

Introduction

Remote, or distance, learning in preschool may be used as a strategy to provide support to young children and families, when children are not able to attend school. This remote learning might be offered due to family choice, a reduction in group size, and/or closures based on public health guidance. Remote learning may be the primary means of supporting children or families, or it might be part of a Hybrid model that also includes some in-person opportunities.

No matter what the circumstances, intentional planning is necessary to make remote learning a valuable experience for young children and their families.

What is remote learning?

Remote learning can take many forms. OEC has defined remote learning as: Learning Opportunities in which students and educators are not physically present in a classroom environment.

Some examples of the types of strategies or tools that might be used for remote learning for preschool include:

- Video formats, such as video chats or recorded and posted videos
- Communication apps such as Class Dojo, Remind, SeeSaw, etc.
- Sparkler app, which provides families access to the Ages and Stages Questionnaires and ideas for activities to promote learning
- Online resources that can be accessed by families
- Providing materials for activities at home
- Phone conferencing

What are asynchronous and synchronous learning opportunities?

Learning opportunities that are **asynchronous** do not involve a live interaction and allow families to have control over when they access these opportunities.

Learning opportunities that are **synchronous** involve individuals participating at the same time. This might be an individual meeting or small or large group activities that occur at a specified time.

What is the focus for remote learning for preschool?

The focus for remote learning for preschool age children should be on:

- Providing opportunities for social interactions and relationships
- Providing prompts/ideas to support hands-on, play-based learning at home
- Supporting families to foster learning and development at home as a part of daily routines
- Introducing new learning or concepts that are followed by hands-on experiences at home or in other natural environments.

What should be considered when planning remote learning for preschool?

Consistency and routine

Young children rely on consistency and routine. It helps them to feel safe and to understand what is expected of them. Providing some familiar classroom activities offered in a virtual format can support young children's learning, build community, and foster a sense of consistency and routine. Logging in daily for a short story time or morning meeting with a predictable sequence can provide consistency and routine. However, the goal of remote learning should not be to replicate a preschool day in a virtual format. Consider which typical preschool activities are appropriate for a virtual format and focus on providing those opportunities.

Consider the following when planning synchronous or asynchronous activities:

- Replicate short versions of classroom activities that support community-building (e.g., story or circle time)
- Maintain or establish routines to help children engage in remote learning opportunities (e.g., familiar sequence for story time or large group times)
- Provide visual schedules and routines to children
- Support families to establish routines related to remote learning

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Young children learn through play and through their relationships with adults and peers. It is important that young children continue to have developmentally appropriate experiences, even when the format needs to be different. As you plan, and periodically when implementing, consider how the experience that children are getting through remote learning aligns with expectations for developmentally appropriate practice.

Consider the following when supporting learning, play, and relationships through virtual learning:

- Find ways to support imaginative play and social interactions
- Maximize small group connections
- Structure games and activities to encourage active engagement
- Support hands-on learning opportunities
- Make sure children and families have the necessary materials for activities at home
- Plan engaging ways to introduce vocabulary or concepts
- Partner with families to support their child's engagement and learning

Goal or purpose for planned learning opportunities

Remote learning activities should address important goals across all domains of learning and development. During this time of adjusting to new routines and possible trauma experienced by families, focusing on social and emotional skills is important. All remote learning opportunities should include intentionally planned opportunities to address social and emotional learning. This includes a focus on building and maintaining relationships between teachers and children and between children. Facilitated small group experiences and individual synchronous opportunities are most likely to foster relationships.

[The Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards](#) (CT ELDS) provide learning progressions across eight domains of learning and can provide the foundation for planning learning experiences. OEC has developed the [CT ELDS Strategies for Learning at Home](#) which include ways to support learning during daily routines across all domains and age bands in the CT ELDS. These are available in English and Spanish. In addition, the [CT ELDS Learning at Home Planning Grid](#) can be used to plan strategies for addressing the skills in the CT ELDS in the context of daily routines.

Partnering with Families

Families play a critical role in remote learning for preschoolers; however, many families are juggling multiple responsibilities. Families must be respected as full partners as they strive to balance other responsibilities and needs with remote learning. It is important to engage families as you plan and adjust schedules and activities to best meet the needs of the families you serve. When families face challenges with participation, reach out and engage in joint problem solving so that children and families are able to participate in ways that best fit with their unique circumstances.

It may be helpful to consider how families became engaged in remote learning when determining the best approach.

