

## PreK Learning at Home: Supplemental Resources for Early Educators

### Purpose

This document serves as a supplemental early educator resource to [Instruction in a Remote Learning Environment: Universal Principles and Recommended Practices](#) (April 8, 2020). The resources listed align with the [Vermont Early Learning Standards](#) (2015), and support social emotional wellbeing and relationships of educators, children and families, as referenced in the [Agency of Education's Prekindergarten Education and Continuity of Learning](#), (April 13, 2020).

### Supporting Strong Connections & Relationships Between Families and Schools

Children flourish when they feel secure, safe, supported and have close emotional attachments to adults in their world. Developing and maintaining relationships is important, especially when children and families are home practicing social distancing. During these challenging times, PreK learning should continue to focus on social and emotional growth and wellbeing of children through intentional interactions and opportunities. Encouraging families to maintain ongoing connection and engagement with school personnel is an important part in supporting and sustaining the child's social emotional development.

### Maintaining Child and Educator Relationships

When engaging young children in conversations through technology, it is important to have verbal check-ins with each child during the virtual classroom time. Educators may use the virtual time to ask about the wellbeing of each child through reciprocal conversations, asking "how are you?", "what have you been doing?", and providing children with positive feedback and encouragement. Connecting with each child outside of the virtual classroom can occur through video chats, phone conversations and/or old-fashioned letter writing.

#### Resource Links

- NAEYC. Silverman, A. (2020). [Play, Child Development and Relationships: A Preschool Teacher in China Shares her Virtual Teaching Experience.](#)

In this article, Ms. Silverman shares how she maintains her relationships with her students and families through her virtual teaching practice.

- Head Start/ECLKC Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (2020) [Building Resilience to Cope with Stress and Trauma.](#)

Ongoing research shows that adversity and high levels of stress in early childhood can have a negative impact on a person's life. Stress can affect a child's health, behavior and ability to learn. Head Start offers a series of articles for educators, caregivers, families and children to foster resilience.

- National Center for Pyramid Model Institute (NCPMI). (2020). [Helping children recognize, understand, and label emotions.](#)

The Feeling Faces assist children with understanding their feelings and the feelings of others. It is important to teach children words to use to express feelings to replace the use of challenging behavior. [Spanish version.](#)

## **Maintaining Peer to Peer Relationships**

During remote learning, educators may use technology to allow time for children to connect with each other during the virtual classroom time. Start the class with a meet and greet to allow children to connect with their classmates and friends to support the social relationships children are missing due to social distancing and school closure. Calling on each child to share out what they have been doing will ensure that everyone gets a chance to be heard. At the end of the class allow five to ten minutes for children to say goodbye, with a verbal reminder of the next virtual class time together.

### **Resource Links**

- Garrette Lisy, J., Paciga, K.A., and Quest, M. (2020). [DAP with Apps and Other Tech Tools: Making Choices that Make Sense for Preschool.](#) TYC, 12(4).

While digital technology should be limited, research suggests that it can add value to children's investigations and learning, especially when it's used in ways that increase access to high-quality content and encourage peer interaction.

- Friedman, S. (2020). [The Power of Story Telling in Early Childhood: Helping Children Process The Coronavirus Crisis.](#) NAEYC.

As schools remain closed to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus, these are not usual circumstances. Here are three ways that the power of storytelling is helping young children during this pandemic.

## **Maintaining Family and Educator Relationships**

Many schools have family engagement strategies for connecting with families virtually. Facebook pages, school and class websites, mobile applications or phone calls are ways for schools to engage families. Some educators have virtual office hours for families to connect, ask questions or share concerns. It is important for educators to not just communicate with families about learning, but to be available for questions that families may have about their children, or to share resources families may need at this time. The message from educators to families should emphasize to not stress over learning objectives, but to focus on the social emotional needs of their child and family as a whole.

### **Resource Links**

- Anderson, J. (2020). [Keeping Classroom Relationships Alive: Three ways preschool educators can ensure that the relationships built in their classrooms continue.](#) Harvard Graduate School.

- Mahmood, R. (2020). [Rethinking Family Engagement During School Closure](#). Teaching Tolerance.

Taking time to check assumptions about family engagement can make a huge difference in the lives of your children and their caregivers.

- Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. (2020). [Practice Improvement Tools: Practice Guides for Families](#).

These Practice Guides for Families are intended for practitioners to share with families. The Practice Guides are formatted for print as well as for viewing on mobile devices. The Practice Guides are listed below by the DEC Recommended Practices topics: assessment, environment, instruction, interaction, teaming and collaboration, and transition.

- National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI). (2020). [Connecting with Families](#).

With children learning at home, our connections with families are so important. These tips will help you be focused and responsive during those calls or virtual meetings.

