

Quality recommendations for distance education in schools

#studentrights

1

Students have the right to receive daily support from their teachers for their learning.

2

Students have the right to talk to their teacher and receive verbal feedback on their work.

3

Students have the right to feel part of the classroom community.

A key quality factor for learning in basic education is the interaction between teacher and student. In distance learning, interaction is in many ways more challenging, but at least as important as in classroom work. Working from home, students must feel that they are supported by the teacher in their daily schoolwork and that they are still members of their classroom community.

Teaching can be carried out over the network either synchronously, i.e. simultaneously, or asynchronously, i.e. independently of time and place. In asynchronous teaching, the teacher sends assignments and records educational videos, and the student does the exercises at a time that suits him or her best. In both cases, the students must receive support and feedback related to their learning. In asynchronous work, feedback can be based on a jointly constructed matrix, provision of comments, or video or audio feedback, for instance.

Distance learning benefits from online teaching, but it is advisable in basic education to use plenty of assignments that get the learners on the move and off the computer screen. For example, an assignment might consist of revision of adjectives by producing a video clip of your own pet. Electronic documentation of fine art, biology posters or work in your exercise book can also be done successfully by taking photos with your mobile phone. Most comprehensive school students in Finland have access to an online environment such as Teams, Google Classroom, Qridi, Peda.net, or the like that can be used to submit the assignments.

#parentrights

4

Parents have the right to learn about the plans for schoolwork in time.

5

Parents have the right to be informed about the success of their child's work.

Similarly to the student, the parent has the right to be informed about the plans for the student's schoolwork and working from home. Although teachers do have the responsibility for the education of children and adolescents, the role of the parent(s) is very important during the distance learning period. Many families are making adjustments for distance learning and teleworking involving multiple children and adults. Therefore, it is important that homes are made in good time aware of the assignments for the next few days, including the need for any materials and equipment.

In addition to the teaching episodes, the teacher must be available to the students and parents during the school hours. The clearest approach for all is that the teachers announce their daily online hours, during which they can be reached over the network or by phone. There can also be a centralized phone answering service for teachers in the school. This allows the student to ask about the specifics of assignments or to ask for advice on how to do them. This kind of instant communication also reduces the isolation between schools and homes and creates a sense of security for all the involved parties.

#teacherrights

6

Teachers have the right to professional support and peaceful conditions for teaching.

7

Teachers have the right to feel part of the school community.

The main job of a teacher is to teach the students. It is not up to the teacher to provide technical support, as this kind of support must be organized by the school or education provider. Students, parents and teachers need to know who they can turn to for technical questions.

The teacher also needs professional support. It is good practice for schools to schedule weekly meetings on an online platform and get prepared for them with a planning team so that the agenda can be shared online before the meeting. The meetings promote school management and professional development, and create a space for discussion on acute issues. At the same time, they provide an opportunity for free-form brainstorming, birthday parties and home office work-out, if you like. Promoting a sense of community is very important in working from home as well.

Background material: : [Edutopia. What Teachers in China Have Learned in the Past Month](#). 20.3.2020. Julkaistu 13.3.2020.

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