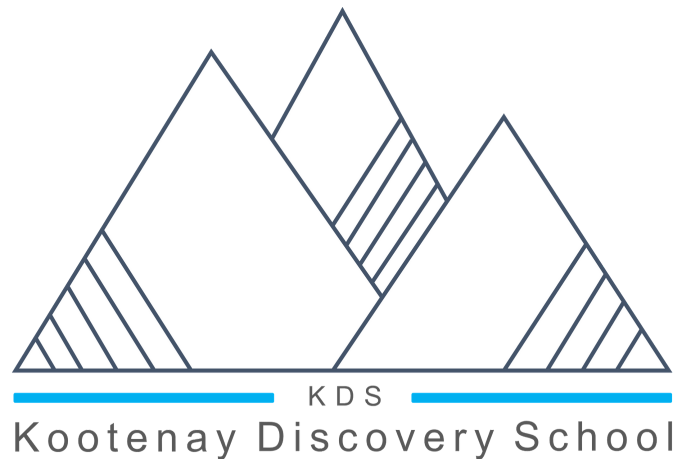


KOOTENAY DISCOVERY SCHOOL



A parents' guide to
supporting your student's
online learning

This guide was designed to introduce families to the KDS Distributed Learning (DL) model.

The DL model allows for much more freedom than you may be used to. It's important to remember that this freedom comes with added responsibility, on students and their parents/guardians.

If you are one of the lucky few who has a student that can handle complete freedom and is fully intrinsically motivated – congratulations, you can skip this guide!

For everyone else, this guide will introduce you to structures that will support your student in their learning.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE:

Mindset & Purpose: Why?

Environment: Where?

Goals: What?

Routine: How?

The Parents' role

MINDSET & PURPOSE

KEY TAKEAWAY: If you have a strong “Why,” it will take care of the “where, what and how”!

Is working on school a constant battle and source of stress in your household? Solve this problem by asking your child to follow this (not so) simple two-step process!

STEP 1: Ask your student: “What do you desire? What do you want to do with their time?”

STEP 2: Ask: “Is what you desire worthwhile? What will it lead to? What will you become?”

Your child must be able to justify their choices with parents and teachers. If they can’t justify their choice, go back to step 1.

Students should be treated as people capable of making their own choices. However, they don’t know what they don’t know!

If given the choice to do whatever they want, most students will not consider the long-term implications of their choices - they will select the option that is fun and easy. This is normal! It is our responsibility to show them the importance of working towards something of value, to make them question “is what I desire worthwhile? Who am I becoming?”

Of course, even by grade 12 it’s not reasonable to expect students to have a full answer to these questions, or to “lock” them into their response. However, without some sense of who we wish to be or become, it’s difficult to judge whether what we’re doing today has value.

WHY?

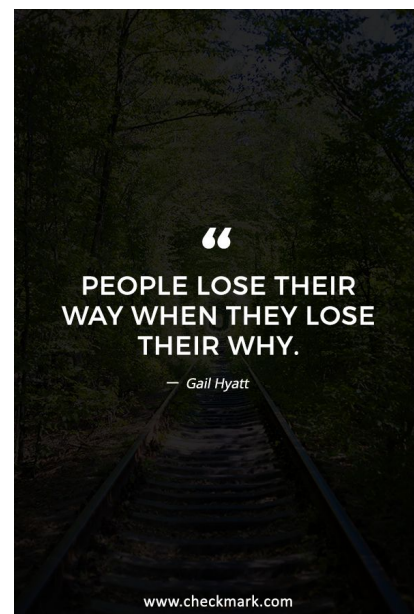
This brings us to the more concrete, every day question students ask: Why am I learning this [math/science/English/etc. content] today?

If your student ever responds, “because the teacher is making me” then STOP!

Jumping through all the hoops, checking off all the boxes and “getting it done” ≠ learning

Learning is not always fun or easy, but it should always be worthwhile. This requires each student to be an active participant in their own learning. Otherwise, what’s the point?

This may be the hardest “switch to flip” in your student’s understanding of school. But once it’s flipped, the sky’s the limit!



ENVIRONMENT

KEY TAKEAWAY: Put yourself in the right headspace by putting yourself in the right workspace

When a student is studying at home, it is important to create a space that is designated for work and free from distractions (ie. putting a cell phone on airplane mode and putting it out of sight!). Find a space in your home that your child doesn't use for other purposes, such as eating, sleeping or watching TV. It's better if this space is not your child's bedroom, but we realize that is not always possible.

Keep the environment simple. Don't have a lot of visual distractions. Set up a desk, making sure that there is a comfortable chair and that the keyboard and monitor are at the correct height. You should have your child aim to work for about 50 minutes without a break, so you need to be comfortable!

WHERE?

What about music? Research indicates that listening to music while you work helps you focus. However, it must be familiar music, and it's better if the music has no lyrics.

