

SYLVAN LEARNING OF CHESAPEAKE

Offering parents educational options for their children

by Christine Knapp

It is no secret that the COVID-19 pandemic has created anxiety and stress for parents across the country, especially when it comes to their children's education. Students have been out of their classrooms since March across Hampton Roads and the nation.

Virtual learning quickly became the norm, literally overnight. As the end of summer draws near and the fall quickly approaches, families everywhere are confronting the dilemma of whether to send their children back to school or find another alternative.

For 41 years, Sylvan Learning Center has been a leading provider in tutoring and academic support to families nationwide. There are over 600 franchises in the United States, with two in Chesapeake and Suffolk.

"We strive to create personal connections between our students and teachers," Kim Teixeira, owner of both local Sylvan Learning Centers, points out proudly. These locations have been in business for nearly fifteen years, with Kim owning them for the last seven.

Those families interested in Sylvan start with an insight assessment, which gives a comprehensive overview of the strengths and weaknesses of each child academically. That information is then analyzed, and a personalized learning plan is created for each child.



The Sylvan model and curriculum are focused on tailoring programs based on student needs, creating individualized plans, and tutoring for those specific areas where students are struggling. "We believe when we deliver personalized instruction, the student is going to show more progress and confidence," Kim explains.

With programs in-person and online, Sylvan's focus is reading, math and writing. Still, it offers supplemental support for children in Pre-K all the way through college preparation and even through college, including programs geared toward enrichment. "How can a student not do better when we are working on the very things we know are their weaknesses?" Kim asks.

Sylvan offered online curriculum and tutoring even before the pandemic hit. When schools began shutting down and moving toward virtual learning, Sylvan was already there, ahead of the game. "We were able to immediately pivot, so if families did not want to come into our center, they were able to receive instruction online," Kim emphasizes. "I'm really proud of the fact that we didn't skip a beat."

With school decisions in flux and no concrete plan in place, Sylvan has developed a unique, new program for students in Hampton Roads called Sylvan Homeroom.

"We created Sylvan Homeroom to allow families to bring their children in our centers for a few hours each week," Kim explains. "The children can log into their lessons or bring in their homework, and they can be partnered with our teachers as well as interact with other students, providing socialization, too."

"We realize our families are struggling, that there is no easy decision when it comes to our children's education in the fall," Kim emphasizes. "We are all learning to be creative right now. Creating a model that will transition into the fall is imperative to supporting our children. Parents are looking for solutions. We are here to help Hampton Roads families get through this tough time."

With three grown children and recently becoming an empty nester, she understands how important education is to families.

"I was a stay-at-home mom who then went back to work at Sylvan as a credentialed teacher," Kim recalls. "I was a part-time tutor for a while, and as a woman and a mom, I enjoyed being able to take charge of my destiny. It was very exciting for me to buy a franchise. It's something that I live and breathe. When the kids at our centers come in, and they have endured weeks or even years of defeat poured over them, it gives me goosebumps to see them finally grasp a concept or finish a problem. It shows how we are making a difference."

Sylvan only hires strong educators who develop curriculum aligned with state standards. Those families interested in Sylvan start with an insight assessment, which gives a comprehensive overview of the strengths and weaknesses of each child academically. That information is then analyzed, and a personalized learning plan is created for each child.

"That way, when they come in for tutoring, we are providing an individualized plan for that student's specific needs," Kim shares. "We don't provide instruction on things the student already knows or isn't ready for yet. Parents have our promise that we will focus directly on those areas of need."

In a time when standardized testing is not currently being conducted, Sylvan can help bridge the gap. Parents may be feeling the pressure of not knowing of their child's progress.



"Sylvan conducts progress assessments regularly, especially now," Kim assures. "Since students aren't receiving assessments currently, we want parents to have confidence in how their children are performing, and assessments are an important key to this. We are regularly evaluating and making sure we are moving the needle forward."

Kim's passion is contagious. "Our number one goal is partnering with families. Our directors brainstorm regularly, we meet with our families to provide updates, and we can also meet with teachers to make sure everyone is on the same page. We support our families with the resources and tools they need as well, like strategies they can use at home."

