


Pathway 3:

Find another schooling option that works well for you and your child.


This pathway is right for you if:

- You are looking for an alternative to your child's school.
- Your child is open to the idea of changing schools.
- The actions laid out in Pathway 1 and Pathway 2 are unlikely to fully address your child's unmet academic, social, or emotional needs.
- The potential benefits to your family and your child of making a large transition outweigh the risks and concerns.
- You have reviewed your family's budget and considered any financial implications of different schooling options.

Select the option you would like to learn more about: homeschooling or enrolling in a different school.



My family is interested in homeschooling. We think we have the capacity to make this big change, but we are looking for guidance on next steps and how to help our child continue to socialize with peers.



I'm on this pathway because I want to explore other schools in my area that may better support my child's academic and social needs.

Pathway 3: Homeschooling



Set-up and Routines Checklist

These steps help you create a safe, consistent learning environment for your child. Use this checklist to identify what your family is already doing 😊 and what new steps you may wish to take 🤔.

😊 🤔 Getting Started

- Learn about your state's homeschool requirements.
- Discuss whether you plan to homeschool for the long-term or the short-term.

😊 🤔 Schedule

- Work with your child to create a learning schedule.
- Prioritize play and interest-based and experiential learning.
- Be flexible.
- Adapt your schedule as you find what works.
- Track progress throughout the day.
- Establish routines.
- Prepare free-time activities.

😊 🤔 Learning Space

- Find a space that is comfortable and relatively distraction-free.
- Personalize the space.
- Take advantage of learning outdoors.

😊 🤔 Digital Access and Safety

- Select a location with stable Wi-Fi.
- Make sure your child can use online learning platforms.
- Talk with your child about digital safety.
- Use parental controls to set boundaries.
- Monitor your child's online activity.



Pathway 3: Homeschooling



Learning and Growing Checklist

These steps help you engage your child in instruction and support your child's learning and growth. Use this checklist to identify what your family is already doing 😊 and what new steps you may wish to take 😊.

😊 😊 Learning Materials

- Talk with your child about their interests and learning styles.
- Select materials that are likely to work for your child and family and that cover the standards.
- Incorporate rich learning experiences.
- Select additional materials and programs.

😊 😊 Learning Support

- Use strategies to support your child's learning needs.
- Provide genuine, positive, and specific feedback.
- Learn with your child.
- Adapt by trying a few things at a time.

😊 😊 Enrichment Activities

- Encourage your child to explore their interests.
- Encourage your child to participate in activities with peers.
- Enroll in a community college at the same time.
- Help your child volunteer.
- Visit parks and local cultural sites.



Pathway 3: Homeschooling



Community and Connection Checklist

These steps help you and your child establish and support meaningful relationships with peers and adults. Use this checklist to identify what your family is already doing 😊 and what new steps you may wish to take 😊.

😊 😊 **Socialization**

- Have fun as a family.
- Help your child make others feel welcome.
- Join a homeschool co-op.
- Stay connected with friends.
- Plan safe in-person meetups.

😊 😊 **Support Systems**

- Reach out to homeschool support networks.
- Connect with other families.
- Join groups of families with children with similar learning needs.

😊 😊 **Mental and Emotional Health**

- Have fun, play, and celebrate.
- Check in with your child about how they are feeling.
- Look for downturns in your child's emotional health.
- Help your child identify their strengths and manage frustration and anxiety.
- Take breaks and don't overdo it.
- Care for yourself.
- Incorporate mindfulness.



Pathway 3: Homeschooling



Set-up and Routines

When homeschooling, build a structured and supportive learning environment that helps your child engage and feel comfortable while learning at home.



When you homeschool, you take charge of your child's schooling. You play the role of caregiver and teacher.

Getting Started

Homeschooling can be a full-time job. Homeschooling takes energy, preparation, patience, care, and an interest in continually adapting to find what works best for your child and family. Additionally, children with special learning needs may not be entitled to receive the same level of supports and services that they received from their school. If you are not able to be a full-time caregiver or homeschooling does not make sense given your child's learning needs, review Pathway 1 and Pathway 2 for strategies to support your child as a family and with others or consider [enrolling in a different school](#).

Learn About Your State's Homeschool Requirements

Homeschooling also requires complying with [state laws](#). Before deciding to homeschool, confirm that you are able to meet your state's requirements. Depending on the state, you may have to provide notice to your child's school district, teach state-mandated subjects, and/or deliver certain state-mandated assessments, among other requirements.

Discuss Whether You Plan to Homeschool for the Long-Term or the Short-Term.

Although your plans may change, consider whether homeschooling is likely to be a short- or long-term move for your family.

Especially if you plan to homeschool well after the pandemic, use resources from homeschooling support organizations to help you make decisions. The [Coalition for Responsible Home Education](#) provides [guidance and strategies](#) for families looking to make a long-term move to homeschooling.

Also, be aware of the implications of homeschooling a high schooler. Homeschool credits may be hard to transfer to a public or private school. As CRHE says, "School districts do not always accept credits from time spent homeschooling and may insist that your student repeat a year."



The [Home School Legal Defense Association \(HSLDA\)](#) provides a user-friendly guide to state-specific requirements and sample forms.

To homeschool in [Connecticut](#):

File a [Notice of Intent](#).

Though not strictly required by state law, [HSLDA](#) recommends filing this notice to avoid uncertainty about whether your child is receiving schooling outside the district. File this notice with your superintendent within 10 days of beginning your homeschool program. Include the name of the homeschool teacher, subjects to be taught, total days of instruction, and your methods of assessment.

Prepare for an Annual Portfolio Review.

The school district may ask you to attend an annual portfolio review meeting to determine if instruction in required subjects has been provided. (If the district does not reach out to schedule a review, you are not required to set one up.) The [Connecticut State Department of Education](#) advises that the portfolio should include “samples of activities, assignments, projects, and assessments, as well as a log of books and materials used” together with “results of any national assessments.”

To homeschool in [New York](#):

File a [Notice of Intent](#).

Within 14 days of beginning home instruction, file a notice with the district superintendent—or, in New York City, the Office of Homeschooling. (Continue to submit a notice by July 1 for each year you continue to homeschool.) Districts may provide specific guidance regarding the contents of this notice. The New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) says the notice should include the parent or guardian name, your child’s name, your child’s date of birth, and your home address. HSLDA says that special considerations in New York City include a family switching to homeschooling in the middle of the academic year; contact your school or district administrator for guidance.

Submit an Individualized Home Instruction Plan (IHIP).

Your district must provide you with an IHIP to fill out within 10 days of receiving your notice. For each required course, the IHIP must include a list of syllabi, curriculum materials and textbooks, or a plan of instruction. After receiving the IHIP, you have four weeks to complete the form and return it to the district. The district will review the completed IHIP, and you will be able to submit a revised IHIP if there are any deficiencies.

