

Green Box ABA

Parent Newsletter



For most families, “Back to School” means something different this year. You might not be shopping for a new backpack or “back to school” clothes. Instead, you might be cleaning out a corner of the dining room to fit a desk and work area for virtual school.

And we know that you are receiving lots of information from the school system and teachers. Throw in the multitude of articles, blogs, and Facebook posts loaded with advice. Sifting through it all is time- and energy-consuming at a time when you might have even less of those things than usual.

So, we have sifted through and, on the following pages, we highlight the tips that we think are particularly useful for making virtual school successful for children with autism.

Yes, they are “do-it-yourself” tips and you may say to yourself “well, that sounds like an awesome idea, but we don’t have the time/space/resources/energy for that.”



Which is why we want you to know that **you are not in this alone.**

Your ABA team is here to help you work through the challenges ahead. Talk to your Behavior Analyst. Let us give you the guidance, tools, and support you and your child may need. We know that their teacher feels the same; they are working very hard to find ways to make learning successful in this environment.

We are in this together and it is going to be a great school year!

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September 2020

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**MARK YOUR
CALENDAR!**

FREE Parent Workshops Fall 2020

Understanding The Autism Diagnosis

September 19, 9-10am via Zoom

To Tell or Not To Tell: Talking With Your Child About Their Autism Diagnosis

October 3, 9-10am via Zoom

Helping Siblings Understand Autism

October 17, 9-10am via Zoom

Grandma, Grandpa, and Others: Educating and Including Your Extended Family & Friends

Saturday, October 31, 9-10am via Zoom





The “classroom” will look different, and that means that you will have to think about school differently, too.

Back-to-School—Virtual Edition

When schools closed this spring and then reopened remotely, there had been relatively little time for everyone to prepare for such a huge shift in instruction. The new format presented challenges for many children. As you prepare for virtual school this fall,” you may be concerned that there will be similar challenges.

And it is true that there will be challenging times. Remember that your child may be stressed, tired, confused, and out of practice with the school routine. And your child may have difficulty with skills necessary to be successful in the virtual format. What to do? Don’t *lower* your expectations for your child and the school year. *Manage* them. Here are some tips:

Create a good workspace. This is on all of the “tips” blogs, but it is especially true for special needs students. You know those issues many of us have working from home? The need to set up a workspace for ourselves because otherwise the line between home and work gets blurred. Yep. That. Only even more so for our kids who may have communication challenges, need for routines, and so on. Having a good, designated workspace will help your child get into a “school mindset” when in that area.

- **Set up a quiet area.** Find a neutral space to set up a desk or table and make sure it has the technology and tools they need.

- **Be flexible about the work area.** Create a space for breaks. Make it comfy.

Create a schedule. The school is going to provide you with one during instructional time, but you may need to make alterations or be more specific about what happens during the breaks. Your schedule should start with a morning routine. As with the workspace, this gives the cue that this is a “school day.” You may need to use timers, including visual timers, to help keep things on track.

Make sure to include movement. It might not seem physically effortful but sitting in front of a screen can be surprisingly tiring. And some of our kids *really* need to move! So, find ways during their scheduled breaks to give them movement time. Be sure to get out and move around outdoors. Fresh air is so good for the mind and the soul!

Work with your IEP team. If you have not already done so, contact, and ideally meet, with your child’s IEP team to discuss what strategies and tools the school can put into place to support virtual learning.

Communicate with the teachers. The good news is that most of you already have an established relationship with your child’s Special Ed teacher. But if that’s not already the case, make sure to start that now! Establish an open line of

Back to School (continued)

communication about what is working and what is not working in the virtual environment. Provide feedback and suggestions. And give the teacher the chance to understand the best way to teach your child in this format.

Work with teachers to identify learning supports for the virtual learning environment. Talk-to-text (transcription) software can help when typing is difficult. Closed-captioning can help children who have auditory processing challenges. Special education and assistive technology specialists should be able to help identify technology supports.

Provide motivation. When the learning environment itself is more challenging – being at home, sitting in front of a computer, needing to focus on images on a crowded screen, presentation and pacing of instruction is different, and so forth – most of our children will need some motivation to participate and learn. And that’s okay. Remember, this is different and challenging and we should reward them when they meet the challenge.

- **Set them up for success.** Make sure that you start with small, reasonable expectations. For example, don’t expect a child who has never successfully managed 15 minutes of virtual instruction time to participate for an entire 45-minute lesson. Start by providing motivation for 15 minutes and work up to the full lesson time.

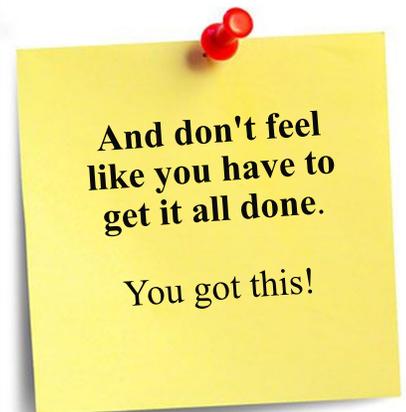
- **Identify what you want them to do and let them know.** There is nothing wrong with telling your child what you expect; for example, “if you pay attention to the teacher until the timer goes off, we’ll have a dance party during the break.”

- **If your child does well with token systems, use one!** Tokens earned across the day or across the week should lead to awesome stuff!

- **For big rewards, use celebrations.** You don’t need boxes filled with toys from Amazon delivered daily. Some of the best rewards are celebrations – family movie night on Friday, staying up late on the weekend, getting to pick what is for dinner, helping you make a special dessert. Use your creativity and your child’s interests to pick your celebrations.

- **Mix it up.** When you give the same reward too often, it can lose its appeal. Pay attention to what will motivate your child *this time* and then use that.

- **Limit screens.** Your child is already spending a lot of time in front of the screen for school. So, try to use motivators that aren’t screen time. And if you do need to use screen time, pick a different screen, like a mobile phone.



And this

Communication

To make sure that your needs and questions are addressed in an appropriate and timely manner, please use the following guide:

General questions about services:

Main Office: greenboxaba@gmail.com; 571-297-4308

Cancellations:

Contact your therapists and BCBA/BCaBA

Questions/issues related to copays/invoices:

Main Office: greenboxaba@gmail.com; 571-297-4308

Clinical Administration:

Required testing

Service authorizations

Clinical Assistant: tmrae@greenboxaba.com; 571-297-4308

Scheduling:

Scheduling Specialist: msauter@greenboxaba.com; 571-297-4308

Clinical and behavioral concerns:

Your BCBA

