

Guidance for Remote Learning in 3-K and Pre-K

Table of Contents

Guidance for Principals/Directors.....	2
Guidance for Teaching Teams.....	6
Guidance for Families.....	7

Updated 3/17/2020

Guidance for Principals/Directors for Remote Learning in 3-K and Pre-K

Remote Learning in Early Childhood

Young children learn best in the context of relationships and through play-based, hands-on, and engaging activities. In their early childhood classrooms, the relationships they develop with their teaching teams and caregivers are crucial to their development and learning. Additionally, the toys, games, and other materials in their classrooms support discovery and exploration – an essential component of early learning. For these reasons, remote learning for young children is centered around helping families, caregivers, and children connect and engage in joyful, fun, play-based activities that build on children’s natural curiosity.

Supporting Remote Learning

During this time, it is particularly important to consider how we support families and children in having safe, nurturing and predictable experiences. Children rely on their daily routines, including seeing their teaching team each day they come to school. At this time, our goal is to ensure smooth transitions from learning in a classroom to learning at home. During times of uncertainty and stress, it is important to maintain strong attachments to help children remain resilient and thrive. Together we can successfully support children and families by helping children feel connected to their early childhood program and teachers. When planning how best to maintain connections with children and families, teaching teams should consider the needs and circumstances of their classroom community. Considerations include:

- How families and children will manage this period of social distancing. For example, some parents and caregivers will still be going to work and may have arranged alternate care for their children; some families will be working from home while simultaneously caring for their children; and other families will not be working and will be spending much more time with their children, etc.
- Whether parents and caregivers will have access to the internet. Internet access will impact the types of online resources and recommendations teaching teams provide to families.
- The types of toys and materials their families can likely access. Available toys and materials will impact the types of activities they can do together.

Engaging Families from Afar: Ideas and Resources

While the remote learning plan for each class should be tailored to the individual classroom community, here are some suggestions for **ways teaching teams and parent coordinators can support learning and stay connected to families:**

- **Share the NYC DOE [Learn at Home Early Childhood Instructional Resources](#).** Children love to play—anytime, anywhere, and with almost anything. As they play, they’re learning about the world around them and practicing important skills. This document includes many fun and engaging activities families can do with their children at home. It includes activities for infants, toddlers, and children who are 3- and 4-years-old. Additionally, this document provides information about talking to children about COVID-19 and self care tips for families.
- **Share activities related to the current classroom studies.** Teaching teams may want to create their own hands-on, play-based learning experiences for children and families to do together, based on what the class has been exploring and their knowledge of their children and families. For example, pre-K classrooms that are implementing the Light Unit may want to suggest activities to support further learning about Light.
- **Share favorite classroom songs, rhymes, and fingerplays with families.** Consider sharing lyrics and/or recordings of songs children sing in class.
- **Share ideas of how families can use household items for play.** Families can use whatever materials they have at home to create meaningful and fun activities. Consider providing examples of common household items and suggestions on how they might use it for play, such as using an empty container for a drum or coloring on a cardboard box.
- **Share transition strategies.** Transitioning between activities and parts of the day can be challenging for children. Share some of the strategies used for transitions in the classroom and how they may apply outside of the classroom. For example, the language classrooms use to signal upcoming transitions (e.g. five more minutes left to play) as well as familiar clean up songs and handwashing songs can also be used at home.
- **Support families in creating a daily routine/schedule.** Help families consider how to structure the day and what types of activities and routines work well with young children. Teaching teams can consider creating a variety of sample schedules and visuals to help families create a routine and determine the best way to display the schedule in their home. Additionally, teaching teams may want to consider sharing ways families can talk with their children about what to expect each day.

- **Create a plan for check-ins with children and families.** Speak with children and families over the phone or via a video platform (e.g. Zoom, etc.). Calls can include talking with children about what they have been up to, sharing fun memories from school, and sharing what you know their friends have been doing.
 - **When using video chat to communicate with families, leaders should choose one platform that will best meet the needs for the entire program.** Here are some options and considerations for each:
 - Microsoft Teams: if you have an @schools.nyc.gov email address you can set up unlimited meetings for up to 250 people with no time limit. It is HIPPA/FERPA compliant for discussing sensitive information, such as IEP/IFSP information.
 - Google Hangouts Meet: you can use your Google Classroom to host meetings for up to 250 people (regular Gmail accounts up to 10) with no time limit. It is HIPPA/FERPA compliant for discussing sensitive information, such as IEP/IFSP information.
 - Zoom: free accounts are available to host up to 100 people for 40 minutes at a team (pro accounts are \$15/month for a longer time limit). The mobile app is downloadable and user-friendly.
 - Skype: free accounts are available to host up to 50 people with no time limit. Mobile and desktop apps are downloadable and user-friendly.
- **Create a plan/system for creating and sharing virtual read alouds.** Teaching teams can consider recording or filming themselves reading a story. They can email it to families to share with their child or post in a visible/accessible place, like the program website.
- **Share photos.** Ask families to send pictures or short written statements of what they are doing. Teaching teams can share the pictures with all families in a weekly email newsletter. This will help reassure children that their friends are safe.
- **Use social media to stay connected.** Teaching teams may want to consider setting up a Facebook page or a page on another technology platform for families to stay connected. Families can share this with their children and use it to help children stay connected with their teachers and friends.
- **Families of 4-year-olds should have a pack of Fun with Feelings Cards at home.** Share the online resources at www.schools.nyc.gov/funwithfeelings to help families use the Fun with Feelings cards at home. The video "[How Can I Use Fun with Feelings?](#)" shows families how to use the cards in support of Social Emotional Learning and family bonding.
- **Send a morning message to families.** Receiving a morning message can help create a routine and support children to feel connected to their teacher and school. Consider singing a greeting song and checking in about what the child and their family have been doing. Share what you are doing and what other children in the class are doing.

