

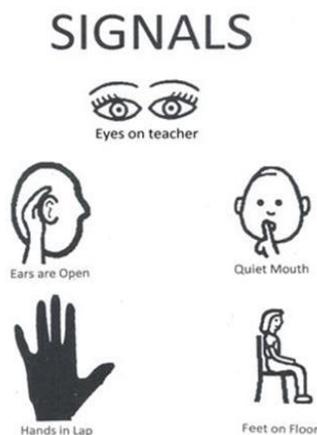
## Tips for learning at home

We are several weeks into our distance learning adventure. For some of our students, the novelty of seeing their teachers and therapists on a screen in their homes has worn off. For some of our students, they have tired of being home and miss their routines and attending school. For some of our students, distance learning has been a struggle since the start, and they have not yet found their groove. We wanted to share some tips and ideas to help your child and your family as we continue to forge this new path.

### Set up a “learning” area

It can be helpful to set up or designate a small "learning" area for your child. Establishing a specific location where teaching and therapy will take place can help your child understand that there are different rules and expectations for when he/she is engaged in learning at home. It will help your child see that this is different than their regular time at home. Even what they are sitting on is important. A small chair, if you have one is often a good choice. Sometimes the kitchen table or the floor is the best place. See how your child responds and ask their therapists. Different therapies will have different needs.

You can keep some basic materials in this area (crayons, paper, child-safe scissors, etc) and other supplies you may be using with your child’s teacher and therapists. You can also hang up a copy of the “signals,” which is our school’s visual display of the signs or signals a child is displaying to show that they are ready to learn. A copy of the signals is attached to this email and pictured below:



Your child has seen these pictures and heard the phrase “signals” often while at school, and posting this picture can help remind your child of how they can show their teacher or therapist that they are ready to learn during their teletherapy sessions.

### **Put together a visual schedule**

With our daily routines being altered so drastically and spending so much time at home, it can be difficult for your child to organize their day and understand that there are times for play and there are times for work.

The schedule does not need to be complex, just a simple outline of your day (breakfast, lunch, dinner, outside time, story time, play time, etc), including when your child has teletherapy. Using pictures on this schedule will help your child be able to easily see what to expect during their day, and can help them make the transition to their “learning area” when it is time for teletherapy. You can use pictures from your home, the internet, or you can speak to your child’s teacher or therapist about other pictures, such as PECS.

With long, repeated days at home, children have a hard time differentiating between what happens and when. A visual schedule will help your child be more organized.

### **Reward your child for their participation**

Your child’s teachers and therapists are asking your child to do hard work, so you want to make sure to reward your child for everything they are trying to do in their teletherapy sessions.

The easiest way to reward your child is with your praise and affection. Let your child know how proud you are of them, and label the wonderful things you see them doing (e.g., “I love how you are listening to your teacher,” “Wow you are trying so hard to cut on the line,” or “you are working so hard, I am so proud of you.”) Combine this praise with hugs, kisses, squeezes, or other forms of affection. And remember, your child does not need to be perfect to receive your praise.

You can also provide your child with a reward after they finish their session. Using a first-then reward system, you can tell your child “first you do your work, then you can have...” Adding a reward can help encourage your child to try their best with teletherapy. Sticker charts can also be a helpful way to motivate your child to participate in teletherapy. Please feel free to speak with your child’s teacher, therapist, or classroom social worker/psychologist for more information about using a sticker chart with your child.

### **Set reasonable expectations and be flexible**

We all have good days, and we all have days that are harder than others. Children are no different, and these extraordinary circumstances we are living through can contribute to a higher rate of difficult days. If your child is not able to complete a full half-hour teletherapy session, that’s ok. If your child is having a hard day and teletherapy is adding increased stress on your child and family, it is ok to miss a day. Speak with your child’s teacher or classroom social worker/psychologist, and a plan can be devised to help you and your child get the most out of

teletherapy. Remember a shorter, positive session is much more effective than a session that is longer and ends poorly. Speak to your child's therapist, it is OK to plan on a shorter session to better suit your child attention span or to end a session early if things are not going well. Ending early could help the next scheduled session occur with less stress.