Comply with Day, Hour, and Subject Requirements.

Keep records of attendance each year to demonstrate that your child meets the “substantial equivalent” of 180 days per year. Additionally, record that your child is meeting the hours of attendance each school year (900 hours in grades 1-6, and 990 hours in grades 7-12).

Complete Required Reports and Annual Assessments.

New York requires that you submit quarterly reports and an annual assessment. The number of reports should be proportional to the period of home instruction. (If instruction begins more than halfway through the school year, you need to submit only two quarterly reports.) The NYCDOE provides [sample quarterly reports and annual reports](#).



Schedule

A schedule with regular routines and the right level of structure for your family can provide stability and help your family transition from school-based learning to homeschooling.

Work with Your Child to Create a Learning Schedule.

Talk with your child to understand how they like to learn. When do they feel most alert? Do they prefer to work at their own pace or have more direction? How long are they able to focus? Create a schedule with the right level of detail for your family. For some families, a loose schedule with little detail that includes only basic routines and breaks provides the right balance of structure and flexibility. Other families do better with more detailed plans.

- Talk with families who homeschool and learn more about common [types of schedules](#). Have conversations with your child and other caregivers about what approaches might work for your family and how to tailor a schedule.
- Plan when to schedule focused, hands-on learning. Set times for specific subjects or projects. Plan which skills to work on every day (for example, reading) and which to space out. Schedule in chunks of time that are realistic, and consider your child's age and needs.
- Add other activities, including times for lunch, snacks, breaks, physical activity, independent reading (as appropriate), and recreation.
- Consider alternating between more challenging and less challenging activities, and schedule things your child finds difficult for times when they are most alert.
- Build in time to study and prepare before working with your child.
- Include key routines in your schedule that provide additional structure, including for [children with ADHD](#) and [toddlers and preschoolers](#).



Schedule

When creating your schedule, don't try to replicate a full day at school. Work with your child to build a schedule that includes basic routines and breaks.

Prioritize Play and Interest-Based, and Experiential Learning.

Build in plenty of time for [play and unstructured fun](#), as well as time for your child to [pursue the things they enjoy](#) (listening to music, playing sports, dancing). Plan time for safe trips to places that connect to what your child is learning or their interests.

Be Flexible.

Just as good teachers switch things up in the moment when working with a class, [give yourself and your child permission to go off script](#). When your child is deeply engaged, encourage and help them to continue exploring. If something is not working, press pause and try a new approach later.

Adapt Your Schedule as You Find What Works.

Talk to your child every week or two about what they like about the schedule and what is challenging. Reorder and adjust the schedule. After a week or two, discuss how the new schedule is working and what to improve.

Track Progress Throughout the Day.

Help older children stay organized with a digital schedule. For younger children, a paper schedule will let them physically see and track their progress using checkboxes, Post-its, and stickers.

- For children who are not reading or for those with [special learning needs](#), consider alternatives to a written schedule. For example, you might create a schedule out of objects that represent each part of your child's schedule. Have your child move objects from a To-Do box to a Done box as they complete tasks.

Establish Routines.

Routines can provide helpful structure to the day, so everyone can be on the same page. Strong routines can also provide an alternative to an overly detailed schedule, allowing you and your child to adapt and be flexible.

- Begin and end the school day with set activities. Use these times to connect with your child in a fun or relaxed way (playing outside, going for a walk, playing a game).
- Use transition routines to move from one activity to the next and help younger children take on more independence. These routines may include putting away materials, preparing for the next activity, noting any incomplete tasks, checking in with an adult, stretching, moving, and taking a break. Consider helping your child set up signals for when a transition is approaching (a five-minute warning alarm, for example).

Prepare Free-Time Activities.

For younger children, create a "choice box" with developmentally appropriate activities (books, toys, coloring books). For older children, help them identify free-time options at the start of each day and week.



Learning Space

Homeschooling allows you to shape how and where your child learns. For most children, having a learning space provides structure and can help them work independently. Work with your child to determine how to create the learning space.

Find a Space That is Comfortable and Relatively Distraction-Free.

Think about the different parts of your schedule and what areas of your home are best for what types of activities (hands-on instruction, virtual instruction, independent reading, play). Find a primary learning space that has good light and is as quiet and free from distractions (music, t.v.) as possible. This space doesn't have to be permanent—carving out a corner of a shared room for your child to use while working independently can work just fine. Your child may also find it best to move from space to space throughout the day, using a sign or other marker to indicate they are working.

Personalize the Space.

Encourage your child to decorate the learning space and add personal touches so that it feels comfortable.

- Gather books and supplies, including stress relievers (like a fidget spinner). Include a notebook for your child to write down questions as they come up.

Take Advantage of Learning Outdoors.

Plan both regular and special opportunities for your child to play, learn, and explore outside. Look for moments to incorporate play and exploration into learning—for example, by visiting locations and landmarks that relate to a book or a topic, reading in a park, or going on nature walks.



Digital Access and Safety

If your child is using online learning programs, they need (1) a stable and strong Internet connection, (2) a personal device (a laptop or other device), and (3) an understanding of how to navigate remote-learning programs and actively participate.

Select a Location with Stable WiFi.

Accessing online learning requires a reliable Internet connection.

- [Everyoneon](#) helps families find low-cost Internet options.
- Websites such as [Speedtest.net](#) let you check your Wi-Fi speed.
- Wi-Fi speed may vary across different rooms in a single house. Run the speed test in multiple rooms, and choose the location where the signal is strongest.

Make Sure Your Child Can Use Online Learning Platforms.

[Tour learning platforms](#) with your child so that they feel comfortable using these systems independently. Your child may be familiar with these platforms, so let them guide you.

- Use a [password manager](#) so that your child and all caregivers can access multiple learning platforms.

Talk with Your Child about Digital Safety.

- Use age-appropriate [online games and videos](#) to help your child understand digital safety terms (cyberbullying, virus protection).
- Remind your child to never give out their personal information—including name, address, and phone number—to anyone over e-mail or social media.

Use Parental Controls to Set Boundaries.

These [controls](#) can filter and block harmful content and prevent your child from sharing personal information online and via e-mail.

Monitor Your Child's Online Activity.

Look at the learning and [social media](#) platforms your child is using and what is communicated on them. Pay particular attention to [signs of cyberbullying](#). Speak with your child about how to make responsible decisions about online communication, including the consequences of posting content that is unkind or mean.



Reflection Questions

What is one thing that my family is already doing to create a safe, consistent learning environment for my child?

What is one new thing I can try in the coming weeks with my child?

