

Fear not parents: Kids can learn lots while at home, expert says

May 21 2020, by Dan Dakin



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As parents adjust to the announcement that in-school classes will not resume in Ontario for the rest of the school year, a Brock University expert says several key steps can be taken to keep kids learning until the

end of June and throughout the summer.

Associate Professor of Educational Studies Debra Harwood says it's necessary for [parents](#) to start with what kids need most.

"I think what's important is remembering the basics of what children need, such as the sense of belonging within family, safety, and mental health and well-being," she says.

With these key parameters at the forefront of any learning objective, Harwood believes the best outcomes can come through four simple steps:

- Provide structure and consistency to the day. Knowing what to predict and providing a [daily routine](#) can help children learn more effectively.
- Take lots of time for talking. Social interactions facilitate attachment and a sense of self as well as foundational language learning skills.
- Set up project time. You can think of projects that can be undertaken throughout a day, or the entire week.
- Make time for play. Ample time for play, both unstructured and supported by parents, fosters creativity, problem-solving and autonomy.

As outdoor temperatures climb, Harwood says the spring and summer seasons provide an ideal [time](#) to take some lessons outside.

"The outdoors provides a wonderful prospect for endless learning and play for children, and it also offers holistic developmental benefits and much needed opportunities for mental wellness," she says. "Beyond the physical benefits of the outdoors, it also promotes language development, problem-solving skills, children's ability to assess risks,

increased concentration, improved self-esteem, and overall well-being.

Whether lessons are taking place at the kitchen table, in the toy room or around the backyard, Harwood says it's important for parents to recognize that learning is not exclusive to school or school-based activities.

"In general, we need a better appreciation for the fact that learning is happening everywhere especially within families—in every conversation, exchange, meal preparation, routine, backyard game [children](#) are learning," she says. "Focus on practical life skills and having fun."

Provided by Brock University

Citation: Fear not parents: Kids can learn lots while at home, expert says (2020, May 21)
retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-05-parents-kids-lots-home-expert.html>

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