



## **Universal PreK (UPK) Café**

### **May 28, 2020 – Issue 30**

Dear Friends,

It looks like summer has arrived in Vermont!

We have had a very eventful school year to say the least – and the Early Education Team cannot say enough how thankful and proud we are of what you have accomplished these past few months – even before teaching and learning changed dramatically in March! Thank you for giving so much to your students and families, even as you have been taking care of your own family at home.

As we begin to transition to the end of the school year and into the summer, this issue of the UPK Café provides you with resources to stay connected with and support families.

And as always, if you have found any helpful resources that you would like to share, or resources you would like to see, please let us know!

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**EDUCATOR in the SPOTLIGHT!** This week we would like to introduce **Melissa Miller!** Melissa is an Intensive Needs Program Specialist in the Milton Early Education Program. Jennifer Knowles, also from the Milton Early Education Program, shared one of the fun videos that Melissa – with the help of her family - put together for her students. Take a look at this video about [counting](#)! Melissa has worked with the Milton Town School District for 5 years. She lives in Milton with her family who have discovered their great video talents during this time of distance teaching and learning from home!

### **RESOURCES for Early Childhood Educators and Early Childhood Special Educators**

- **Vermont Agency of Education:** [PreK Learning at Home: Supplemental Resources for Early Educators](#)

This document serves as a supplemental early educator resource to Instruction in a [Remote Learning Environment: Universal Principles and Recommended Practices](#). (April 8, 2020)

- [Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center \(ECTA\): Build Your Video Conferencing Skills: For Home Visitors – And Everyone Else!](#)

This video presents important tips for honing video conferencing skills. The lighthearted narration and whimsical illustrations can help you identify key technical, environmental, and interactional aspects to keep in mind. Download the accompanying [one-page checklist](#) to assess your skills while watching the video.

- [National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations \(NCPMI\): "We Can Be Problem Solvers at Home!"](#)

This scripted story for families can help children understand the steps to problem solving. The story includes problem scenarios and solution cards to help children practice finding a solution to common social problems.

- [Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center \(ECLKC\) Supporting Families in Uncertain Times: Social Media Messages](#)

Connecting with parents through social media is one way to let them know your program cares and you are still there for them. It shows families that you stand ready to partner with them around their interests, needs, and goals. This is a set of 15 positive social media messages you can send to parents to let them know you are thinking of and supporting them. Since you know your families best, feel free to tweak the messages as needed.

- **Vermont Public Broadcasting System (PBS) and the Agency of Education (AOE)** are partnering to support continuity of learning for our students and school communities. This partnership provides access to free educational programming through [Vermont PBS At-Home Learning](#). Teachers can create unique accounts with their school email or Google account through [PBS LearningMedia](#). Accounts are free and provide access to a range of additional features.

- **PBS Schedule for the Week of June 1st:** This is the [Vermont PBS Week-Ahead Program Schedule](#) for the week of June 1st. Resources available online as well as those that can be printed and sent home have been identified within the schedule.
- ***HERO ELEMENTARY*** is a school for budding superheroes, where kids learn to master their innate powers, like flying and teleportation, while exploring science along the way. The launching series will give **children ages 4 to 7** important tools to help them solve problems by encouraging them to think and act like scientists, igniting their natural curiosity. ***HERO ELEMENTARY* also showcases character and social-emotional concepts such as kindness, empathy, and commitment to working together to solve problems.** Please join **Vermont PBS's preview screening of *HERO ELEMENTARY* on Friday, May 29th from 3:00 to 4:00.** Following the screening there will be a Q&A with the program's co-creator, Carol-Lynn Parente, and other education experts. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions connected to At-Home Learning. Sign up through [Eventbrite](#).
- **New Partnership Allows More Access to PBS:** A recent partnership with Dish Network expands access to the educational content jointly developed by Vermont PBS and the AOE to more families across most of Vermont. The

channels will be available to DISH subscribers in the Burlington - Plattsburg media market.

- **PBS Parent/Teacher Survey:** Vermont PBS has partnered with the Vermont Agency of Education to provide for continuity of learning for Vermont students and school communities during the COVID-19 outbreak, allowing Vermont teachers, families and students access to free educational resources via television broadcast with connected curricular resources throughout the duration of school closures. If you have used these resources with your students or children please take a minute to complete this [survey](#).
- **Vermont Public Radio:**
  - ***But Why Live: Words (May 29th)***

**On Friday, May 29 at 1 p.m., *But Why* will focus on words with linguist and [Lexicon Valley](#) podcast host John McWhorter. He will be answering your questions about the origins of words and languages.**
  - ***But Why: Press Conference for Kids with Governor Phil Scott (June 5th)***