Pathway 3: Homeschooling



Learning and Growing

Homeschooling does not have to mean replicating school at home. This is an opportunity to tailor your child's education to their interests and to inspire a love of learning.



Learning Materials

Homeschooling allows you to help your child learn in ways that they enjoy, engage their interests and curiosity, and find new ways to approach challenging subjects. If you plan to return to school-based learning after the pandemic, make sure you cover [state learning standards](#) for your child's grade. These standards identify the content and skills your child is expected to learn each school year. (You can always cover additional content, as well.)

Talk with Your Child about Their Interests and Learning Styles.

Ask your child what they want to learn and how they like to learn. Discuss what they find challenging about learning. Use these conversations to understand what approaches to learning are likely to work for your child.

Select Materials That Are Likely to Work for Your Child and Family and That Cover the Standards.

Families use a variety of curricula and teaching styles to tailor their children's homeschool education. Think about your strengths and interests as a home educator and the ways your child likes to learn. Look for materials that speak to your child's interests and strengths.

- Learn about your state learning standards, which specify the content and skills students are expected to master in each grade and class. Use family guides ([K-12](#)) to read family-friendly versions of the key standards in math and English Language Arts.
- Identify the standards that different materials cover. Many programs appear complete but do not include everything your child is expected to learn in a grade or a class.
 - » Research how materials have been rated by curriculum review organizations—for example, [EdReports](#) (which reviews materials designed for public school settings) and [Cathy Duffy Reviews](#) (which reviews homeschool-specific materials). Know what standards are covered so that you can supplement with other materials and learning activities as needed.
 - » Ask publishers about the standards that a material covers.
- Use materials that include all standards, or use a mix of materials that together will help your child understand the content and skills they are expected to learn. Select materials that are accessible for your child, reflect their background and interests, and help them learn about the backgrounds and experiences of others.
- Some families adapt school-based curricula for use at home. Some highly rated and standards-aligned options include:
 - » For math:
 - [Zearn](#) (Kindergarten through grade 5)
 - Illustrative Mathematics ([6-8](#), [Algebra 1](#), [Geometry](#), [Algebra 2](#))
 - SchoolKit provides additional [key lessons](#) to support learning major work for grades 6-8.
 - » For English:
 - EL Education ([K-2](#))
 - CKLA ([K-5](#))
 - Odell High School Literacy Program ([9-12](#))

Incorporate Rich Learning Experiences.

In school and at home, children learn best when they are given the opportunity to interact with others and engage in learning that is creative. Find ways to build these elements into your child's learning—for example, by learning with other students in a [homeschool co-op](#) or using a project-based approach (such as [unit studies](#)).

Select Additional Materials and Programs.

As needed, use supplemental learning programs to support your child's learning. You might select programs to help your child further develop skills and explore their interests. Supplemental learning materials are typically not designed to be completed in a set order, and many include highly engaging games and activities.



Some supplemental programs you may consider include:

Multiple Subjects			
UNBOXED by Prepared Parents	4-9	Free	UNBOXED by Prepared Parents (available in English and Spanish) provides a monthly toolkit for families that supports academic learning and helps children develop habits and skills for lifelong success.
Khan Academy	K-12	Free	Khan Academy offers practice exercises, instructional videos, and a personalized learning dashboard that empower learners to study at their own pace in and outside the classroom. Subjects include math, science, computing, history, art history, and economics, plus K-14 and test preparation (SAT, Praxis, LSAT) content.
Wide Open School	PK-12	Free	Wide Open School provides free learning activities for all grades.
Outschool	PK-12	Costs vary by class (financial support available)	Outschool offers live, small-group video classes taught by educators, artists, scientists, and others. Courses range from beginning reading to AP physics to video game design to piano.
Math			
Teach to One Roadmaps Home	4-8, Algebra 1	\$9.95 per month	Roadmaps Home uses diagnostic assessments to generate a personalized road map for your child. It identifies grade-level math skills to master and links to lessons to develop those skills.
DreamBox	K-8	\$12.95 per month	DreamBox is a digital math program with interactive lessons that your child can use at home. (Available in English and Spanish.)
Prodigy	K-8	Free	Prodigy provides math games that your child can use to practice math at home.
XtraMath	K-6	Free	XtraMath helps students develop quick recall and fluency with basic math.
English Language Arts			
CommonLit	3-12	Free	With a guardian account , caregivers can choose reading lessons from any literary or nonfiction genre and track their child's progress on reading and writing skills.
Story Mentors	PK-2	Free	StoryMentors supports reading with access to resources like children's books and guides.
Springboard Collaborative	K-2	Free	Springboard Collaborative features a four-week learn-at-home plan, including a reading strategy of the week (by video), tip sheets in English and Spanish, daily lessons, and corresponding e-books.
Reading A-Z	K-6	\$115.45 per year	Reading A-Z provides a library of downloadable books, lessons, units, and assessments.
Epic	K-6	\$7.99 per year (1 month free)	Epic includes a library of digital books personalized to your child's age and reading level, and it provides information about your child's reading habits.



Learning Support

Homeschooling provides the opportunity to shape your child's education in ways that make learning personal, interactive, and rich.

Use Strategies to Support Your Child's Learning Needs.

Learn more about [effective homeschooling strategies, considerations, and advice to beginners](#). Talk to people you know and trust who homeschool, and contact [local, state, and community homeschool support networks](#).

Provide Genuine, Specific, and Positive Feedback.

Recognize [growth](#), praise hard work, following directions, and staying on task, and recognize small steps in the right direction.

Learn with Your Child.

Facilitating your child's learning requires preparation. Plan time that you can use to understand state standards and tailor learning materials and activities to your child's needs and interests. Even with that preparation, don't hesitate to tell your child, "I don't know" when asked a question. Use these opportunities to learn alongside your child or encourage them to explore an answer.

Adapt by Trying a Few Things at a Time.

Talk to your child every week or two about what they like and what is challenging. Brainstorm together ways to solve challenges. Try a new approach for a week or two, and see how the change is working and what to improve.



Enrichment Activities

With a typically shorter formal day than school-based education, homeschooling provides the opportunity for your child to engage deeply in other rich learning activities, both individually and with peers.

Encourage Your Child to Explore Their Interests.

Use the flexibility of homeschooling to help your child continue to practice and pursue the things they enjoy, including [drawing and art](#), [cooking](#), sports, music, dance, and other activities. Help your child connect with teachers, coaches, and mentors to further develop their talents.

Encourage Your Child to Participate in Activities with Peers.

Connect with other families through family networks (like Facebook groups) to find out about opportunities for your child to safely have fun and explore outside (in a hiking group, for example).

