

Give Your Student's Home Study Space an update



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Whether your student is headed back to a school building or will continue learning online, having a dedicated space for schoolwork at home is important. Many families freshen up their student's study area a couple of times a year, including at the start of the new year at the semester break. If your student already has a study zone, it might need updating to meet their current situation. Find out how to best organize your student's study area by reading the tips below.

Set and reset

This is a good time to establish a learning station for your student or rethink the space if they already have one. Does your home have a designated place for studying? One that's free from excessive noise and distractions? If not, look for a spot where your child can do both online and offline work. Students should have their computer, school supplies, and textbooks within reach.

Is your student's study area not working? Try thinking about their personality. On her blog, organizing expert Vicki Norris of Restoring Order asks, "Do they like to have a quiet place to work, or do they like to be close to you? If your child is the latter, you'll want to create a space in the kitchen for example as opposed to their bedroom." This can help guide you as to where you can design a new space that will help them stay focused.

Personalize

Make learning enjoyable by encouraging your student to decorate their schoolwork area, which can give them a sense of ownership and build excitement for studying. See if there's anything special your child wants to add to their education space, such as customized whiteboard or wall calendar to track assignments and upcoming tests.

Declutter

Whether it's an established study zone or a new learning area, an early spring cleaning is in order before the second semester starts.

Begin by clearing out the learning station, putting everything into categories: school supplies, books, and reference items like the teacher contact list. Keep items that are used frequently, like pens, and notebooks handy. Other less used items, such as folders, can be kept in a nearby drawer. Toss anything that is either outdated or not needed.

By showing your students that getting organized can be fun, they'll hopefully get in the habit of cleaning off their desk every night. Researchers at St. Xavier University in Chicago found that students who were organized with tools such as binders and paper for notetaking had better grades than those who weren't as prepared.

Restock

Students need the right learning tools, including virtual ones, to help them succeed in school. Ask older students to take inventory of what they have in stock for school supplies such as highlighters and folders. Once you've restocked, children should be responsible for keeping the supply inventory up to date.

If your child's school is resuming in-person classes soon, the district may ask

your family to provide certain supplies, including hand sanitizer and masks, so check for a list to make sure you are ready for their first day back.

Tech Check

During the pandemic, technology has been vital to keeping students connected to teachers and online courses, making computer maintenance critical for digital learners.

When refreshing the designated school space, double-check all the connections for your child's printer, webcam, headset, and other devices. Test out the Internet connection to ensure peak performance.

If your student is old enough, make sure they know how to organize their computer files by removing clutter from the desktop and putting items for school projects into a designated folder. Parents should also update their antivirus software to check for malware and troubleshoot other cyber problems. If you have a school-issued computer, check with their technology support team to see how they can support you.

While the goal is to ensure your child's school space stays organized in the short run, hopefully, they're learning valuable organizational skills that will assist them later in life as well.

Students feel more invested in their education when they update their study areas with their parents. Refreshing their study space is also a great way to keep them motivated going into the new semester and will help them finish the school year strong.

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Address

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Among the details she focused on in her address were her wildfire mitigation goals and expanding voter access.

On wildfires, Brown said that while factors including climate change and population growth are expected to continue to put people at risk from wildfires every year, "an immediate response to mitigate fire risk is required."

This response includes promoting fire-adapted communities with evacuation routes and response plans; putting more boots on the ground during wildfire responses; investing in new firefighting technologies; and supporting coordinated forest thinning operations and controlled burns.

The governor also repeated her calls for expanded voter access, describing voting as a central tenet of democracy.

Her priorities include expanding automatic voter registration to state agencies beyond the Department of Motor Vehicles, instituting same-day voter registration and allowing ballots to be counted as long as they were postmarked by election day.

Brown encouraged Oregonians that the finish line for the troubles of 2020 is in sight, but warned that building back will require more than just a return to the pre-2020 world.

"We are determined to rise, rebuild and reinvent a more just and equitable Oregon," Brown said.

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Fight

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Mehama, the fire roared northwest on a web of remote forest and creek-cut canyons. The fire followed dry, fuel loaded ridgelines as it burned across Shellburg Falls and moved towards Silver Falls, said local firefighters.

"If you look at a map of the fire, it was running ridgelines and then backing down slopes into drainages," said Fred Patterson, fire chief of Drakes Crossing Fire Department.

Fire crews laid down rudimentary goals: find the best place to make a stand, save nearby homes and protect the park.

"The decision I had made was that we are not going to lose any of the park," Patterson said.

Generations of firefighters

Patterson has firefighting in his blood. In 1967, his grandfather, Bill Bartels, was one of the founding members of the Drakes Crossing Fire Department, a small station nestled between Silver Falls and Silverton. Patterson's son and cousin are also members of the 22-person department composed almost entirely of volunteers.

As a child, Patterson remembers going on calls with his grandpa. After a short career in law enforcement, Patterson returned home in 1997 and worked his way up the department ranks. He was named fire chief in 2010.

He's also worked wildfires in different states.

"I've been to California twice and Texas — I've seen my share of wildfire," he said. "But it's a different feeling, a different toll on your personal life when it's in your own backyard."

Taking a bulldozer down a black diamond slope

With the primary goal of protecting the park and local buildings, Patterson and his crew of volunteer contractors used heavy equipment to dig fire lines.

Fueled by adrenaline and diesel, they used bulldozers to create lines that ran parallel to the park. The goal was to remove all burnable vegetation and stop the fire in its tracks.

It wasn't easy. It required sending bulldozers down dangerous pitches as steep as 35 degrees — roughly the slope of a black diamond ski run.

"In some pretty nasty topography, those guys did incredible work," Patterson said.

Matt Chavarria, owner of Chavarria Construction in Silverton, was one of the many locals who answered the call.

"I grew up there, I've been in that area since I was 10 years old and I'm still working up there," Chavarria said. "We'd just watched half the timberland burn up in one night that I've been working on my whole life. Fred and I knew once it crossed (Grade Road) we weren't going to fight it anymore without losing structures."

A battle on two fronts

The Beachie Creek Fire wasn't just threatening Silver Falls. A finger of the fire advanced north of the park and west toward Drakes Crossing, a community of roughly 800, and structures outside Sil-



Members of the Salem Area Trail Alliance work to restore trails following the Beachie Creek Fire. KYLE MARTZ / SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

verton.

Chavarria helped evacuate Drakes Crossing before working to protect the park and his community. He dug dozer lines for 16 straight days.

"The first week was pretty intense, it was a big adrenaline rush," he said.

Patterson instructed Chavarria to use his in-depth knowledge of the area and run a dozer line parallel to the park from the north.

"It's a little different when you're fighting fire around people's houses that you know. People are calling and texting you while you're trying to save their house," Chavarria said.

Firefighters get a break and look to take advantage

The Beachie Creek Fire lost some momentum as winds slowed on Sept. 9, giving fire crews the chance to take advantage.

"Nobody gave any sigh of relief," Patterson said. "We still had a lot of very active fire out there, and we didn't have any visibility on September 9."

The Beachie Creek Fire split into three fingers as it traveled west, with the bottom two surrounding Silver Falls and Drakes Crossing.

"The first day, we didn't realize how big it was," Chavarria said.

To stop the fire from traveling across ridgelines, crews worked to cut the fires off before it entered a canyon and increased in intensity traveling back up the other side. Fire moves much faster up slopes than down slopes as it preheats the vegetation above, Patterson said.

One natural barrier was a clear-cut southeast of the park. It served as a natural fire line.

"We were trying to use as much natural break as we could, whether it was old road systems, creek lines or parts of that clear cut," said Patterson.

Splitting crews to make a final stand

Faced with the challenge of protecting local communities and Silver Falls, Patterson divided his resources.

Crews to the north focused on limiting damage to homes and structures in Drakes Crossing. To stop the fire from reaching the community, fire crews made their stand east of the Bridge Creek drainage and Grade Road.

"We made the decision to start fighting it where we fought it because I knew we could stop it there without losing houses," Chavarria said.

The strategy paid off. With improved

conditions, the fire reached the fire line at Bridge Creek and came to a halt.

"It butted up against it and it was done," said Patterson.

The fire ultimately stopped a half-mile from Drakes Crossing. No buildings were lost.

A few miles to the south, at Silver Falls, crews were also successful. The combination of fire lines and improved conditions meant that only 127 acres of the 9,000-acre park burned, and only in the remote southeast section.

Fire lines outside the park show the impact fire crews made. On one side of dozer lines, the forest is blackened. On the other, it's emerald green.

"A lot of the credit should be attributed to my contractors and firefighters; they took great risk to be out there in front of this fire putting in the work that they did," said Patterson.

The weather also made a big difference.

"If that wind would have kept blowing at 50 mph for another hour, the park and my community would not look like what it looks today," Patterson said. "God laid a humongous hand in the fact that Silver

Falls and Drakes Crossing are still there."

The cleanup and the future

To see what might have happened at Silver Falls, you don't have to look far. Shellburg Falls, just a few miles away, was severely burned and will likely be closed for a year or more.

Silver Falls, on the other hand, is almost unscathed. None of the waterfalls were impacted. The historic buildings, built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps, still stand.

In fact, almost nobody visiting Silver Falls today would know how close the park came to calamity.

The only evidence of the fire can be seen along the Catamount Trail in the park's backcountry. Hikers, bikers and runners can travel through large patches of fire-blackened forest, thanks to the work of the Salem Area Trail Alliance, which quickly restored the pathway.

Park officials said the experience prompted better fire planning, so they'll be ready should another titanic blaze come their way in the future.

In the meantime, those who love the park and know how close the fire came are grateful to those who put themselves on the line.

"We're thankful to the firefighters and everyone who answered the bell, so that we still get to enjoy this," said Beth Dayton, executive director of the Salem Area Trail Alliance.

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