On Friday, June 5th at 1:00 p.m. Vermont Governor Phil Scott will join *But Why Live* on Vermont Public Radio for a special kid press conference. First, students will learn what a press conference is and how journalists think about what questions to ask. VPR reporter Peter Hirschfeld will guide us through that. Then Governor Scott will join us to field questions from kids for the rest of the hour. This is an opportunity for students to ask questions about whatever is on their minds. Teachers could pair this radio program with a writing activity: ask students to write a news report using quotes from the press conference, or talk about the concept of an editorial essay and ask students to write an opinion piece based on the show. This episode is targeted at students in grades 3-6, but the phone lines will be open to all students.
  - Students can send written or audio recordings of questions ahead of time to [questions@butwhykids.org](mailto:questions@butwhykids.org) or call in live while the program is on the air. An audio recording of the press conference will be available at [But Why](#) after the program.

## RESOURCES for FAMILIES

- **PBS Kids: [For Parents How Play Helps Kids Navigate Difficult Times](#)**

Play supports kids' cognitive, social, emotional and character development. It strengthens their language and executive function skills. And it strengthens their emotional bonds to the people they play with. This article shares how making time for play can help our children navigate stress, experience joy and build resilience.

- **Tinkergarten:** [How Helping the Helpers Can Help Us All](#)  
We can take seeing the helpers even a step further by helping them ourselves. This article presents some great ideas for grown-ups, and we thought it might help people like us think about ways to engage young kids, too. Though social distancing and being with young kids all day can make it feel harder than ever to contribute, we can do things from our homes to strengthen our communities and help those most vulnerable to COVID-19.
- **Commonsense Media:** [Books FTW! Summer Reading Challenges to Hook Kids on Books](#)  
Summer can be a great time to slow down a little and check into some great books – and even introduce chapter books! Make it a family summer activity that encourages your child to keep reading with some fun challenges for everyone to stay interested! These "challenges" will not only provide you with some fantastic reads for kids of all ages, interests, and reading levels, they'll offer you tons to talk about together, from faraway cultures to scientific facts to the importance of tolerance and friendship. Whatever your family's reading style, there's something here that will help your child feel inspired to read through the summer.
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- **PBS Parent/Teacher Survey:** Vermont PBS has partnered with the Vermont Agency of Education to provide for continuity of learning for Vermont students and school communities during the COVID-19 outbreak, allowing Vermont teachers, families and students access to free educational resources via television broadcast with connected curricular resources throughout the duration of school closures. If you have used these resources with your students or children please take a minute to complete this [survey](#).

## VERMONT EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS (VELS)

**Domain:** Approaches to Learning

**Element 1:** Initiative

**Goal 1:** Children show curiosity about the world around them, and take action to interact with it and learn.

### Developing Self Activities:

- Put on your rain gear and play in puddles! Can your child or you make the biggest or most stylish splash? Make mud pies— don't be afraid to get dirty, revel in the gooey globby mess! Dance and sing in the rain! Collect rain in different containers and listen to the sounds of raindrops as they hit a metal, plastic or glass container. Mark your containers – how long does it take for the rain to fill to your line? Float a boat made of

recycled items, paper or twigs and leaves. Gather items from around your house and see what will sink or what will float in puddles!

- Catch the wind! Create a wind sock, kite, pinwheel, or weather vane and learn all about the wind. When you are building your “wind-catcher” ask your child questions: Can you see the wind? How do you know it's there? What did it sound like? What did it feel like?
- Help your child plant their own garden! Plant herbs, vegetables and/or flowers in containers. Place the containers in an area where your child can reach them to water and care for the plants as they grow. You and your child can record how much each one grows using a piece of wood to mark the height, draw pictures or take pictures for a journal recording the changes that are seen every few days. You can also choose plants to create a garden that attracts specific animals such as a bird or butterfly garden.

### **Books to read with your child:**

- *Planting a Rainbow*, Written by Lois Ehlert
- *Who Likes Rain?* Written by Wong Herbert Yee
- *Like a Windy Day*, Written by Frank Asch

The UPK Café is now posted on the [Early Education Team's webpage!](#) Please visit the webpage to explore the resources in current and past issues. You will continue to receive the weekly UPK Café via PreK and/or ECSE list serves.

Please let us know if you have any distance learning experiences and activities you would like to share as an Educator in the Spotlight. Don't be shy, share with your colleagues!

If you have received this issue from a coworker and would like to be placed on the UPK Café listserv, please email Leslie at [leslie.freedman@vermont.gov](mailto:leslie.freedman@vermont.gov).

Be well and stay healthy!

Leslie

### **Helpful Links:**

- [COVID-19 Guidance for Vermont Schools](#)
- [COVID-19 Information from the Vermont Department of Health](#)
- [COVID-19 Information from the Agency of Human Services/ Department of Children and Families](#)