

Kids Can Learn to Love Learning, Even Over Zoom

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“Can independently mute and unmute himself when requested to do so.” That’s praise we never expected to see a year ago on our son’s kindergarten report card. We’re so proud.

As the new school year begins, many students are learning virtually, either by personal choice or requirement — and many parents and teachers are concerned that students will fall behind in their knowledge. But a greater risk to our students may be that they lose their curiosity.

Whether students are in kindergarten or college, knowledge is always attainable. Teachers can and will catch kids up on their multiplication tables and periodic tables. But in school and in life, success depends less on how much we know than on how much we want to learn. One of the highest aims of education is to cultivate and sustain the intrinsic motivation to learn.

A classic [study](#) found that world-class artists, athletes, musicians and scientists typically had an early coach or teacher who made learning fun and motivated them to hone their skills. An [analysis](#) of 125 studies of nearly 200,000 students found that the more the students enjoyed learning, the better they performed from elementary school all the way to college. Students with high levels of [intellectual curiosity](#) get [better grades](#) than their peers, even after controlling for their IQ and work ethic.

Unfortunately, remote learning can stifle curiosity. For students, it’s easy to zone out. Staring at a screen all day can be exhausting. For teachers, transmitting excitement into a webcam is not a simple task: it can feel like talking into a black hole. Technical difficulties mean that key points get lost and even brief communication delays can make students [seem](#) disengaged, crushing rapport and killing timing.

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