



The WHALE Study
Family Newsletter
September | 24th | 2021

Back to School is Cool

Most schools have resumed in-person education. During the first year or so of the pandemic, we reassured families not to over-emphasize academics at home. Kids learn through play and parents can casually reinforce and teach new skills on a daily basis (e.g., tying shoes, reading books). Now that we're in the second year of pandemic,

returning to school is more important than ever. Learning is like working muscles in your brain. After long periods of time of not routinely practicing cognitive and academic skills, those metaphorical muscles can become weak. It's time for children to resume regular practice of both cognitive and social skills!

Research has shown the kids who are suffering the most from the pandemic are those who were already struggling before (for example, those with intellectual, behavioral, and/or emotional challenges requiring extra attention or family support). Adult attention can be critical for kids' development yet even the most caring adult's time, energy, and patience is sparse amid pandemic conditions. With the return to in-person learning, kids can have caring adults dedicated to their well-being for several hours a day! In addition to behavioral and mental health support, children can access other important resources like nutritious meals and organized activities. This return to learning may come with some adjustment. Some kids may have been nervous, especially starting Kindergarten, but your reassurance can help. [See our [past newsletter](#) on preparing your child for the transition from remote to in-person learning.] Many children are not used to that much structure or interacting with kids or adults outside their family. You may have noticed your child(ren) feeling more exhausted as they are learning to balance these new (or forgotten) social and emotional skills, and new learning!

Some families continue to worry about the risk of COVID-19 for their unvaccinated children at schools or daycares for long periods of time. While we are excited for the return to in-person learning for our children, if/when temporary illnesses happen, please stay home and/or keep your children home as needed. Children can stay safest when CDC-recommended precautions are in place, but be prepared that your child *can* still contract COVID-19. In instances where children are exposed to or test positive for COVID-19, families are recommended to quarantine again. (Continued on page 2 below)

Check out the page below for [schooling during the pandemic](#) and [community resources](#)!

Click [here](#) to tell us what topics you want covered in future newsletters!



Please reach out if you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding The WHALE Study or the COVID-19 situation. Staff can be reached by call, text, or email: whalestudy@unc.edu | 919-914-0588
Find us on Twitter: [@circlelab_unc](#), Instagram: [circlelab_unc](#), and [Facebook](#)!
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This can be incredibly challenging to navigate while other resources (child care providers) can't be accessed. However, this isolation is important to prevent spread to others or classroom- and school-wide closures further delaying your child's return to in-person learning. Thankfully most of you are already familiar with strategies to keep your child engaged in remote or virtual learning until they can return to their friends and teachers safely, and we have more tips below!

REMINDERS

***Reminder:** Please refer your friends if they have a 4-6-year-old and you think they would be interested in participating in the WHALE study. For every eligible family that you refer to us, you will receive \$10! Email us at whalestudy@unc.edu or call/text us at 919-914-0588 with their information.*

SCHOOLING + COMMUNITY RESOURCES (CLICK BLUE LINKS)

- [Helpful tips for kids adjusting \(back\) to in-person school](#) from KidsHealth
- [How to help kids transition from remote to in-person school](#) from Washington Post
- ["The Children of Quarantine"](#) from The Cut (November 2020)
- ["How to make the most of online school"](#) from LA Times (September 2020)

HOUSING

- [Durham Continuum of Care \(CoC\)](#)
- Eviction Information: 216-965-5095
- [Durham Rescue Mission](#)
 - 919-688-9641
- [Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness](#)
- [Urban Ministries of Durham](#)
- [Durham County Social Services](#)
- [Orange County Social Services](#)
- [Wake County Social Services](#)

FOOD & GROCERIES

- [Wake County Public Schools Free Meals](#)
- [Durham County Public Schools Free Meals](#)
- [Orange County Food Resources](#)
- [Chapel Hill/Carrboro Schools](#)
- [TABLE](#)
- [Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina](#)
- [Wake County Food Resources](#)
- [No Kid Hungry NC](#) - Text FOODNC or COMIDA to 877-877 to receive information about 3 drive-thru or pickup sites with meals for kids closest to you

HEALTH & SAFETY

- [Compass Center for Women and Families](#)
 - 919-929-7122
- [Durham Crisis Response Center](#)
 - 919-403-9425
- [InterAct Family Safety and Empowerment Center](#)
 - 919-828-7501
- [Orange County Rape Crisis Center](#)
 - 866-935-4783 (call) , 919-504-5211 (text)
- [Freedom House](#)
 - 919-967-8844 (Crisis Unit, Chapel Hill)
 - 1-877-967-8844 (Mobile Service)
- [Suicide prevention lifeline](#): 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Hope4NC Helpline: 1-855-587-3463
- [Crisis Text Line](#): Text HOME to 741 741

CHILDCARE

- [NC Hotline for Critical Workers Seeking Child Care Options](#)
- [Covid Childcare Co-op Creator](#)
- [Covid Urgent Childcare](#)
- [Child Care Services Association](#)

LEARNING

- [Scholastics Learn at Home](#)
- [Khan Academy](#)
- [PBS Kids](#)
- [CDC Tips for Talking with Children about COVID-19](#)