- **Share language and resources families can use to talk to their children about the disruption to their regular routine.** With so many shifts to their daily routine, children may feel as though everything in their life is changing. It's helpful for families to tell them that some things will be the same and some things will be different. For example: "We'll still wake up every morning, have breakfast, and read a story. Some things that will be different are that we won't be going to school for a little while and we won't be going to the library after school."
- **Share language and resources families can use to talk to their children about COVID-19.** Ensure what is being shared is honest and accurate. See page 6 for language and information that teaching teams can use to support their conversations with families.
- **Consider sharing the Guidance for Families of Young Children During School Closures for COVID-19.** See page 7 for a sample guidance letter that teaching teams may want to share with families.
- **Offer availability for calls with parents/caregivers.** In these times of anxiety and uncertainty, parents and caregivers may look to their child's school and teachers for support. It will be helpful to make yourself available for check-in calls with them to share guidance around any of the resources that have been shared or other concerns families have about their children and their time away from their early childhood program.

Guidance for Teaching Teams when Speaking with Young Children about COVID-19

Below are some talking points that your program and teaching teams can share with families to talk about COVID-19 and changes children are experiencing.

- Children are likely hearing about the coronavirus. Feel free to talk with them about it. Not talking about it may actually make them more nervous. Invite your child to share what they know about the coronavirus and how they are feeling.
- Find out what your child already knows before beginning the conversation. Ask questions geared to your child's age level. For younger children, you could say, "Have you heard grownups talking about a new sickness (germ) that's going around?" This gives you a chance to learn how much kids know — and to find out if they're hearing the wrong information.
- Follow your child's lead. Some kids may want to spend time talking or even drawing about what they know. But if your kids don't seem interested or don't ask a lot of questions, that's okay. They may need time to think and come back to you later with their questions.
- Answer your child's questions about the virus in a straightforward and factual manner.
- If your child asks about something and you don't know the answer, it's okay to say, "I'm not sure." Use the question as a chance to find out together, or let the child know you'll check into it and come back to them later.
- Remember that emotions are contagious. Your attitude about the coronavirus will impact how your child feels about it. If you remain calm, your child is more likely to remain calm as well. Empower your child with information about staying safe. You might say, "We can be germ-busters! Germ busters keep germs away by washing hands and keeping hands to ourselves and away from faces."
- Let children know there are a lot of helpers who are working to keep the germs away too, like doctors and nurses.
- Give kids space to share their fears. It's natural for kids to worry, "Could I be next? Could that happen to me?" Let them know they can always come to you for answers or to talk about what scares them.

Resource: [Social Story on Speaking with Young Children about School Closure](#)

Note: Consider adapting this social story to better reflect the children and families in your program and community.

For more information to share with staff and families, see "[Talking With Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks](#)"

Guidance for Families of Young Children During School Closures for COVID-19

With our daily routines disrupted and many elements of our work and personal lives currently unknown, it is understandable that there will be heightened stress and anxiety. In times of communal stress it can sometimes be hard to know what to say or how to react. During this time, keeping our daily routines, connecting with others (even from afar), and caring for ourselves will help offer a sense of security and help children know what to expect.

Here are a few suggestions with more information and resources on each below:

- Speak with your children about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and why schools are closing
- Keep a daily routine that works for you and your family so everyone knows what to expect.
- Offer children lots of opportunities to stay engaged in play and learning.
- Caregivers' physical and mental health is important.

Speak with your child about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and why schools are closing.

- Children are likely hearing about the virus. Feel free to talk with them about it. Not talking about it may actually make them more nervous. Invite your child to share what they know about the coronavirus and how they are feeling.
- Find out what your child already knows before beginning the conversation. Ask questions geared to your child's age level. For younger children, you could say, "Have you heard grownups talking about a new sickness (germ) that's going around?" This gives you a chance to learn how much kids know — and to find out if they're hearing the wrong information.
- Follow your child's lead. Some children may want to spend time talking or even drawing. But if your children don't seem interested or don't ask a lot of questions, that's OK. They may need time to think about it and come back to you later with their questions.
- Answer your child's questions about the virus in a straightforward and factual manner.
- If your child asks about something and you don't know the answer, it's okay to say, "I'm not sure." Use the question as a chance to find out together, or let the child know you'll check into it and come back to them later.
- Remember that emotions are contagious. Your attitude about the coronavirus will impact how your child feels about it. If you remain calm, your child is more likely to remain calm as well.
- Empower your child with information about staying safe. You might say, "We can be germ-busters! Germ busters keep germs away by washing hands and keeping hands to ourselves and away from faces." Let children know there are a lot of helpers who are working to keep the germs away too, like doctors and nurses.

