



Universal PreK (UPK) Café **September 4, 2020 – Issue 37**

Dear Friends,

The Agency of Education’s Early Education team recognizes all the amazing work and support you have been providing to Vermont’s children and families. We thank you for your dedication and the incredible work you are doing to ensure a safe and healthy start for each and every child, their family and staff as we head back to school this fall.

The AOE has recently released two new guidance documents specific to reopening Universal Prekindergarten Education programs in Vermont:

- **(NEW)** [Allowable Use of Publicly Funded Prekindergarten Education Dollars in Response to COVID-19](#) (8/21) The purpose of this supplemental guidance for reopening of prequalified public and private PreK education programs (PreK) addresses the allowable use of publicly funded prekindergarten education dollars as it pertains to implications of COVID-19.
- **(NEW)** [Prekindergarten Staff Qualifications and Instructional Models Impacted by COVID-19](#) (8/21) This supplemental guidance addresses prequalified public and private prekindergarten education (PreK) program staff qualification requirements and PreK instructional models impacted by COVID-19.
- Universal PreK programs are to follow the below information in maintaining students’ GOLD® portfolios. Please contact Leslie Freedman, UPK Monitoring and Assessment Coordinator at leslie.freedman@vermont.gov if further clarification or information is needed. The following documents have been updated for the 2020-2021 school year.
 - [My Teaching Strategies GOLD® 2020-2021 Requirements and Guidelines](#)
 - [Teaching Strategies GOLD® Transfer Request 2020-2021 School Year](#)

As you prepare to reopen prequalified private and public PreK programs, the early education team has compiled the following related guidance, resources, and recommended research-based practices:

- [A Strong and Healthy Start: Safety and Health Guidance for Vermont Schools](#)
- [Health Guidance for Childcare and Out-of-School-Time Care](#)

- [PreK Learning from Home: Supplemental Resources for Families \(4/28\)](#)
- [Early Childhood Special Education \(Ages 3 through 5\): Indicator - Early Childhood Outcomes Guidance \(5/11\)](#)
- [PreK Learning from Home: Supplemental Resources for Educators \(5/27\)](#)
- [Getting My Temperature Taken: A Social Story \(8/3\)](#)
- [Vermont Early Learning Standards \(VELS\)](#)

Additional considerations and resources:

- **Communicating with Families**

To foster reassurance in families that reopening of a PreK program is safe, programs should be prepared to clearly communicate the necessary steps and safety precautions that are being followed to ensure the health and safety of each and every child and staff. The following practices may be helpful:

- Identify possible health related concerns for staff, students and family members
- Establish training needs for staff as well as for families
- Provide virtual ‘walk throughs’ or webinar of health and safety expectations and procedures to staff and families
- Focus on strengthening relationships with family building trust and bi-directional communication
- Identify personnel designated as primary point of contact for each family
- Use [visual representation](#) to proactively identify, understand and appropriately respond to individual child’s health needs.
- Provide verbal and visual cues when teaching [expectations](#), [social stories](#), and a [response plan](#) for individual children that may require further support or assistance. Share and discuss the benefit of using visual supports with families.

- **Facial Coverings**

Private and public PreK programs may support staff to proactively identify, understand and appropriately respond to a child’s unexpected behaviors or developmental appropriateness brought on by the requirement to wear facial coverings. It is highly likely children may become anxious, distracted, or demonstrate lower frustration thresholds due to their developmental age.

- Provide visual cues, [social stories](#) and [videos](#) for children to better [understand about germs](#) and why it is important to wear facial coverings and practice [preventative hygiene](#).

- Remote/Distance/Hybrid Learning
 - [Five Big Equity Ideas for Designing Distance Learning Opportunities](#) an info graphic provided by Great Lakes Equity Project
 - [7 Tips for Managing Distance Learning in Preschool: Edutopia](#)
 - [Distance Learning and Early Childhood Education: Head Start](#)
This resource provides prospective students and instructors information about distance learning from both student and faculty perspectives.

- [PBS At-Home Learning](#): Vermont Public Broadcasting System (PBS), DISH Network, and the Agency of Education (AOE) are partnering to support continuity of learning for our students and school communities this Fall. Weekly thematic bundles, with specific episodes highlighted per week by content area and age-level, are available to stream on-demand. These episodes connect to specific resources on PBS Learning Media and PBS Parents.

- The [National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations](#) (NCPMI) provides high quality resources for educators, staff and families.

Check out these upcoming Webinars!

- [StemieFest - Innovation for Inclusion in Early Education](#): Join families, early childhood/early childhood special ed professionals, faculty, & more to engage in innovative STEM learning experiences.
- [Providing Distance Family Support: What do I say? How can I help? A Conversation with NCPMI Faculty](#)
- [Back to School During COVID-19: Resources and Practices for Promoting Social Emotional Learning in Young Children with Disabilities from NCPMI](#)

If you have received this issue from a coworker and would like to be place on the UPK Café listserv, please email Leslie at leslie.freedman@vermont.gov.

Be well and stay healthy,

The Early Education Team