



## The Stakes are Higher with the Second Round of Remote Learning

By Educator Barnes – August 11, 2020

My fourth-grade twin sons attend school in Washington Township. Washington Township decided to reopen schools remotely for all students. Remote learning is different than it was

when schools closed back in March. The stakes are higher and more is being demanded of students.

Last spring, remote work was optional for a few weeks. Then, it became mandatory, but there weren't live lessons. Parents complained about the lack of teacher interaction. Even though there were office hours, it wasn't enough to keep students engaged. This situation is not unique to Washington Township. This situation was similar across the United States.

Now, my sons have a set schedule, and they are earning letter grades unlike in the spring where they were assigned a 3, 2, or 1. Although we set up the learning space, prepped our sons, we still had some roadblocks.

Remote learning requires some autonomy and motivation from students. Our sons have two live sessions a day. In the morning there is a longer session from 8:15 until 9:15 a.m. which includes morning meeting, a Second Step social-emotional learning lesson, and a reading mini-lesson. Then, my sons are supposed to return for a live mini-math lesson at 10:15 a.m. Almost every day when 10:15 a.m. rolled around, my sons missed math. During that time, I was in a meeting on Zoom. Many of those times, I was leading the meeting.

Since my sons are twins, who are in the same class this year, they tried to be slick. One day, I got out of my meeting at 10:25 a.m. I noticed one of my sons was on the computer, but his brother wasn't. When I asked why my son was not on the computer, he said that his brother was attending class for both of them. Later, I found out his brother did not attend class but was playing games instead.

If my own children, who are the sons of an educator, are on the struggle bus, I can only imagine the struggles other parents are facing. I am not going to lie. I went off about math. Then, I felt guilty. Real talk. That was a pretty cool idea to alternate who was going to class ... but don't tell my sons I said that.

Later, at dinner, I asked them why it was a struggle for them to transition to math. After the live reading session, they are supposed to work on reading assignments independently until the live math session. They mentioned in school the teacher would say there were 10 more minutes until science or whatever the subject was, or there was a timer. Now, we have shifted to using a timer that goes off two minutes before the live class. That has made all the difference.

The other action I took was to go over their data. On Monday, they took the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment. Before the assessment, I asked them what they believed their reading levels would be. One said it would stay the same and the other said it would improve one level. Both of their levels stayed the same. For several years my sons have been two grade levels above in reading, so it isn't the end of the world. However, the reality is they did not grow at all despite the fact that they read almost daily.

What about students who were already behind and did not grow? What about students who didn't stay the same, but have now fallen behind? As a school administrator, this is what keeps me up at night, every night? I want all students, including my sons, to grow academically.

This is why I am concerned. I'm hoping the adjustment made this time for remote learning will ensure that all students are growing academically. To make sure that is the case, parents have to do what they can to help their children to be as engaged as possible and to be on time to live lessons. Our children's futures depend on it.