- [Outschool](#) provides low-cost online classes and clubs led by trained instructors across many interest areas, including art, music, health and wellness, technology, games, and other student interests. Families may also apply for a need-based [\\$300 credit](#) to apply towards classes.

Enroll in a Community College at the Same Time.

[In most states](#), homeschooling students who are old enough and demonstrate readiness use [dual enrollment](#) to begin earning college credit. Dual enrollment allows students to complete college degrees more quickly and often save money.

Help Your Child Volunteer.

Brainstorm with your child ways to show gratitude and support others. Consider writing notes of appreciation, helping a neighbor with lawn care or other tasks, or [reading with a senior citizen](#).

Visit Parks and Local Cultural Sites.

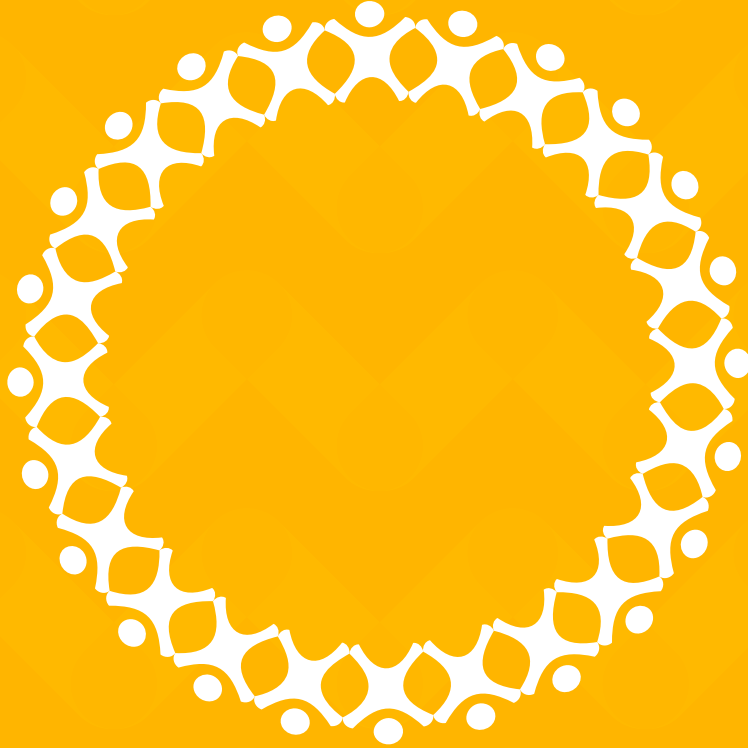
Contact local organizations to find out about virtual group tours. Check out parent social media pages to learn about special events happening in your neighborhood.



Reflection Questions

What is one thing that my family is already doing to support my child’s learning and growth?

What is one new thing I can try in the coming weeks with my child?



Community and Connection

Help your child maintain connections to peers and caring adults while being homeschooled to support their personal growth and well-being.



Socialization

Have Fun as a Family.

Play games, watch movies, create art, go on walks, cook, eat, read—take time to turn off devices and connect as a family outside focused learning activities.

Help Your Child Make Others Feel Welcome.

Help your child to learn, work, and play with peers who have different backgrounds and interests. [Teach your child to connect with people who are different from them.](#)

- If you are seeking guidance navigating conversations with your child about race and racial justice, there are [resources to help you engage your child in meaningful discussion](#) regardless of their age. PBS KIDS also offers [age-appropriate tips and resources](#) that can help families use books, art, and other media to teach children about race, racism, and being anti-racist.

Join a Homeschool Co-op.

[Homeschool Co-ops](#) provide the opportunity for homeschool students to regularly meet, play, and learn together. Contact your local or state homeschool support organization to find a co-op in your area.

Stay Connected with Friends.

Encourage and help your child stay connected with friends from their previous school. In addition to virtual play-dates and video calls, encourage your child to [host a book club](#), or plan a virtual art lesson with friends. ([Udemy](#) offers free online tutorials.) Forming a regular get-together—for example, a virtual lunch group—can be another way for your child to connect with peers during the day.

Plan Safe In-Person Meetups.

Coordinate with other families to [agree on safety precautions](#) for meetups, and follow guidance from local and national health officials (including meeting outdoors when feasible).

Support Systems

Reach Out to Homeschool Support Networks.

Connect with local, state, and national homeschool support networks and affinity groups (e.g., [Black Family Homeschool Educators and Scholars](#)) for support and guidance.

Connect with Other Families.

Talk with other families in your community and nationally who homeschool. Use [local and regional homeschool networks](#) and affinity groups (like [Black Family Homeschool Educators & Scholars](#)) to reach out to families who homeschool. Ask for advice for getting started and lessons learned.

Join Groups of Families with Children with Similar Learning Needs.

Many family groups are organized around supporting children with specific learning needs. To find a group, visit [Bayada](#).



Mental and Emotional Health

Supporting your child’s mental and emotional health—and your own—is critical to successful homeschooling. As a family, make a habit of looking out for and supporting one another in big and little ways.

Have Fun, Play, and Celebrate.

Make time to do the things you and your child enjoy. Exercise and get outdoors. Look for ways to help your child recognize how they are progressing, including by exhibiting greater independence and responsibility.

Check In with Your Child about How They are Feeling.

Talk with your child about [mental and emotional health](#). Ask [open-ended questions](#), model talking about your feelings, and [help your child name and express their emotions](#).

Look for Downturns in Your Child’s Emotional Health.

Some [indications that your child may be struggling emotionally](#) include seeming bored, becoming upset, frequently feeling unwell, and not completing assignments.

- Contact [mental and emotional health specialists](#) if you suspect that your child may be in distress.

Help Your Child Identify Their Strengths and Manage Frustration and Anxiety.

Help your child identify their [character strengths](#). Support your child with unproductive frustration. [Limit the type and amount of media your child consumes](#), and [help your child have accurate information about COVID-19](#).

Take Breaks and Don’t Overdo It.

Taking breaks can help you and your child decompress after challenging activities. Adapt your homeschooling schedule if you notice yourself or your child becoming particularly frustrated.

Care for Yourself.

Make time for the activities that support your own emotional and mental health. Take your child to the park to give yourself a break, read a favorite book, talk to friends and others who uplift you. Recognize when you need to refresh and take a day off from teaching. Use this time for play, enrichment activities, and learning with other caregivers.

Incorporate Mindfulness.

Mindfulness education can help you and your child practice techniques to calm the mind and body. Emerging research has shown that it can decrease the negative effects of external stress and increase children’s ability to stay engaged in learning.

- Download a [toolkit](#) to incorporate mindfulness exercises into your homeschool day, and access easy-to-follow guides.



Reflection Questions

What is one thing that my family is already doing to help my child have meaningful relationships with peers and adults?

