

Webinar: Teaching Young Learners in a Pandemic

Supporting children pre-k to grade 3 and their learning partners at home

A Publication From Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic at IES

To access the RELs' evidence-based COVID-19 response resources, visit <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/covid-19>.



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Primary Audience: Teachers **Secondary Audiences:** State Administrators and Superintendents

This Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Mid-Atlantic webinar provides research-based information about remotely teaching young children in pre-kindergarten to grade 3, including practical steps that align with research guidance. A unique feature of learning remotely for young children is that a parent, guardian, or another adult in the home needs to be involved to support learning. This webinar talks about ways teachers can support these “learning partners.” The webinar also addresses ways state and local education agencies can strengthen support for remote learning over the longer term.



Promising Strategies

Based on an exploratory research review of approaches to promoting young children’s learning and supporting parents to facilitate learning in the home, this webinar recommended the following promising strategies to implement during remote learning:

For teaching young children remotely:

- Support learning partners to create and implement routines and structure by establishing a daily schedule for their children.
- Because children learn within the context of relationships, provide both (a) synchronous online learning opportunities and (b) activities in the home for a learning partner to use, such as book-reading and play that extends learning.
- Consider use of household items as manipulatives for learning (concrete objects that help children learn abstract concepts) to help children extend math and science activities.
- To promote child engagement, allow them choice of learning activities and timing, within parameters that ensure learning happens.
- Reach out to families of English Learners to encourage teaching and reading in the home language so learning continues.

For teachers to support the involvement of learning partners:

- Foster relationships with learning partners in the home by discussing their challenges to supporting learning and troubleshooting how to address them.
- Make communications accessible by using the learning partner’s preferred mode of communication.
- Encourage two-way communication, inviting learning partners to reach out for explanation of an assignment or to understand a lesson.



- Provide brief tips for multiple learning activities across content areas. Make them as clear and useful as possible.
- Be clear about the goals and objectives of home learning activities and provide clear instructions.
- Encourage parents or learning partners to join the child’s online learning sessions to better extend learning at home.

For strategies for district and state administrators:

- Find ways to get books, devices, and internet access into all children’s homes.
- Gather evidence of student participation in educational activities and of learning progress.
- Keep reaching out to students and families not participating regularly to connect them with learning opportunities.
- Support continued summer learning to address achievement gaps.
- Leverage efficiencies of remote learning with teacher collaboration and district planning and oversight to free teachers for smaller-group, targeted teaching and relationship-building with students.



Questions to Consider

- What approaches are you able to take with individual families to strengthen the learning environment in the homes of young children you teach?
- How can school and district administrators help reach out to families whose young children are not participating regularly?
- How can your district and school organize efficient communications with families?
- Can your district continue to support remote learning over the summer?
- How can your state or district leverage efficiencies of remote learning to connect more young children with learning opportunities?
- Can your state or district get books, devices, and internet access to more families with young children, with the goal of reaching all children?



Related Resources

- REL resources to support remote learning and other issues arising from COVID-19: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/covid-19>
- COVID-19 resources from the Comprehensive Centers: <https://compcenternetwork.org/covid-19>
- REL Central two-page summary: [Strategies to Support Remote Learning Along a Continuum of Internet Access](#)
- REL Southeast resource page: [Supporting Your Child's Reading at Home](#) which provides videos of these types of activities and resources for kindergarten and first grade teachers and parents.
- Daily activities for parents or learning partners of pre-kindergarten students at home: [Georgia PK at Home](#)
- Information on potential COVID-related learning loss for early learners:
 - Kuhfeld, M., & Tarasawa, B. (2020). [The COVID-19 slide: What summer learning loss can tell us about the potential impact of school closures on student academic achievement](#). Collaborative for Student Growth at NWEA.
 - Kuhfeld, M., Condrón, D., & Downey, D. (2019). [When does inequality grow? A seasonal analysis of racial/ethnic disparities in learning in kindergarten through eighth grade](#). Collaborative for Student Growth at NWEA.
- Review of research on engaging parents in children's learning: Axford, N., Berry, V., Lloyd, J., Moore, D., Rogers, M., Hurst, A., Blockley, K., Durkin, H., & Minton, J. (2019). [How can schools support parents' engagement in their children's learning? Evidence from research and practice](#). Education Endowment Foundation.
- Review of research on shared book reading: Dowdall, N., Melendez-Torres, G.J., Murray, L., Gardner, F., Hartford, L., and Cooper, P.J. (2020). [Shared picture book reading interventions for child language development: A systematic review and meta-analysis](#). *Child Development*, 91(2), e383-e399.
- Review of research on educational technology, including for young children: Escueta, M., Nickow, A.J., Oreopoulos, P., and Quan, V. (forthcoming). [Upgrading education with technology: Insights from experimental research](#). *Journal of Economic Literature*.
- Review of research on summer reading interventions on children's literacy K-grade 8: Kim, J.S. & Quinn, D.M. (2013). [The effects of summer reading on low-income children's literacy achievement from kindergarten to grade 8: A meta-analysis of classroom and home interventions](#). *Review of Educational Research*, 83(3), 386-431.
- Promising evidence on dual-language immersion programs on achievement: Steele, J. L., Slater, R. O., Zamarro, G., Miller, T., Li, J., Burkhauser, S., & Bacon, M. (2017). [Effects of dual-language immersion programs on student achievement: Evidence from lottery data](#). *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(1S), p. 282S-306S.
- National Academies of Sciences publications:
 - Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/19401>
 - National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2016). *Parenting matters: Supporting parents of children ages 0-8*. The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/21868>
 - National Research Council. (2001). *Eager to learn: Educating our preschoolers*. The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/9745>

The U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences funds a network of 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs). Each REL serves a designated region of the country and works in partnership with educators and policymakers with a mission of supporting a more evidence-based education system to improve outcomes for students. In response to the impact of COVID-19 on education systems, the RELs collaborated to produce evidence-based resources and guidance.

This material was prepared under Contract ED-IES-17-C-0006 by Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic, administered by Mathematica. The content of the publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government.