5 Positive Behavior Incentive Strategies for Remote Learning
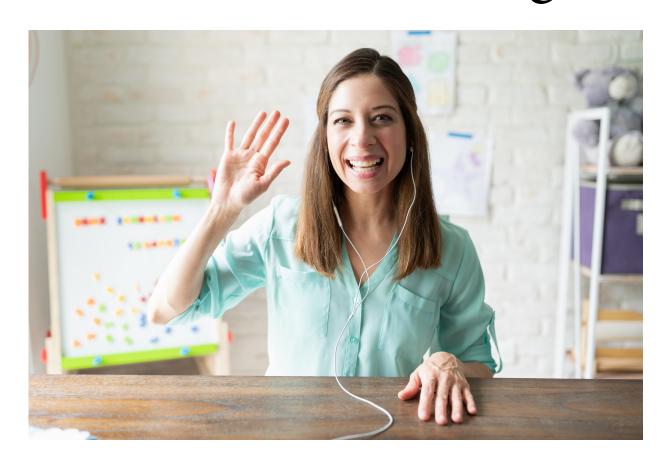
Kids may struggle to stay focused on their work when their teacher is "on screen" instead of "in class" with them, but there are a few things that you can do to bridge this gap. And don't worry—you don't have to take on the role of a strict disciplinarian—a positive and encouraging approach is actually the most effective!

No matter how awesome you are at facilitating your students' lessons and correcting their work, there is no denying how different teaching has become without the human or "live" touch that is so vital for young learners' success.

So, how do you keep your kids on task and make sure they're not playing games or spacing out all day? Here are 5 Positive Behavior Incentive Strategies (PBIS) for Remote Learning that will make it so much easier:

1) Require a Distraction-Free Space at Home
When you start off by making sure all of your students have a space conducive to focusing, you have already won half the battle. Model for your kids (and their parents!) how to create a learning area free of distractions by example. Then talk about why this matters so much, and then assign it. Use a simple checklist to help guide and assess the learning spaces.

Keeping equity in mind, emphasize that a specific room just for school time is not "the only way"; in fact, a desk in the corner works well, as long as it's away from the hustle and bustle. It should hold only what the learner needs at any given moment throughout the school day. A child's bedroom or a family room is not always the best area for remote learning—sometimes a table in the parents' bedroom or another unexpectedly quiet and clear area makes it easiest to stay on track or limit distractions.

2) Stick to a Routine
Kids thrive on a predictable daily schedule. Knowing what to expect empowers them to succeed. Create an easy and fun morning routine to get started. For example, leave everyone unmuted so they can all greet each other before a chime or alarm rings, and then mute them before you begin making announcements and introducing the lesson.

Keep a sense of structure throughout the rest of the learning time, such as always doing math first. Also, don't forget to incorporate community building into your daily schedule, like a set time to share appreciations or acknowledgments at the day or class's close.

3) Take Breaks!
Pushing your students to stay on track for too long is a sure way to to see them space out or even minimize the window to do something else! Breaks are an essential part of the daily schedule. As you learn more about your specific group of students and how they function within the distance learning model, tweak the break times as you see fit.

4) Incorporate Movement Throughout the Day

Kids are made to move. They will learn better and focus longer if they're encouraged to get physical exercise before, after, and during their school time. While some of your scheduled break times should give your kids the freedom to choose how they spend it, also consider weaving physical exercise into your lessons, or instead during transitions!

Distance learning has the unique challenge of sitting kids on chairs in front of screens for what is probably **way** too long. Find creative ways to integrate movement into your lessons. For example during reading time or English, read a passage aloud and have the students do a jumping jack every time they hear a preposition or another part of speech. Also, applying the common "popcorn" method, have students choose a peer to send the next question or response to by getting up and dabbing, or choosing some other movement of their choice!

5) Hack Your Reminders

Just like in the traditional classroom, there are some kids who need more reminders online too! Utilize technology to your advantage here—visual timers that count down do wonders to help kids either complete a task or sustain an activity. You can also use a special chime or other auditory signal to regain your class's attention. Also, students love competition and there are many apps, such as Kahoot!, that feature "against-the-clock"-type racing games for providing answers, either individually or in teams!

Distance learning is new for all of us. Even if you've taught ESL, tutored online, or have used technology for work in the past, fully replacing the school day with a computer-dependent model is not something you probably ever saw coming. Just as you would in an in-person classroom, let yourself learn as you go and make adjustments when you see problems. *Not only will we get through this, we can do this right!*