What is one new thing I can try in the coming weeks with my child?

Pathway 3: Enroll in a New School



Set-up and Routines Checklist

These steps help you create a safe, consistent learning environment for your child. Use this checklist to identify what your family is already doing 😊 and what new steps you may wish to take 😊.

😊 😊 Getting Started

- Explore your options.
- Decide whether to make a change.
- Choose a school that will provide a high-quality education to your child.

😊 😊 Schedule

- Update schedules.
- Conduct a trial run.
- Track progress throughout the day.
- Continue helpful routines.
- Prepare for interruptions and mishaps.

😊 😊 Learning Space

- Find a space that is comfortable and relatively distraction-free.
- Personalize the space.
- Tour the new school.

😊 😊 Digital Access and Safety

- Request technical resources.
- Ensure that your child has a stable and strong internet connection.
- Ensure that your child has a device.
- Make sure your child can use online learning platforms.
- Talk with your child about digital safety.
- Use parental controls to set boundaries.
- Monitor your child's online activity.



Pathway 3: Enroll in a New School



Learning and Growing Checklist

These steps help you engage your child in instruction and support your child's learning and growth. Use this checklist to identify what your family is already doing 😊 and what new steps you may wish to take 😊.

😊 😊 Learning Materials

- Select learning materials as needed.

😊 😊 Learning Support

- Forward your child's transcript.
- Meet your child's teacher.
- Reach out about the learning supports your child needs.
- Coordinate with other caregivers who supervise your child.
- Understand and prevent distraction.
- Build in screen-time breaks.
- Provide genuine, specific, and positive feedback.
- Familiarize yourself with the grade-level standards and content.
- Use your home language.
- Talk about your child's strengths, interests, and challenges.
- Work with your child's school to monitor attendance, engagement, and learning progress.
- Communicate questions and needs as they come up.

😊 😊 Enrichment Activities

- Plan how your child can safely participate in school-based extracurriculars.
- Visit parks and other local cultural sites.
- Encourage your child to participate in extracurriculars outside school.



Pathway 3: Enroll in a New School



Community and Connection Checklist

These steps help you and your child establish and support meaningful relationships with peers and adults. Use this checklist to identify what your family is already doing 😊 and what new steps you may wish to take 😊.

😊 😊 Socialization

- Request new family resources.
- Enlist a pen pal.
- Help your child maintain existing friendships.

😊 😊 Support Systems

- Join messaging lists.
- Connect with families at your school.
- Connect with families in your child's class.
- Join groups of families with children with similar learning needs.

😊 😊 Mental and Emotional Health

- Make time for fun.
- Create space for questions.
- Check in with your child about how they are feeling.
- Look for downturns in your child's emotional health.
- Help your child identify their strengths and manage frustration and anxiety.



Pathway 3: Enroll in a New School



Set-up and Routines

A positive and consistent setting can help your child learn from home and transition between in-person and remote schooling, even during a period of significant change.



Getting Started

Explore Your Options.

Depending on your state, additional school options could include public schools accessed via a lottery or alternative schools, like interdistrict magnet schools, technical schools, and charter schools. They may also include private schools (including religious schools and tuition-based private academies). Finally, many families are exploring microschools and virtual schools, which have rapidly risen in popularity during the pandemic.

Microschools

You may have heard other families talk about microschools. There is no clear definition of microschools, but in general they are neighborhood alternative schools that serve small groups of children (typically 10 to 15) of mixed ages.

Microschools resemble homeschools in the level of personalized attention paid to each child, but they are different from homeschooling because a private tutor or teacher guides student learning. Microschools tend to attract families who want their children to receive a highly personalized education. Microschool instructors typically emphasize project-based learning and encourage students to steer their own learning.

Depending on your state, you may be able to join an existing microschool. The cost of microschools varies significantly, but tuition can be equivalent to that of a traditional private school. Alternatively, you might explore [launching your own microschool](#) with other families.

Virtual Schools

Although virtual schooling is conducted at home, it is distinct from homeschooling. Unlike homeschooling, virtual schools provide accredited curriculum, certified teachers, and expectations similar to those in public schools. In other words, this option does not require you as a parent or guardian to become the primary teacher. If you are interested in finding a virtual school that is the right fit for your child, check out [K12](#), which lets you search for options.

Depending on your state, there may be public virtual schools available. In Connecticut and New York, there are several private virtual schools—some allow families to select a full-time curriculum or individual full-year courses. Tuition for the full-time curriculum varies widely from \$2,000 to upwards of \$10,000 per year, though many virtual schools offer discounts for siblings and military families.

Many families over the past several months have opted for virtual schools, which are experienced in online education, over traditional public schools that are new to remote instruction. If your child is likely to return to in-person school after the pandemic, contact administrators to ensure that your child takes courses from a virtual school that their traditional public school will accept transfer credits from.



Decide Whether to Make a Change.

To decide whether to enroll your child in a new school, you will need to consider:

- The range and quality of options available in your state and community.
- Whether other schools are offering in-person or hybrid learning and your preferences regarding how your child participates in learning.
- Your child's interest in attending a new school and meeting new friends.
- Financial commitments associated with the transfer.
- Whether schools you are interested in are accepting new students.

To help determine and assess the options available to your family, it may be helpful to search online databases published by state education departments or advocacy organizations. The New York State Department of Education, for example, provides a searchable [charter school directory](#). The Connecticut Charter Schools Association provides a similar [charter school directory](#). The Connecticut Regional School Choice Office (RSCO) also provides [information](#) about interdistrict magnet schools and other schools available to families.

To understand whether enrolling in a new school is right for your child, consider if any of the steps laid out in the Pathway 1 Guide or Pathway 2 Guide may address current shortcomings. If the answer is no, ask your child questions to help you gauge their excitement and interest in adjusting to a new school environment, a new schedule, and new teachers. Be honest with yourself about your child's comfort and openness to navigating new situations and meeting new friends.

Choose a School That Will Provide a High-Quality Education to Your Child.

Once you decide to make a change, you will want to assess the quality of potential schools. Check out publicly available student achievement data and information about the school culture, community, and environment.

- Contact the new school to learn how it has structured its hybrid or remote schedule. Ask administrators how teachers are communicating with families and keeping them updated on their child's progress.
- Take a virtual or in-person tour of the school to get a sense of the new school and build a greater connection to the new school community.
- Reach out to families at the potential new school via shared friends or through family social media groups to get a sense of how hybrid or remote schooling is going for them.
- Learn about what curricula the school uses. Select a school that uses high-quality curricula.
 - » Use state family guides ([K-12](#)) to learn more about the learning standards and foundational skills your child is expected to master. State guides (for example, [Connecticut Parent Guides](#)) can give you a sense of the content and skills your child is expected to learn.
 - » Talk to administrators and families at potential new schools about what curricula they use and how the curricula will help your child master state standards.
 - To know if a school is using a high-quality core curriculum, see how the learning materials are rated on [EdReports](#). In addition, see if the content helps your child move from simpler to more complex skills, instead of being presented in a pick-and-choose format.
- If your child has special learning needs, talk to administrators at potential new schools to understand what services and supports will be made available. Children attending private school and some virtual schools may [lack the same rights](#) as children attending public schools.