- Give children space to share their fears. It's natural for children to worry, "Could I be next? Could that happen to me?" Let them know they can always come to you for answers or to talk about what scares them.

Some language to share with children

- "There is a new germ, like the germs that give us the flu or a cold and it's called Coronavirus, or COVID-19."
- "It can make people cough or have a fever, but if a person gets this germ it usually doesn't stay for long."
- "Grown-ups are very good at keeping kids safe. We can stay safe by washing our hands with soap and water. When we wash our hands, we can sing a song! What song should we sing?"
- "Grown-ups everywhere, like your teachers and other grown ups in school are working really hard to make sure that everyone stays healthy and one way to do that is making sure we do our learning and playing from home. "

Resources

- [Social Story on Speaking with Young Children about School Closure](#)
 - *Note: Consider adapting this social story to better reflect your family and community.*
- For more information see "[Talking With Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks](#)"
- Adults can find accurate information [here](#)

Keep a daily routine that works for you and your family so everyone knows what to expect.

Children thrive on routines. Following a predictable routine is a helpful way for children to feel safe and know what is expected of them (e.g. washing hands before breakfast, reading a book before nap, or taking a bath or shower before bed). Routines help you and your child move confidently through the day and encourage positive behavior. At the same time, be flexible and responsive to your children's needs. You know your child best! Find a balance of routines and flexibility that works for your family.

- Some language to use with children when discussing a daily routine: "We'll still wake up every morning, have breakfast, and read a story. Some things that will be different are that we won't be going to school for a little while and we won't be going to the library after school."

Things to consider when planning your daily routines

- An easy way to get started is to ask yourself- "What are the things we do everyday?" Here is an example of what a schedule at home may look like:

Morning	Wake up routine Breakfast Reading time Play
Afternoon	Lunch Quiet time Music and movement Play
Evening	Dinner A walk outside Bedtime routine

- In school, teachers use pictures to help children understand what is coming next. You may want to consider using images like those found at this link. You can find a handwashing example below.



Source: livingwellwithautism.com

Take time to remind your child of a few important things everyday

- They are safe
- Where they will be that day
- Who will be taking care of them that day
- When they can expect to see you again (i.e., "I will see you after snack this afternoon.")

Routines can also be challenging. This Routine Based Support Guide for families gives helpful tips for navigating any daily routine with your young children.

- [For Infants and Toddlers](#)
- [For children 3-8 years old](#)

Offer children lots of opportunities to stay engaged in play and learning.

For young children, everyday living is full of learning. Any of that learning they consider fun is called play! Connecting with and talking to your child throughout the day is one of the best ways to support their development.

- Your child’s favorite toys, games, and books offer many opportunities for learning, especially when you play and talk with them. By talking with your child as you play, and engaging in back and forth conversations, you are supporting the development of many important skills (e.g. vocabulary development, communication skills, listening skills, social emotional skills, and critical thinking skills). **Always feel free to use any language your family speaks when talking and playing with your child as this supports later learning in any language.**
- Daily activities like cooking, laundry, and opening the mail offer important moments to bond and engage with your child. The Division of Early Childhood recently created and shared a Learning at Home resource for families of young children full of ideas for how to build learning into your days at home.
 - You can pick up a printed copy at any of the Enrichment Centers and digital copies, including all translated versions [here](#)
- Families of 4-year-olds also should have received a pack of Fun with Feelings cards this year. There are [resources online](#) to help you use those cards at home to support play, learning, and social emotional development
 - We suggest you start with the video “[How Can I Use Fun with Feelings?](#)”

Caregivers' physical and mental health is important.

Adults should support each other to recognize and address stress. It can be challenging to recognize stress signals for what they are: physical discomfort, unusual emotional fluctuations, and difficulty thinking clearly are some common responses to communal stress. When you take time to care for yourself, you are better able to care for your child. Even a few minutes of “you time” can help you to recharge so that you can be your best.

- Listen to music as you're doing chores around the house.
- Set an alarm to remind yourself to pause, take a deep breath, or use a calming meditation app. Even 2 minutes of relaxation can make a difference in how you feel.
- Make sure you're getting enough sleep. When your little one lays down to rest, try to do the same. If they're having trouble settling down, sing a quiet song that you loved when you were small, one that calms you down, too.
- Take a ten-minute vacation. As you're bathing your child, soak your hands in the warm water.
- Keep a favorite family photo with you. If you're having a challenging day with your little one, you can look at it to remind you of happy times you've spent together.
- Reach out to others. Feeling alone is common for families and caregivers during stressful times. But you don't have to handle them on your own. Connect with trusted family members and friends, share your feelings with them, and enlist their help.

For more information to share with staff and families, see "[Coping with Stress During an Infectious Disease Outbreak](#)"