As expectations for home and school have changed, it is not uncommon for children to respond to the changes with challenging behavior. Below are some tips for handling challenging behavior at home.

**Tips for Handling Challenging Behavior**

**Be clear and consistent with your expectations.**
Oftentimes, challenging behavior is a result of unclear expectations. When giving your child an instruction or activity, clearly explain what is expected of them. Letting your child know how long or how much of the activity is expected, what they should be doing during the activity, and what happens when they are finished, can be helpful in getting your child to engage.

**Reinforce small changes in behavior.**
Children frequently engage in challenging behavior to get the attention of other. In these situations, providing attention (even if the attention comes in the form of reprimands, re-directions, etc.) can increase the likelihood of these challenging behaviors occurring again in the future. By identifying smaller positive behaviors, and providing frequent praise and attention for those behaviors, you can change the cycle. Providing high quality, positive attention, for even the smallest of positive behaviors can encourage your child to engage in those behaviors more frequently, rather than engaging in the challenging behaviors which result in less desirable forms of attention (i.e., reprimands, re-directions, etc.).

**Model the behaviors you want to see.**
Children learn by watching the people around them, and by modeling the behavior you want to see, the more likely the children are to engage in those behaviors when faced with similar situations. Remaining calm and communicating your expectations and feelings can provide children with positive examples of how they can also respond in stressful times.

**Be Proactive.**
If there are certain times or activities that you know are more difficult for your child, or more like to trigger challenging behavior, it can be helpful to provide some support prior to those situations.
- When transitioning to a new activity, or away from a preferred activity, using a timer or count down system to prepare for the transition can be helpful. Setting a timer, or providing verbal reminders of the time remaining in the current activity can set the stage for a smooth transition to the next activity.
When providing instructions for more complex tasks, avoid long lists of instructions. Break down the instructions into short steps, or use visuals to indicate the steps in the activity, can help avoid frustration and confusion.

When presenting more challenging tasks or activities, it can often be helpful to incorporate choices. Offering your child the choice of doing a math or reading activity first during work time, or choosing to do paper and pencil work versus online work, or working on the floor or table, are some ways you can incorporate choice making into your daily routine.