Schedule

Starting a new school involves lots of changes, including new teachers and new classmates. It may also involve a new digital platform for remote learning. Minimizing additional changes to your child's schedule can help ease the transition.

Update Schedules.

Before the first day, work with your child to update their [daily](#) and [weekly](#) schedule to reflect schedule changes. Give your child the chance to ask questions and make adjustments.

Conduct a Trial Run.

Conduct a trial run to ensure your child can access new remote-learning platforms and knows their class schedule.

Track Progress Throughout the Day.

Help older children stay organized at their new school with a digital schedule. For younger children, a paper schedule can help them physically see and track their progress using checkboxes, Post-its, and stickers.

- For children who are not reading or with [special learning needs](#), consider alternatives to a written schedule. For example, you might designate objects that represent each part of your child's schedule and have your child move objects from a To-Do box to a Done box as they complete tasks at their new school.

Continue Helpful Routines.

Keep up the routines that work for your child. For example, if your child enjoys taking a break outside after class, continue this routine. Follow best practices, including:

- Begin and end the school day with set activities. Use these times to connect with your child in a fun or relaxed way—playing outside, going for a walk, or playing a game.
- Use transition routines to move from one activity to the next, and help younger children take on more independence. These routines include putting away materials, preparing for the next activity, noting any incomplete tasks, checking in with an adult, stretching, moving, and taking a break. Consider helping your child set up signals for when a transition is approaching (a five-minute warning alarm, for example).

Prepare for Interruptions and Mishaps.

At some point, your child's new teacher may forget to send the right password, or the class may spend time working on an activity from earlier in the year before your child transferred to the school. By talking about these and other challenges that might occur and having a backup plan (like an activity from [Wide Open School](#)), your child can manage hiccups and interruptions.



Learning Space

Having a set space for learning can improve how your child engages in school, especially during a transition period.

Find a Space That is Comfortable and Relatively Distraction-Free.

Think about the different parts of your child's new schedule and what areas of your home are best for what types of activities (hands-on instruction, virtual instruction, independent reading, play). Find a primary learning space that has good light and is as quiet and free from distractions as possible.

Personalize the Space.

Encourage your child to decorate the learning space and add personal touches so that your child feels comfortable while participating in remote classes at their new school.

- Gather books and supplies, including stress relievers (like a fidget spinner). Include a notebook for your child to write down questions as they come up.

Tour the New School.

If your child's new school will include in-person instruction this year or in the future, getting to know the new school building can help build excitement. Look for a virtual tour available on the school's website or on social media platforms, or ask an administrator if one is available. This can help your child get a sense of the new school and build a greater connection to the new school community.



Digital Access and Safety

To connect to remote learning at a new school, children need (1) a stable and strong Internet connection, (2) a personal device, and (3) an understanding of how to access remote-learning programming and actively participate.

Request Technical Resources.

Ask for copies of any technical resources that the school distributed to students before your child enrolled. These resources may include platforms, apps, and programs your child's teachers and school will be using for instruction, teacher-to-student messaging, homework submission, and assessments.

Ensure that Your Child Has a Stable and Strong Internet Connection.

If you need help connecting to the Internet, contact your district or city to see if they can provide a Wi-Fi hotspot. If your internet is not stable, ask your child's teacher about alternative ways of engaging with class content (through recorded videos of class, phone check-ins, printed materials, and virtual office hours).

- [Everyoneon](#) helps families find low-cost Internet options.

Ensure That Your Child Has a Device.

Many schools and districts provide devices for home use and technology support. If your child has questions or the device malfunctions, [contact your school's technology support staff](#).

- If your child is sharing a device with others, make a schedule to show who is using the device at what time.

Make Sure Your Child Can Use Online Learning Platforms.

[Tour learning platforms](#) with your child so that they feel comfortable using these systems independently. Your child may already be familiar with these platforms, so let them guide you.

- Use a [password manager](#) so that your child and all caregivers can access multiple learning platforms.
- If your child has special learning needs, there are [actions you can take](#) to improve your child's experience with remote learning. Reach out to your child's school about any [accessible instructional materials](#) your child needs to participate in learning. This may include universal accessibility features (e.g., closed captioning) that can be activated on digital learning platforms.

Talk with Your Child about Digital Safety.

- Use age-appropriate [online games and videos](#) to help your child understand digital safety terms (cyberbullying, virus protection).
- Remind your child to never give out personal information—including name, address, and phone number—to anyone over e-mail or social media.

Use Parental Controls to Set Boundaries.

These [controls](#) can filter and block harmful content and prevent your child from sharing personal information online and via e-mail.

Monitor Your Child's Online Activity.

Look at which learning and [social media](#) platforms your child is accessing and what is communicated on them. Pay particular attention to [signs of cyberbullying](#) at the new school. Speak with your child about how to make responsible decisions about online communication with new classmates, including the consequences of posting content that is unkind or mean.



Reflection Questions

What is one thing that my family is already doing to create a safe, consistent learning environment for my child?

What is one new thing I can try in the coming weeks with my child?

Pathway 3: Enroll in a New School



Learning and Growing

As your child transitions to a new school environment, there are ways you can support their learning and development and minimize academic disruptions.



Learning Materials

Select Learning Materials as Needed.

You might select supplemental learning materials to help your child fill in gaps, further develop skills, and explore their interests. These materials are not intended to replace in-school materials. They are typically designed to be completed on a flexible schedule, and many include highly engaging games and other activities.

