

One of my favorite Mark Twain quotes:

“I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.”

There are two main types of learning we parents can lead this school year in order to make sure our kids thrive and learn. The first type of learning is Fundamental Learning.

Fundamental learning skills include classroom skills, focus, pencil skills, print awareness, number sense, arithmetic, decoding ability, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, word skills, sentence skills... the list goes on. For a Kumon family, Fundamental Learning is the piece you can immediately check off your plate of worries, because Kumon Math and Reading covers these skills!

The second part of learning is Experiential learning. This is the piece you may have to take into your own hands, especially in the “new normal” of increasingly online schooling.

Experiential learning is what Jean Piaget - one of the early developers of our education system described as "learning through discovery." This is the part of learning in which you naturally participated when your kids were younger by helping them learn to eat, to sleep at regular times, to enjoy drawing and coloring, to sing songs, to listen to and learn from stories. Maybe you took your kids to the science, art or kids' museums or to concerts or the Zoo. This is the piece of learning that, when understood and done the right way, is almost always seen as "fun" by both parents and students. Though it doesn't replace the need to develop disciplined and fundamental learning-skills, Experiential learning is important in its own right. Sometimes schools like to focus on experiential learning at the expense of fundamental learning because generally, it is easier to organize a classroom into an Experiential learning activity than into a Fundamental learning activity.

When you started your kids in school, you ceded the "responsibility" of your kids' intellectual growth to your local, trusted school district. Unfortunately, since long before COVID19, the concepts of learning have been convoluted, confused and co-opted with systematic changes that will achieve a very different outcome than you as a parent might have sent your kids to achieve.

Did you send your kids to school to *learn* or to *go to school*? Do you wonder why I'm asking, or does my question make you stop to think what is the difference? Even though there is a huge difference, there is also a reason for your confusion. The meaning of the word "learning" has been replaced in our communal consciousness with the word "school."

I'm hoping this article helps differentiate learning needs, and while we are waiting for our culture to adopt new, effective classroom and online strategies, I hope I can provide you the respite of knowing that with your kids doing Kumon Math and Reading, they are practicing the fundamental learning skills that will enable them to be the leaders who change our world for the better.