

The Parent and Family Engagement Connection

Home & School



Volume 17
2020, 3rd Quarter



Skip Forsyth

Some things don't change. Winter gives way to spring. Bluebonnets bloom in March and April. Spring break is a welcome brief respite. Birds return to their spring and summer habitat. For high school seniors FAFSA forms need to be completed and submitted ASAP. College ACT and SAT testing is very soon. STAAR and End-of-Course testing is approaching. End of year activities – prom, fine arts presentations, yearbook, and graduation ceremonies are being planned.

Some things are changing. Virtual instruction will improve. Access to technology will increase. Masking up and physical distancing will be more accepted. Travel through busy airports and on crowded planes may be less desirable. Conferences and crowded events with unknown people may be less inviting. Training and meetings via Zoom will be more frequent. When possible, people will work from home more often. Washing hands thoroughly and using hand sanitizer regularly will become a new normal.

I think we would all agree that 2020 was a stressful year: political and social unrest, the coronavirus and mass unemployment, summer protests and riots, fall hurricanes, and then a renewed surge of Covid-19. Although it is a year we want to forget, the memories and emotions will linger. For our children various experiences of 2020 may be imprinted on their psyche for a lifetime.

One thing will not change, our children require faith, hope, and love.

- Our children need to be able to believe that our uniquely American political, economic, and educational systems provide opportunity for growth and success and secure our liberty.
- Our children need hope to cope with events, sometimes events of great magnitude, that are beyond their control. We don't want our children to become victims of fear. We need to reassure our children they will have many choices and opportunities to redirect their destiny.
- Our children need love. When our children arrive at school, they need to know they are safe and at least one adult genuinely cares for them. Children are feeling worries and bearing burdens, but our love for them can help lighten the load. Love is expressed in a variety of ways, and love is expressed consistently over time. Today, make the promise, that you will give to our children faith, hope, and love.



SIMPLE HUG



*There's something in a simple hug
that always warms the heart;
It welcomes us back home
and makes it easier to part.*



*A hug's a way to share the joy
and sad times we go through;
or just a way for friends to say
they like you cause you're you.*



*Hugs are meant for anyone
for whom we really care,
from grandma to your neighbor,
or a cuddly teddy bear.*



*A hug is an amazing thing
it's just the perfect way
to show the love we're feeling
but can't find the words to say.*



*It's funny how a little hug
makes everyone feel good,
In every place and language,
it's always understood.*



*And hugs don't need new equipment,
special batteries or parts
Just open up your arms
and open up your hearts.*



Author Unknown



Parents as Teachers During Remote Learning

Teachers are “coaches,” and parents are “teachers.” Although it is true that the parent is the first and most influential teacher in a child’s life, parents and families have been thrust into the role of educator. Parents are accustomed to helping their child with homework. Parents are not trained to teach algebra or sentence mapping or the water cycle. They are not trained to teach their child with dyslexia how to read. They are not trained how to provide meaningful enrichment for their gifted child. Parents, as you face challenges and change, be patient, be persistent, and be flexible.



Adjusting to Change

Explain:

- Explain to your child why this is happening while providing comfort.
- Be honest and clear with your child.
- Share your concerns with your child and allow them to share with you as well.
- Reassure your child, we are all in this together.

Plan:

- Work with your child to create a plan.
- Create expectations together.
- Allow time for your child to connect with teachers or classmates through phone calls, email, or video conference.

This Is a Process:

- You will not see results overnight.
- Allow you and your child a grace period to adapt to new changes. Be flexible.
- Allow yourself time to become accustomed with these changes.
- Children will also be learning new routines and schedules.
- Troubleshoot what is not working best with your child.

Challenges for Parents and Families:

Frustrations may arise and mistakes will happen during this time.

- It is okay to have moments that are not okay.

You already have a very busy schedule.

- Build brief breaks (“me time”) into the day.

Teaching and learning at home can be very stressful.

- Be kind to yourself.

You may feel overwhelmed and under-prepared.

- Focus on areas you are comfortable with and can prepare for.
- Do not be afraid to ask for help, with anything and everything!

Stay connected to family, friends, and support groups.

- This is a positive way to relieve stress and learn from one another.

You may have several children needing access to limited technology.

- Advise your teachers and schedule the technology the best you can.
- Seek technology advice and resources from your school and community.

You may feel worry about your family’s health, or finances, or your child lagging behind or losing focus with their schoolwork, etc.

- Take care of yourself—family first.
- Each child has a unique learning style and learns at a different pace.
- Seek clarity for assignments from the teacher.

Continued on next page

For more information, please contact your Regional ESC Title I, Part A Contact or the Title I, Part A Parent and Family Engagement Statewide Initiative at t1pfe@esc16.net

Parents as Teachers During Remote Learning - Continued

Communication

Parents and families:

- Keep open lines of communication.
- Review school policies on communication procedures.
- Provide feedback.

Child:

- Let your child know how they are doing.
- Highlight their strengths for the day or week and celebrate achievements AND genuine effort!
- Discuss the areas that may need work.
- Create a plan with your child to strengthen those areas.
- Ask your child how you can better assist them moving forward.

Teachers:

- Share with teachers what worked well this week, as well as what did not go as planned.
- Work together to implement procedures that may help your child's learning.

Schools:

- Communicate with your school clearly and frequently.
- Reach out for support with the following:
 - ◇ Child motivation
 - ◇ Well-being
 - ◇ Educational support
 - ◇ Resources: basic needs and/or school supplies

Continuing

Compassionate Leadership:

- At school, your child looks to their teachers as leaders in their education.
- At home you are both the parent and their first teacher.
- Demonstrate compassion to your child through their learning process.
- Your child's well-being will always come first, and then success will follow in their education.
- Provide safety and comfort to your child. They may not remember the curriculum they studied, but they will remember that they felt loved, supported, and cared for.

Motivation:

- Consider rewards for your child as they accomplish daily/weekly goals, such as: extra free time/TV time.
- Build time in the schedule for breaks.
- You are taking on a big responsibility, remember to reward yourself as well.

Keep Learning Going:

- Change will continue. Frustrations will come and go. Encourage students and families to keep learning.
- Access resources for fun and interactive learning opportunities outside of the child's weekly curriculum, like virtual field trips.
- Even an evening walk or bike ride through a park can be a learning experience for your child.
- Become involved in community organizations or activities as a way to explore and grow.
- Participate in the community to meet new families and possibly gain new cultural experiences.

Culture

School vs. Home Atmosphere:

- Households and needs will vary greatly. Make your space and time work for your family. Not all learning spaces and schedules will look the same, and that is okay.
- As teaching and learning from home takes place reach out to your campus administrators for resources to support your child's achievement.
- Remote learning should not create an extra financial burden on your family. Reach out to your school, for supplies if needed.
- Work with the school to find alternatives to technology needs or to access resources within your community.

Resources

TEA Covid-19 Support and Guidance— <https://tinyurl.com/TEA-Covid-19-Support>

USDE Covid-19 Support—www.ed.gov/coronavirus?src=feature

Tips for Caregiver of Students with Disabilities—<https://tinyurl.com/Children-with-Disabilities>

CDC Parent Checklist—<https://tinyurl.com/CDC-Parent-Checklist>

Covid-19 Parenting Tips in Worldwide Languages—<https://www.covid19parenting.com/>

Teaching and Learning at Home—<https://tinyurl.com/Region-16>

Coping During Covid-19—<https://tinyurl.com/parent-guide-for-covid>

Multilingual Family Toolkit—<https://tinyurl.com/yynjr244>

Parents As Teachers PPT with Video— https://www.esc16.net/page/title1swi_Teach_Learn_at.home_PPT.video

How the Free and Reduced Lunch Application Affects School Funding

The Free and Reduced Lunch Application can impact your school's Title I, Part A funding. 2020 has been a challenging year for all of us. Thankfully, USDA has extended the Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option through June 30, 2021 to assist those schools in communities where in-person schooling has not been deemed a safe option yet. However, schools must still be diligent about getting the Free and Reduced Lunch Application completed for all students to avoid decreases to future Title I, Part A funding. Here are some facts to consider and help you understand why completing this application process is so vitally important to your school.



- ✓ TEA has provided some flexibility in reporting free and reduced-price lunch data. See the FAQs on the TEA Coronavirus website. <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/health-safety-discipline/covid/coronavirus-covid-19-support-and-guidance>
- ✓ The Free and Reduced Lunch Application determines whether a student receives free or reduced cost meals, and it also affects a school's Title I, Part A funding.
- ✓ If the application isn't completed or is filled out incorrectly, it must be coded as "student paid" which is read by USDE as a student who doesn't meet eligibility even if that student truly does qualify for free and reduced lunches.
 - ◇ This directly impacts students and families who may not receive free or reduced cost meals.
 - ◇ This also impacts campuses that are designated Title I schoolwide but now may be under the threshold for having a schoolwide Title I designation when they will be required to shift to Title I targeted assistance only. As a result, students who previously benefited from the programs and services these funds provided will no longer receive them. This federal funding pays for meals at the school, and it can also be used to pay salaries for teachers to help students and to purchase things like computers and other needed equipment to help improve the quality of student education.
- ✓ Field A in Step 2 of the application, which requests a parent or guardian social security number, is the field that is most commonly left incomplete or filled out incorrectly. There are families who may be hesitant or reluctant to complete the application, but completing the application is in the best interest of your child and the school. If you are unsure about the Free and Reduced Lunch Application, talk to a school staff person who is knowledgeable about this program and its value to your child and school.
- ✓ Free and Reduced Lunch Application instructions are available. If you need assistance completing the application contact a trained staff person to help fill out paperwork and to assist with follow up. Some schools have the option to complete the application online. Applications need to be completed, corrected, and entered in a timely manner.

It is important schools remain diligent in completing this process. If you have any questions about how to execute this process in your community due to COVID, please contact your child's school for guidance. Thank you all you do to help your children and the children in Texas.

If you want to know more about the Free and Reduced Lunch urgency, go to Free/Reduced Lunch... **CLICK HERE**



ACCESSING TRANLATED LANGUAGE CAPTIONS IN YOUTUBE:



Be sure the red CC icon is underlined then click on the settings icon to the right.



In settings, open the drop down box for subtitles and click it to open another layer.



Then click on "English (auto-generated)" to open a dropdown box for language selection.



Choose your selected language in the dropdown list and the captions will appear in that language.

Parents is a Storyboard in English and Spanish

- Educators is a Video
- Very soon the Storyboard will be available as a YouTube which will allow the animated video to be viewed in multiple languages:
 - ◇ Click the "CC" icon on bottom right of screen
 - ◇ Next click on "Settings" icon at bottom right of screen
 - ◇ Click "Subtitles/CC"
 - ◇ Click "Auto-translate" and select the desired language

ANXIETY During Covid-19 Pandemic

Anxiety is a normal emotion to uncertainty and serves as a signal to pay attention so we can protect ourselves from things that may harm us. Anxiety alerts us. It prompts us to adapt. For many of us, the coronavirus and the COVID-19 illness make for a very uncertain future.

If you feel stressed about coronavirus, you're not alone. [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) has had ripple effects into almost every aspect of our lives. With schools and workplaces closed for now, it's affected the way we live every day. So much has changed in such a short time. It's natural to feel [anxiety](#) when we face a crisis, the unknown, or sudden change. It's a normal reaction to feel the need for safety, certainty, predictability, and control.

What Is Anxiety?

Anxiety is your body's natural response to stress. It's a feeling of fear or apprehension about what's to come. Anxiety is a normal and often healthy emotion, but when we're overwhelmed by anxiety, it can do harm. The American Psychological Association (APA) [defines](#) anxiety as "an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased [blood pressure](#)."

Symptoms of Anxiety

Anxiety feels different depending on the person experiencing it. Feelings can range from butterflies in your stomach to a racing heart. You might feel out of control, like there is a disconnect between your mind and body. Sometimes you feel too much worry, or you can't stop worrying, and as a result it is difficult to focus and think clearly. Other symptoms might include:

- Nervousness, restlessness, or being tense
- Rapid or increased heart rate
- Increased or heavy sweating
- Have trouble relaxing
- Have trouble sleeping
- Feelings of fear, danger, panic, or dread
- Rapid breathing
- Trembling or muscle twitching
- Muscle tension
- Easily fatigued, weakness, and lethargy

Self-help Suggestions

Lifestyle changes can be an effective way to relieve some of the stress and anxiety you and your children feel every day. Most of the natural "remedies" consist of caring for your body, participating in healthy activities, and eliminating unhealthy ones. These include:

- Get enough sleep
- Eat a healthy diet
- Stay active and exercise
- Maintain a routine as best you can
- Connect with family and friends
- Deep breathing exercises and relaxation techniques
- Focus on the positive and be thankful
- Avoid caffeine, tobacco products, and alcohol
- Go outdoors – sunshine, fresh air, enjoy nature's beauty

Ways to Support Your Child During Covid-19

- **Talk with and listen intently to your child or teen** about the COVID-19 outbreak.
- **Answer questions** and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- **Reassure your child or teen** that they are safe. Let them know it is okay if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- **Limit your family's exposure to news coverage** of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- **Try to keep up with regular routines.** If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- **Be a role model.** Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.

IMPORTANT! Know when to reach out for help. If your anxiety seems overwhelming — if you're having trouble sleeping, eating, or interacting in the ways you normally would — get help. Most behavioral health providers are offering [telehealth visits](#) during this time and can schedule with new patients. Don't be afraid to reach out for help during this stressful time!

Here's what you need to know about the 2021–22 FAFSA

October is here which means the FAFSA has arrived. This year, for the 2021-2022 school season, the FAFSA has a few updates. While there aren't as many changes as previous years, it's still important to know what is different.

\$0 EFC Threshold Increase

A major component of the FAFSA is calculating EFC—or Estimated Family Contribution. This is the amount of money a family is expected to pay out of pocket for their child's education. (Note: it is an **estimate**, not a definitive number your family will necessarily have to pay). Depending on the calculated EFC, the FAFSA will the student a certain amount in aid or loans.

Previously, the income threshold for an automatic \$0 EFC was \$26,000. Meaning that if a family earned an income lower than \$26,000, they weren't expected to pay anything out of pocket and would qualify for more financial aid.

For the 2021–2022 school year, the FAFSA has increased that threshold to \$27,000.

Ready to File the FAFSA?

The 2021–2022 FAFSA certainly isn't an overhaul of the form—to the relief of many. All the same, it's important to note any changes and adjust your answers accordingly. After all, it's vital to enter the most relevant information so you can get the aid you're owed.

If, for some reason, you submit an error or your financial situation changes after you file the FAFSA, be sure to correct the information as soon as you can.

The effort you put into filing the FAFSA will be well worth it. Federal grants, loans, and access to the work study program can help put students through college. Remember, federal aid is typically more flexible than private loan options.

If it's your first time filing, or you want a refresher, be sure to check out our [question-by-question FAFSA guide!](#)

[2021-2022 FAFSA Updates You Should Know About! \(collegeraptor.com\)](#)



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The Parent and Family Engagement Connection

The Parent and Family Engagement Connection is posted on our website four times a year for parents and educators of Texas. This newsletter is available in Spanish, Vietnamese, German, Tagalog and Korean.



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