Some supplemental programs you may consider include:

Multiple Subjects			
UNBOXED by Prepared Parents	4-9	Free	UNBOXED by Prepared Parents (available in English and Spanish) provides a monthly toolkit for families that supports academic learning and helps children develop habits and skills for lifelong success.
Khan Academy	K-12	Free	Khan Academy offers practice exercises, instructional videos, and a personalized learning dashboard that empower learners to study at their own pace in and outside the classroom. Subjects include math, science, computing, history, art history, and economics, plus K-14 and test preparation (SAT, Praxis, LSAT) content.
Wide Open School	PK-12	Free	Wide Open School provides free learning activities for all grades.
Outschool	PK-12	Costs vary by class (financial support available)	Outschool offers live, small-group video classes taught by educators, artists, scientists, and others. Courses range from beginning reading to AP physics to video game design to piano.
Math			
Teach to One Roadmaps Home	4-8, Algebra 1	\$9.95 per month	Roadmaps Home uses diagnostic assessments to generate a personalized road map for your child. It identifies grade-level math skills to master and links to lessons to develop those skills.
DreamBox	K-8	\$12.95 per month	DreamBox is a digital math program with interactive lessons that your child can use at home. (Available in English and Spanish.)
Prodigy	K-8	Free	Prodigy provides math games that your child can use to practice math at home.
XtraMath	K-6	Free	XtraMath helps students develop quick recall and fluency with basic math.
English Language Arts			
CommonLit	3-12	Free	With a guardian account , caregivers can choose reading lessons from any literary or nonfiction genre and track their child's progress on reading and writing skills.
Story Mentors	PK-2	Free	StoryMentors supports reading with access to resources like children's books and guides.
Springboard Collaborative	K-2	Free	Springboard Collaborative features a four-week learn-at-home plan, including a reading strategy of the week (by video), tip sheets in English and Spanish, daily lessons, and corresponding e-books.
Reading A-Z	K-6	\$115.45 per year	Reading A-Z provides a library of downloadable books, lessons, units, and assessments.
Epic	K-6	\$7.99 per year (1 month free)	Epic includes a library of digital books personalized to your child's age and reading level, and it provides information about your child's reading habits.



Using and Adapting Core Curriculum

Some parents support learning by choosing a strong school-based curriculum to adapt and use at home. If you do, look for curriculums that cover all state learning standards and are ordered to help your child move from simpler to more challenging skills.

Some curriculum providers have made highly rated and standards-aligned teacher and student materials available online.

Math

Strong math curriculum options include:

Zearn

(Kindergarten through grade 5)

Illustrative Mathematics

(6-8, Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2)

SchoolKit

provides additional key lessons to support learning major work for grades 6-8.

English

Strong English curriculum options include:

EL Education

(K-2)

CKLA

(K-5)

Odell High School Literacy Program

(9-12)

Science

NextGenScience has identified quality science lessons and units intended for teachers to use in a classroom. If you have the time and interest, you could adapt these for use in the home.

Consider using Learning in Places's family resources to apply science principles at home.

The **Council of State Science Supervisors** has prepared a list of science home learning activities.



Learning Support

To help your child transition to their new school:

Forward Your Child's Transcript.

Curricula, credit requirements, and transcript layout often vary widely among schools. This can make interpreting transcripts and placing children into appropriate classes difficult. Smooth the process by forwarding a copy of your child's transcript to a guidance counselor or other administrator at their new school.

- Offer to connect administrators at both schools to talk through course equivalencies.

Meet Your Child's Teacher.

Request a virtual visit with your child's teacher to introduce yourself and your child. Share any information that may help the teacher better support your child's learning.

- Let new teachers know you want to work together to support your child. Include information about your child's strengths, interests, and needs. Tell new teachers how and when it's best to contact you, and ask new teachers how they prefer to be contacted.

Reach Out About the Learning Supports Your Child Needs.

- Review the staff directory. Focus on key contacts relevant for your child's needs or interests. A directory is often available on the school's website or by contacting an administrator.
- If your child has special learning needs, ensure that your child's IEP is transferred to the new school. Discuss with your child's new school whether services will be provided in the same way or if a new evaluation will be conducted.



Learning Support

To help your child stay focused and engaged while learning:

Coordinate with Other Caregivers Who Supervise Your Child.

If others supervise your child during the day, share your child's new school schedule, including class times and login information. Make sure all caregivers can access the digital platforms your child uses for learning (for example, [Google Classroom](#)). Communicate about what work your child has completed and any tasks that remain at the end of each day.

Understand and Prevent Distraction.

Talk with your child about what causes them to become distracted. Work together to find [strategies and routines](#) that address key causes.

- [Find What Motivates Your Child](#). Include breaks and time for play after challenging activities to reward your child's hard work. Create goals with your child to help them build stamina and maintain focus. Make time for special activities, and recognize and celebrate moments when your child demonstrates greater independence.

Build in Screen-Time Breaks.

Staring at a screen all day is hard. Reading a physical book, taking handwritten notes, or writing a draft of an essay on paper may help your child feel more engaged. Encourage your child to get fresh air at least once in the morning and once in the afternoon.

Provide Genuine, Specific, and Positive Feedback.

Recognize [growth](#) and small steps in the right direction, and praise hard work, following directions, and staying on task.

Familiarize Yourself with the Grade-Level Standards and Content.

Use family guides ([grades K–12](#)) to identify key learning goals and to access practical, everyday strategies and resources to reinforce learning at home.

Use Your Home Language.

Use your home language when talking with your child about assignments and reading together. By learning in your child's home language, they will be better able to transfer new skills to English.

- [Colorín Colorado](#) provides an array of tools for learning in Spanish and English.



Learning Support

To strengthen your partnership with your child's school and teachers:

Talk About Your Child's Strengths, Interests, and Challenges.

- Actively look for areas in which your child is struggling. Use tools (such as this Learning Heroes' [Readiness Check](#) for grades K–8) to assess your child's learning. Ask your child about what work is hard for them. Make sure academic challenges are communicated to your child's teachers, counselors, and other support staff. As appropriate, encourage your child to reach out for help with specific academic tasks.
- Have regular check-ins with your child's main teacher to ask and answer questions, plan for the month ahead, and provide feedback on remote and hybrid learning.
- Virtually and in person, children learn well one-on-one and in small groups. Help your child arrange opportunities for small-group and one-on-one support with teachers, and help your child form study groups with students at their new school.

Work with Your Child's School to Monitor Attendance, Engagement, and Learning Progress.

Ask your child's teachers and school how to keep track of attendance and engagement. Make sure you know your child's schedule and how you can support daily and weekly lessons and expectations. [Ask questions](#) to understand how your child's new school will support your child and how you can support learning at home.

Communicate Questions and Needs as They Come Up.

Use the e-mail templates below to ask questions and share needs with staff members at your child's new school. In most cases, it makes sense to first e-mail your child's teacher. If you're not sure how to proceed, contact your child's counselor, assistant principal, or principal.

- [You are not receiving communication in the primary language you speak.](#)
- [School and class materials are not in the primary language you speak.](#)
- [Your child needs a device or a stable internet connection.](#)
- [Your child has IEP or 504 needs that make learning from home challenging.](#)
- [Your child is not getting food service or other services or support.](#)
- [The learning goals, standards and content, and key assignments for a class are not clear.](#)
- [You could use additional support understanding your child's class content.](#)
- [Your child could use additional support with a class topic.](#)
- [You are not sure who to contact with a certain question or need.](#)
- [You are concerned about your child's emotional or mental health.](#)
- [You are interested in connecting with other families in your child's class.](#)
- [You notice that a lot of families are experiencing the same challenges.](#)



Enrichment Activities

Plan How Your Child Can Safely Participate in School-Based Extracurriculars.