- For families who have opted-in to remote learning as the primary means of engaging in early care and education
 - Share plans for remote learning to inform family decision-making. The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning has provided this [sample schedule](#) for PreK remote learning.
 - Provide strategies and options to ensure remote learning is successful
 - Consider remote learning agreements that address expectations for families and teachers/programs. Here are sample family agreements from the [Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education](#) and from [San Antonio's Pre-K 4SA program](#).
- For families whose children were enrolled to participate in in-person opportunities that have currently shifted to Hybrid or remote learning due to public health guidance
 - Provide additional flexibility regarding the ways in which families can participate in remote learning.
 - Consider tracking, but not requiring, participation. If families aren't participating, reach out to provide support and find out what is and isn't working for the families.

Overall screen time for young children

It is important to keep in mind that experts (including [the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Fred Rogers Center](#), and the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)) recommend limiting screen time for young children. However, it may be more difficult to limit screen time during the pandemic due to limitations on typical activities and a shift toward remote learning. Here are some considerations when planning remote learning opportunities and partnering with families around developmentally appropriate screen time:

- The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) recommends that parents should watch with children to help them understand and apply what they see and learn to their world.



- Consider family priorities, needs, and routines related to screen time. Maintaining familiar routines is important for families and children and these routines may involve media use and screen time. For example, a child might watch their favorite television show while dad prepares dinner nearby and comments on the show.
- Consider the quality of the screen time when planning remote learning and when working with families around overall screen time.
 - The use of technology as a means for interaction might be considered separately from other types of screen time.
 - Share resources and tools with families so that they can select quality educational media sources and develop a family media plan.

Assessment and Remote Learning

It may seem difficult to conduct assessments of young children's skills right now; however, it is more important than ever to understand skills and areas in which support is needed. It may be especially important to consider children's social and emotional development due to disruptions in routine, possible trauma or stress, and decreased opportunities for social interaction.

If your program has an assessment tool that you have used in the past to inform instruction, consider how that tool might be used during remote learning. Keep in mind that it may be difficult for teachers to observe skills, and for children to demonstrate skills, via technology. Assessment done using remote methods may not be a full or accurate representation of a child's skills.

- Families are a reliable source of information about their child's learning and development. Consider how assessment practices might be adjusted or enhanced and how families can become even more involved in this process. For example, the Connecticut Documentation and Observation for Teaching System (CT DOTs) includes family input as one way of collecting evidence about children's learning and development. Programs may consider relying more heavily (or even exclusively) on this input to assess children in order to inform curriculum and teaching.
- Consider using a screening tool completed by families, such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaire and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-Social and Emotional to identify children in need of additional assessment. More information about the ASQ and the ASQ-SE is available on the [211 website](#).

Serving Children with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) using Remote Learning

- If a child has an IEP, refer to their Learning Model IEP Implementation Plan. SDE's [Addendum 6](#) provides more information about these plans.
- IEP goals and objectives may be addressed through direct instruction or through specific coaching for families and caregivers. Coaching should focus on techniques to support the child's progress on their IEP goals and objectives.
- If standardized assessments are being considered determine what portions may be able to be used remotely. DaSy (The Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems) and ECTA (Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center) have [suggestions for norm references tools](#) for young children that can be administered remotely.



Other considerations

- Consider families' access to technology, including both appropriate devices and internet access. Connect them to resources to address gaps or inequities related to technology access.
- Consider what is required to complete activities. If specific materials are required for suggested activities, consider how those materials can be safely and efficiently shared with families.

Resources

Resources to share with families to support learning at home:

- Learning/Activity Ideas
 - The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) offers many resources and strategies to promote your child's learning at home: <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/for-families>.
 - The OEC's [CT ELDS Strategies for Learning at Home](#) provides ideas for incorporating learning into daily routines for different age groups.
 - Wide Open School's [Student Activities page](#) includes remote learning activities for children preschool through grade 12.
- Screen/Media Resources
 - Wide Open School provides [resources for families](#) related to remote learning
 - Phoenix Children's offers ideas and suggestions related to [screen time rules](#) during COVID-19.
 - The American Academy of Pediatrics' website for families (healthychildren.org) includes suggestions for creating a [Family Media Plan](#).

Resources for Teachers Planning Remote Learning

- The OEC has provided a [CT ELDS Learning at Home Planning Grid](#) that teachers might use to help families plan when to incorporate learning opportunities into their daily routines.
- Wide Open School include [Resources for Teachers](#) implementing remote or hybrid education models.
- The National Center on Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI) offers strategies related to [Connecting with Families Tip Sheet](#) and has archived a webinar related to [Providing Distance Family Support](#), as well as other [COVID-19 resources](#) related to supporting young children their families.
- For teachers using CT DOTS, the [CT DOTS Family Input Pages](#) offers a way to gain family input on children's learning and development across all domains and age bands.
- [Preschool During the Pandemic: Early Childhood Education in Extraordinary Times](#) is a video series highlighting how early childhood and early childhood special education professional are supporting preschoolers and their families.