

Some Help with Home School - Take a Walk

Disclaimer: I am a former k-12 teacher. I have never been involved in the homeschool movement which some people choose in place of sending their children to traditional schools. The term “Home School” as used here refers to the work that you will do with your children over the next few weeks during the quarantine.

Again, these ideas are not vetted by the homeschool movement. However, I was a public school teacher for 13 years, teaching 7th and 11th grades. I am National Board-certified in English/Language Arts for Adolescents and Young Adults. I hold an earned Ph.D. in Education.

The following advice is offered in a spirit of collaboration with directions from your children’s teachers.

-Jeanine A. Irons, Ph.D.

Guiding Thought: Layer learning with daily activities.

It is possible to work educational moments into things that you and your children may do from time to time anyway, such as taking a walk. Please use your best judgement and follow social distancing guidelines when you and your children are out walking.

A walk around the neighborhood can provide some fresh air and light exercise and can easily include some learning experiences.

The following information gives some ideas on how to incorporate some educational content into a neighborhood walk. You can easily include geography, art, vocabulary, spelling, handwriting, geometry, information recall, science, and/or civics experiences for children of various ages. You can pick and choose from the ideas provided and/or use your own ideas, based on factors you deem significant, such as your children’s ages.

Go on walks around the neighborhood with your children, maintaining social distance (6 feet) from others. Do not use or allow the children to use any technology during the walk, in order to focus on your surroundings and take a break from screens. [Physical exercise, multiple learning environments]

- While you are walking:
 - Look for signs of spring. [science]
 - Count deciduous trees. [science, math]
 - Count evergreen trees. [science, math]
 - When you get home, look up the trees and plants that you saw. [digital literacy]
 - What are their Latin names? [language]
 - What trees and plants are native to the area? [science]
 - Which are not? [science]
 - Name colors of houses and flowers [art, vocabulary]
 - Practice spelling the colors. [spelling, recalling information]
 - Look for shapes, Ex: squares, triangles, circles [geometry, vocabulary]
 - For older children, ask what kind of triangle (right, acute, obtuse, equilateral, scalene, or isosceles), and include additional shapes like rhombus, trapezoid, octagon, cylinder, and/or sphere

- Practice spelling the shapes. [spelling, vocabulary]
- Count the total number of houses that you pass and the number of houses you pass that have basketball goals visible in the yard. When you get home, calculate the percentage of houses that had basketball goals. You can do this with other things, too, like flowers blooming in the yard or double garage doors. [math] (special thanks to a colleague for this idea)
- Identify architectural features, Ex: columns, gables, bay windows. [architecture, vocabulary]
- Talk about/come up with personal definitions of what makes a neighborhood and what responsibilities neighbors have to each other. [civics, character]
- Which streets in the neighborhood run parallel? Which are perpendicular? (math)
- Practice spelling the names of the streets that you walk on. [spelling, memorization]
- Take a compass with you on one of your walks and use it to guide you as you walk North, South, East and West. [geography]
- Wear step counters if you have them. When you get home, look up how many steps each person should take per day and figure out what percentage of that amount they walked. Try to add some steps the next time that you walk. [math, health]
- Have the children memorize one or two addresses of people you know and trust in the neighborhood. When you get home, have them write a cheery note to people at those addresses and tell them some of the things they have been doing and learning in the last few days. Have them add a drawing if they would like. [handwriting, character, art, memorization]
- When you get back home, look at Syracuse on a digital or printed map together. If you have a printed map, consider allowing the children to hang it up on the wall. A colleague who taught social studies for over 30 years taught me that there can never be enough maps around for a child to see. They will learn lots by just looking at maps on the walls at random times.
 - Is your neighborhood north, south, east, or west of downtown?
 - Where is Onondaga Lake in relationship to your neighborhood?
 - What interstates run through/near Syracuse?
 - Two-digit, odd-numbered highways run North/South. Identify one on the map.
 - Two-digit, even-numbered highways run East/West. Identify one on the map.
 - Three-digit, odd-numbered highways are bypasses, usually around major cities. Is there one in the Syracuse area? Where?
 - Three-digit, even-numbered highways are spurs, usually going into major cities. Does Syracuse have one? Point it out.
 - Interstates are marked with blue on maps and state highways are marked with white. Find 3 state highways in/near Syracuse.
- On a paper or digital New York state map, trace the route from your house to other cities, Ex: Rochester, Buffalo, Albany, New York City, Ithaca [geography, map reading]