For a good overview and links to the research:

- <https://www.healthline.com/health/does-music-help-you-study>
- <https://www.inc.com/scott-mautz/science-says-you-get-astonishing-productivity-boosts-by-listening-to-music-just-follow-these-6-rules.html>

It is difficult to work from home 100% of the time. If the weather's nice, try working outside! If a family member also works from home, try working in the same room. You may be able to find quiet spaces in your community that are conducive to studying, such as the library.

You can also always come by KDS!

We have an expectation that your child will come into KDS and complete work (at least) twice per week.



BLEND ED LEARNING MODEL

WHERE?

As you are seeing from this guide, there is a steep learning curve in the DL environment! Traditionally, the student success rate for completing an online course is 20-30%. Students require a lot of support to reinforce the behaviours and mindset required for success.

Thus, there is an expectation that full-time students will come into KDS twice per week, for approximately 2.5 hours each session, to participate in our blended program (Mon-Tues, Thurs-Fri; exact days and times depend on your student's cohort and will be communicated separately).

Students will be provided with approximately one hour per session of guided content. The remainder of their time in the building will be spent working individually, collaborating with other students, and/or meeting with their teacher one-on-one. For September, the guided content will be focused on Career Education, which strongly connects to the contents of this guide (eg. goal setting, inquiry mindset).

The face-to-face interaction is designed to overcome the shortcomings of a fully on-line model, by providing:

- One-on-one interaction with teachers
- Social interaction with peers
- Ability to meet learning outcomes in alternative ways (eg. discussion)
- Structured environment
- Access to learning resources
- Support with technology, course navigation and course content

In addition, we will be organizing community field trips on Wednesdays, to support and reinforce learning outcomes. If you are interested in joining us on these community excursions, please contact your child's teacher.



GOALS

KEY TAKEAWAY: Focus on right now to build towards tomorrow.

This is where the “why” from section 1 of this guide translates it into concrete tasks.

Procrastination is your student's worst enemy, but it's easy for students to procrastinate if they don't have a clear sense of what they should be working towards. ANY personally meaningful goal is better than NO goal! Your child's teacher will work with them to give them school credit for anything that connects to the greater purpose.

Three steps to achieving a goal:

1. Make sure it is S.M.A.R.T. (If you don't yet know what this is, your child will learn all about it at KDS!)
2. Have your child write down what they will do, when they will do it, and what they will need at that time
3. Get them to tell you their plan before they do it; and get them to tell you how it went afterwards



What?

When your child starts a course at KDS, all of the content can be seen at once. This can be overwhelming! A person's working memory can only hold a limited amount of information at one time. Overloading with tasks/information not only causes stress, but also is physically impossible: the excess information simply will not “fit” in a person's brain!

It's good to have a sense of overall goals and purpose (step 1 above). However, this can't be kept in a person's head at all times. It is important to “chunk” goals by breaking them down: what needs to be completed this week to reach the big goal? What needs to be completed today to reach the weekly goal? What needs to be completed right now? After doing this, only focus on the right now, with the confidence that the overall plan will work out!

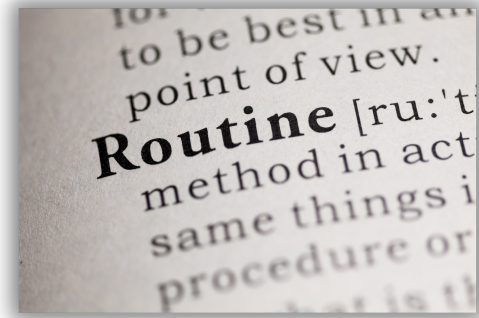
Research shows that making a detailed schedule, including what will be done and when it will be done, enables people to reach their goals (step 2 above). Make it visual. Create some kind of physical check list and schedule to keep track of daily goals. Set aside specific times to work each day, and write down what will be completed during that time: eg. "from 10-12 complete assignment 1.2." A little brain trick is to give yourself two tasks to complete. If your child gets tired/bored of the first task, have them move on to the second.

We have sample schedules posted at the start of each course. They can be a useful starting place for planning what to accomplish in a day.

When something's accomplished, have your child cross it off the list and tell someone! Their brain will release endorphins and they will feel good about what they've accomplished.

HOW?

ROUTINE



KEY TAKEAWAY: Humans are creatures of habit.

Human brains have evolved to recognize structure, patterns and routine. It's such an ingrained part of our brains that not following a routine negatively affects your physical and mental health, as well as your sleep quality.

Creating a routine means fewer conscious decisions need to be made each day, which leaves more mental space for school work.



No one reaches their goals 100% of the time. We all struggle and run into unforeseen difficulties. It's ok! If your child feels demotivated, switch things up: try a change of scenery, or a change of schedule. However, be sure to stick with the new routine, giving it a chance to become habit, before switching it up again.

Never hesitate to reach out to your child's teacher or school counsellor. We want your child to succeed and are here to support you in helping them do so.

Although you must find a routine that works for your family, here are some general guidelines that work for most:

- Every morning, have your child go through a routine AS IF they were leaving the house to go to school. Eg. eat breakfast, brush teeth, get dressed, go to designated workspace. This puts them in a headspace that will allow them to focus on their schoolwork.
- If you find your child unable to focus, get them to stop and take a break. Get away from the computer! Stretch. Have a drink of water and/or a snack. Get them to rest their brain so when they return to studying, they can re-focus. If they still can't focus, try again. Some days will be harder than others, especially if you're just establishing the routine. Don't give up!
 - After about 50 minutes, most people need a 10 minute break.
 - The younger the student, the shorter the time that can be spent before a break is needed. 15 minutes of work before a quick brain break is ok!
 - Set a timer at the start of the break. When the timer stops, return to work.
- Stay healthy (physically and mentally) by not neglecting the things and people your child loves.
 - Make time for things your child enjoys every day (other than school).
 - Ensure your child exercises for at least 30 minutes every day. See the PHE courses for ideas!

Allow enough time to adjust to a new routine. However, if your child can't follow it after a few weeks, change it!

PARENTS' ROLE

We won't sugarcoat it: Online school is a privilege. It requires access to a good internet connection and a reasonably new computer. We also find that the students who have the most success have a parent/guardian who can support the student at home during the day and facilitate their learning. If you cannot make this commitment, we strongly suggest you reconsider schooling with KDS.

That being said, we are here to support you as much as possible! Parents are our partners in this process. You are NOT expected to take on the burden of being your child's teacher! Also, resist the urge to do your child's work for them. The student must be the one doing the learning.

Families that have good results do two things:

1 Take interest in your student's day. Talk with them about their plans at the beginning of the day, and see how things are going at the end of the day.

Make sure you know what they are working on, what their goals are, and whether these goals are being achieved.

In general, humans need two things every day: a sense of joy, and a sense of accomplishment. Try to ask questions that get at these two feelings. They don't all have to be connected to school work! Students who have something in their life other than school that connects to these two feelings tend to be more successful in school.

Here is a link to a great article with questions and information on how to go about this:
<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/parents-fifteen-questions-replace-how-was-school-today-elena-aguilar>

If your student can't or won't answer questions like this, that is a problem! Let's work together to solve it!

2 Structure your student's day. A bit of stress and external pressure are positive for most people: it motivates us to complete tasks. The trick is to find the right balance for your family; we don't want every conversation about school leading to shouting and tears. It's not a failure to decide that KDS is not a good fit for your family.

Help your student structure their day by agreeing on regular times for study. In general, students should be aiming for 4-5 hours per day, 5 days per week. However, don't hesitate to make a schedule that works for your family. One family, where both parents did "4 on 4 off" shift work, made a schedule for their student that fit with theirs: when the parents were off, so was the student!

Another family's method: They made a deal - The student was expected to work for 5 hours per day; but if they worked well for 4, they got an hour off

- Mom would check in on where he was at in morning, at lunch (they had a scheduled lunch break) and then recheck after 4 hours.

Whatever schedule you negotiate, stick with it - routine is important.

All parents also have access to a "parent moodle account." This allows you to log into our website and monitor your student's progress and feedback from their teacher. You will also receive bi-weekly progress reports to your email address. As students often "overlook" the teacher's feedback, parents play an important role in directing their student to engage with and act on provided feedback.

If you ever feel out of the loop, contact your child's teacher!

"Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in, day out." Robert Collier

FEEDBACK FROM KDS STUDENTS

What would you tell a student just starting KDS?

Focus on one course at a time.

The courses look like a lot when you start; it's easy to feel overwhelmed until you break it down.

It gets easier once you learn the system.

Make a schedule!

Try to spend 4 hours per day on your schoolwork.

Focus on all the positive benefits of meeting your goals

Don't get in your own head; if you don't understand at first, don't freak out. Take a break, read it again, talk to someone else about it, get someone else to read it.

Make timelines that are longer than you really think, so you can exceed your goals

Google is your friend! It's ok to use sources beyond the course materials to help you understand something.

You should reach out to your teacher more than you think is necessary

The freedom is great, but you have to make yourself do the work.-

You can keep working on a concept until it sticks. You don't get lost, and can keep going from where you're at

Keep your parents in the loop. They can help motivate and organize you.

Some days will be hard, some days you will get a lot done. Push yourself on the good days! Give yourself space on the bad days.

Install an "auto-reader/text-to-speech" plug-in on your web browser. It will keep you going when you get tired of reading.

If you get stuck in a course, work on something else for a bit, like PHE. Or move on to the next concept and come back later.