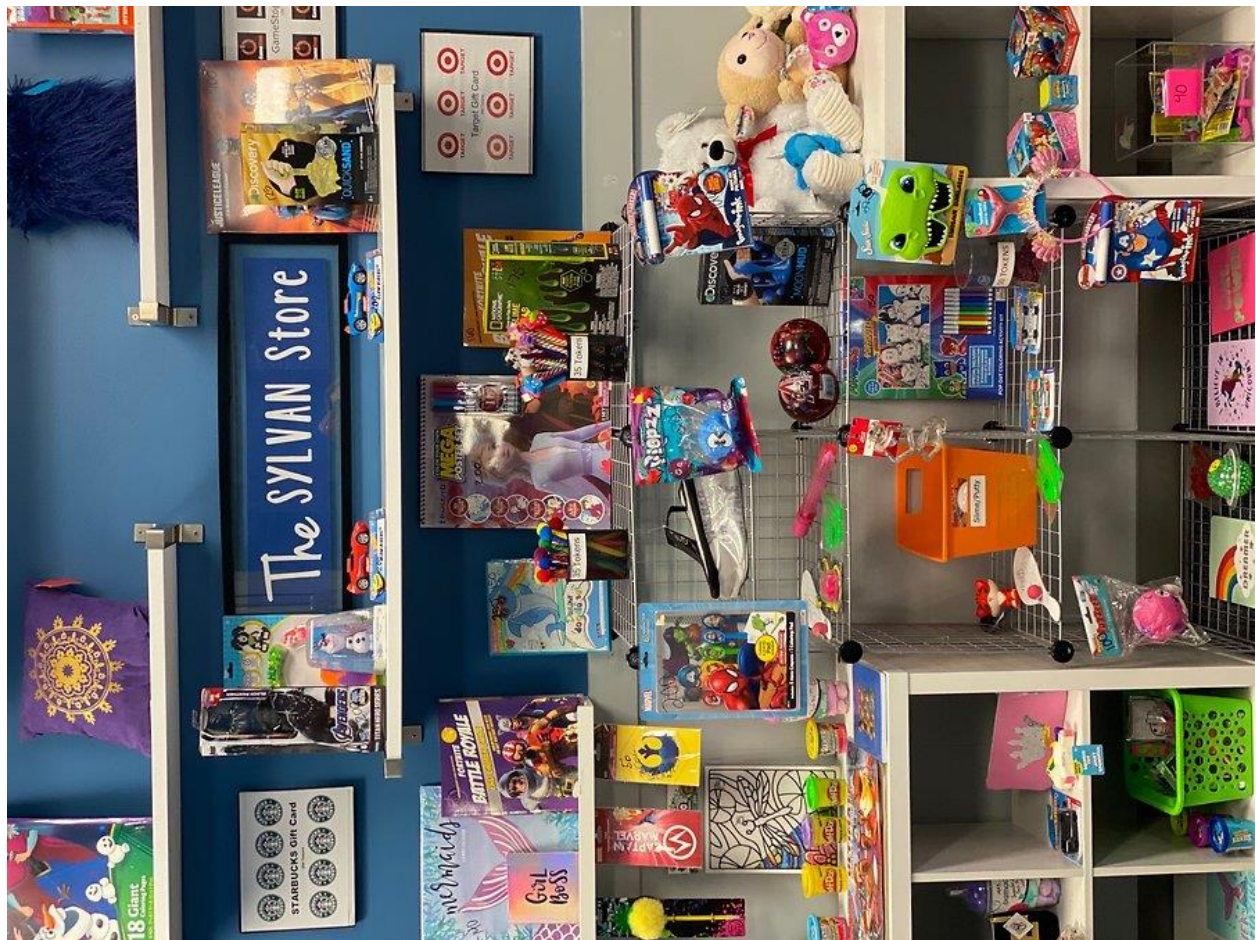
The safety of all Sylvan students, teachers, and families is always a top priority.

"We are following all protocols," Kim guarantees. "We do not allow more than nine to ten kids in the building at any time, and they stay six feet apart at their tables. We are operating in the morning all the way through the evening to help children maintain

that connection with their teacher and other students, while helping everyone to feel safe. Masks are being worn, we are sanitizing materials, and we are asking for families to bring their own materials to class."

Sylvan educators and administrators firmly stand by their five core values: Education is everything. Learning should be personal. Results matter. Technology accelerates learning. Great teachers inspire.

"We are a piece of the puzzle," Kim concludes. "We are part of the picture that is going to create the portrait. And when we're all working together, the result is a masterpiece."



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