## Taking Care of Yourself

Remote learning is different and can be stressful for many educators. Not having the personal connection with your PreK children and colleagues adds another level of stress. Keep these supportive relationships active by connecting with colleagues virtually or by phone. It is important for educators to self-check and reflect often on their own wellbeing. Taking care of yourself will help you take care of others.

## Resource Links

- Vanderbilt University. (2020). [Taking Care of Yourself](#).

During challenging times, it can be hard to stop and take care of yourself. The best way to be there for the ones you care about is to first reach inward and be there for yourself. When you are effectively taking care of yourself, you are better able to care for others. Self-care can help you be the calm and steady pilot in the middle of unpredictable turbulence.

- Georgetown University, Center for Early Childhood Mental Health. (2020). [Taking Care of Ourselves: Stress and Relaxation](#).

Stress is natural and can be inevitable, but stress can take a toll on your health and effectiveness as an early childhood educator or parent. It impacts the quality of care that you can give.

- Vermont Agency of Education. (4/23/2020). [Educator Resilience: Tips on Self Care in the Time of Covid-19](#).

The purpose of this document is to provide educators with tips for maintaining their personal well-being.

## **Educators Tools and More Resources to Explore**

Below is a compilation of evidence-based practices and resources that you may want to explore as you plan and support distance learning opportunities for your PreK children and their families.

- **NAEYC and the Fred Rogers Center Joint Position Statement. (2012).** [\*Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8\*](#)

This joint position statement was created in 2012 to guide educators in applying the principles of development and learning when considering the use of cutting-edge technologies and new media.

- **National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI). (2020).** [\*Covid-19 and Pandemic Resources\*](#)

NCPMI offers resources to support families in helping young children cope with the challenges that might occur during stressful emergency or disaster situations.

- **Frank, G. and Coventry, M. (2020).** [\*Making Videos at Home: Tips for Educators.\*](#) NAYEC.

Are you interested in supporting the children and families in your program by creating videos to share via HELLO, YouTube or Facebook? This resource describes some simple tips for making videos from your home.

- **West Ed Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety. (2020).** [\*Mindfulness in Education: An Approach to Cultivating Self-Awareness That Can Bolster Kid's Learning.\*](#)

This brief introduces mindfulness as a strategy for facilitating social and emotional learning in school, explains the potential benefits for both students and educators, provides examples of mindfulness strategies, and lists resources for learning more about mindfulness

- **University of Texas Agency & Young Children. (2020).** [\*Balancing Online Remote and In-Person Learning for Young Children.\*](#)

At this time of COVID-19, teachers, parents and caretakers are trying to figure out how to educate young children using online technologies. Schools and districts are trying to figure out how best to support parents and continue children's academic progress while they are away from school. This article offers some principles of early childhood learning that could be helpful in shaping how schools and districts approach daily or weekly support for children and families.

- **Sarama, J. and Clements, D.H. (2020).** [\*Learning & Teaching with Learning Trajectories \[LT\]2\*](#) is a creation of Drs. Julie Sarama and Douglas H. Clements, funded by the Heising-Simons Foundation and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

[LT]2 is a web-based tool for early childhood educators to learn about how children think and learn about mathematics, and how to teach mathematics to young children (birth to age 8).

- **Preschool Development Grant Program. (2019).** [\*Early Learning Language and Literacy Series\*](#). The Preschool Development Grant Program is a discretionary grant program that is jointly administered by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This series of professional development modules on early literacy learning, birth to kindergarten, is designed to support the work of early education initiatives across the fifty states and the territories to support the language and literacy development of young children. The two key objectives for the Early Learning Language and Literacy Series are:

- To provide teachers with background information/research on early language and literacy
- To provide evidence-based strategies to support the language and literacy development of young children

- **Preschool Development Grant Program. (2019).** [\*Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics \(STEM\) in Early Learning Series!\*](#) The Preschool Development Grant Program is a discretionary grant program that is jointly administered by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This series aims to enhance professionals' understanding and confidence in supporting children's intellectual learning. The 11-part series offers research, practical application for classroom and home and provides examples of experiences that build scientific, technology, engineering, and mathematical learning for older toddlers and preschool children. The two key objectives for the STEM in Early Learning Series are:

- Provide early childhood professionals with background information and research on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) learning for young children.
- Provide evidence-based strategies to support STEM learning in varied environments, including early learning settings, homes, and community settings such as museums and libraries.

- NAEYC. (2020). [\*How Play Connects to Learning\*](#)

Play is an important part of children's learning and development. Find articles on how to intentionally connect play and learning, ideas to share with families, and the latest research about learning and play.

- Vermont Early Learning Standards: The Right Stuff. [\*The Right Stuff March 2017 Issue on Creative Arts and Expression.\*](#)

These creative arts and expression resources were compiled by Camille Catlett. It is supported by a contract from the Vermont Agency of Education. Funding is provided through the Vermont Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant.