		X
11:30-12	Break	Eat lunch		X
12-12:30	Social Studies	Read a biography of choice	X	
12:30-1:30	Break	Playtime outdoors or indoors	X	
1:30-2	Art	Think outside the box		X
2-2:30	Break	Snack & TV show of choice	X	

2:30-3

Math

Prodigy or Dreambox (resource from school)

X

Last, since I believe in working smarter and not harder. There is a list of free educational resources that is being updated daily at <http://www.amazingeducationalresources.com/>.

Hopefully, this is helpful. We can all get through this if we work together. Last, don't forget to follow social distance guidance and wash your hands for at least 20 seconds.