School-based extracurricular activities can be a great way for your child to meet friends at their new school with similar interests. Talk to teachers and coaches at the new school to learn about how your child can participate remotely or safely attend in-person activities.

Visit Parks and Local Cultural Sites.

Contact local organizations to find out about virtual group tours. Check out family social media pages affiliated with your new school to learn about special events happening in your neighborhood.

Encourage Your Child to Participate in Extracurriculars Outside School.

See tips below on helping your child [maintain existing friendships](#).

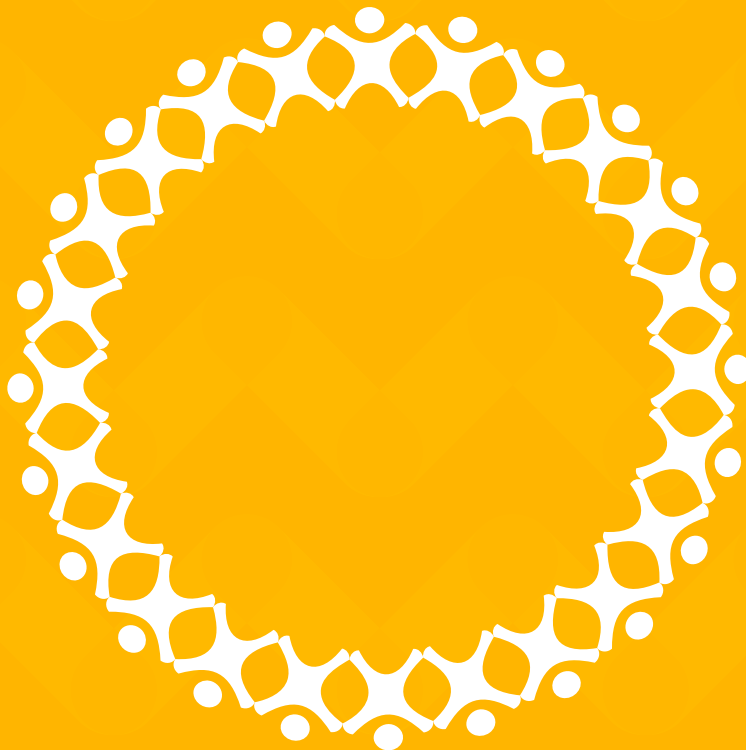


Reflection Questions

What is one thing that my family is already doing to support my child’s learning and growth?

What is one new thing I can try in the coming weeks with my child?

Pathway 3: Enroll in a New School



Community and Connection

Getting to know other families and children at your child's new school helps you and your child feel part of the new community.



Socialization

Take advantage of opportunities to socialize with new classmates and maintain existing relationships.

Request New Family Resources.

Ask for new family resources, including the student handbook and opportunities organized by the school to help new students adjust.

Enlist a Pen Pal.

Ask an administrator at the new school to assign your child a pen pal in the weeks leading up to your child's start. This can help make the first day (whether it is in person or online) a bit less overwhelming.

Help Your Child Maintain Existing Friendships.

Coordinate virtual meetups and plan safe in-person meetups.

- In addition to virtual playdates and video calls, encourage your child to [host a book club](#) or plan a virtual art lesson with friends. ([Udemy](#) offers free online tutorials.) Forming a virtual lunch group can be another way for your child to stay in touch with friends from their old school.
- Coordinate with other parents to agree on safety precautions for any in-person meetups, and follow guidance from local and national health officials (including meeting outdoors where feasible).

Support Systems

Share and learn tips and strategies from other families in your new school community for making remote learning work, and celebrate what you've done that has worked for you and your child.

Join Messaging Lists.

Ask to join any e-mail lists and messaging platforms used by your school and your child's new teachers.

Connect with Families at Your School.

Join your local or state [PTA](#) and any Facebook groups for families at your child's new school.

Connect with Families in Your Child's Class.

[Contact your child's teacher](#) about ways to connect with other families in your child's class. Set up a group conversation (using WhatsApp or Facebook) to share tips, ask questions, and coordinate social activities.

- Contact your school and check social media to find opportunities to connect with families at your new school with shared interests or backgrounds (home countries, home languages).

Join Groups of Families with Children with Similar Learning Needs.

Many family groups are organized around supporting children with specific learning needs. To find a group, visit [Bayada](#).



Mental and Emotional Health

Prioritizing mental and emotional health is always important, especially during a period of transition such as enrolling in a new school. As a family, make a habit of looking out for and supporting one another in big and little ways.

Make Time for Fun.

Transferring schools can involve a lot of work. Continue to make time to do the things you and your child enjoy as a family even during this busy time. Exercise and get outdoors. Look for ways to help your child recognize how they are progressing, including by exhibiting greater independence and taking steps to get ready for their new school.

Create Space for Questions.

When you [talk to your child](#) about beginning a new school, emphasize opportunities to meet new people, take new classes, and explore a new community. Encourage your child to share any anxiety or sadness they may be experiencing around leaving their old school so that you can brainstorm ways to address these feelings.

- Questions like “What are you most looking forward to?” and “What are you most worried about?” can help start a productive conversation.
- If your child doesn’t want to talk to you about moving, contact other adults (a school counselor, an athletic coach) who may be able to create space for this conversation.

Check In with Your Child about How They are Feeling.

Talk with your child about [mental and emotional health](#). Ask [open-ended questions](#), model talking about your feelings, and [help your child name and express their emotions](#).

Look for Downturns in Your Child’s Emotional Health.

Some [indications that your child may be struggling emotionally](#) include seeming bored, becoming upset, participating less in class, missing or skipping classes, frequently feeling unwell, and not completing assignments.

- Contact mental and emotional health specialists, including your child’s [school counselors and psychologists](#), if you suspect that your child may be in distress.

Help Your Child Identify Their Strengths and Manage Frustration and Anxiety.

Help your child identify their [character strengths](#). Support your child with unproductive frustration. [Limit the type and amount of media your child consumes](#), and [help your child have accurate information about COVID-19](#).



Reflection Questions

What is one thing that my family is already doing to help my child have meaningful relationships with peers and adults?

What is one new thing I can try in the coming weeks with my child?

If you have questions or feedback on this Family Guide, contact CPRL at cprl@law.columbia.edu or CPRL Executive Director Elizabeth Chu at emc2170@tc.columbia.edu.