

**Maryland State Department of
Education Pre-K Expansion Grant
Program School Year 2020-2021
Reopening Guidance**





Preparing for the 2020 – 2021 Pre-K School Year

The Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood has developed this guidance to support Maryland’s Pre-K Expansion Grant Programs in preparing and providing high-quality instructional classrooms during the 2020 – 2021 school year. The purpose of this guidance is to support Pre-K programs in creating high-quality instructional environments which foster the overall development and growth of children while prioritizing the health and safety of staff and children.

Early childhood is the time for being social, learning through play, making new discoveries, and practicing new skills. Three- and four-year-olds learn best from hands-on activities with many opportunities to interact with peers and teachers. This reopening toolkit provides developmentally appropriate guidance to support Pre-K programs in their planning for a safe school year. MSDE recognizes that each program will have to make many decisions that are specific to its students, families, and resources.

This guidance was modified by MSDE from the original guidance and recommendations developed by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, the CDC, and American Academy of Pediatrics. [This guidance is aligned with *Maryland Together: Recovery Plan for Education for K-12 Schools*](#) which provides guidance for reopening schools.

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School



In this document, guidance will be provided in the following areas:

- Preparing for Temporary Pre-K Class Closures
- COVID-19 Spread and Determining Instructional Models
- Approved Instructional Models and implementation requirements
- Instructional Model Recommendations
- Resources to support students and families

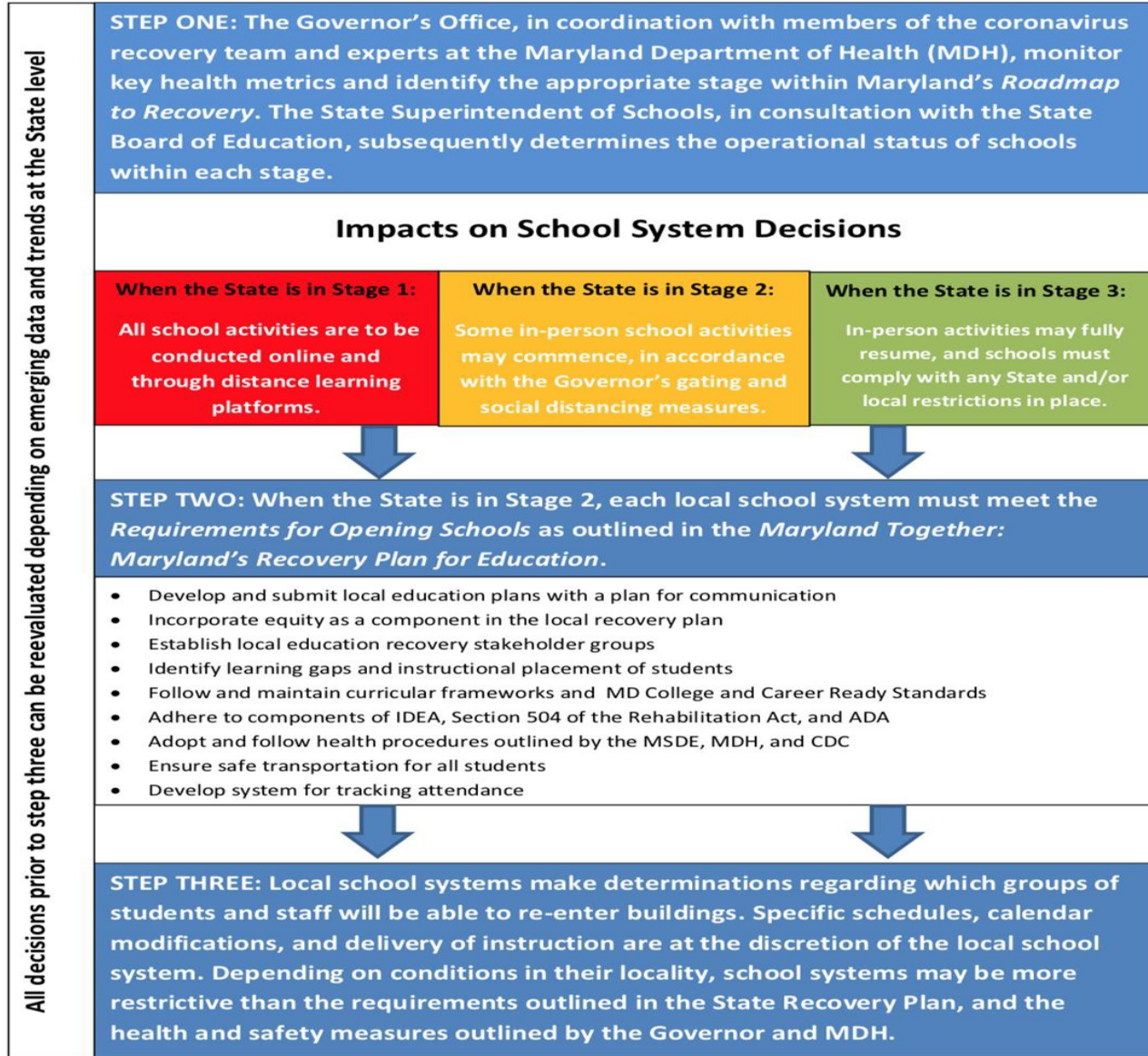
All programs should have a plan to continue offering Pre-K services if Pre-K classes must be closed due to COVID-19:

- Closures due to COVID-19 do not have to be rescheduled if distance learning or virtual learning is provided to meet the 180-day attendance requirement.
- Programs must notify their Pre-K Monitor of any closures.
- Lead and Assistant Teachers are expected to work virtually during closures.

Teachers should actively support instruction daily through a variety of methods:

- Help families create predictable routines for learning by sharing appropriate schedules for learning at home.
- Provide hands-on learning kits that families can pick up or programs have delivered.
- Connect with students through individual, small group and large group video chats, Zoom (or other online platforms), apps and phone calls.
- Provide virtual instruction online including circle time, storybook reading, and small group instruction.
- Provide families with supplies and materials including manipulatives, books, etc. and written directions for all at-home learning activities.

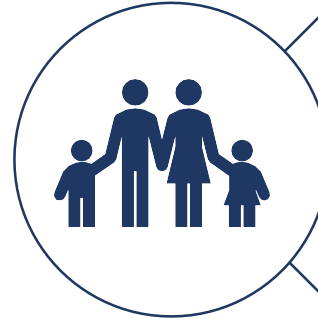
Reopening Maryland Schools PreK-12 Decision Matrix



Choosing an Instructional Model 2020-2021

Each Pre-K Program is required to select an Instructional Model for each Pre-K classroom for the 2020 – 2021 school year.

- Programs are not required to select the same model for every classroom.
 - A site with only one classroom must select only one model.
 - A site with multiple classrooms can select more than one model (one model per classroom).
- Programs should consider the needs of children and their families as well as their Pre-K staff when selecting a model.
- Programs should select a model that best fits the needs of their families, community and program.
 - Community-based programs should review and consider the model used by the local system; however, it is not required to use the same model.



What are the needs of the families you serve?

Consider surveying your families to determine their concerns and needs.



What is the current spread of COVID-19 in your community?

Consult with your local health department and Office of Child Care.



Can your program meet the model requirements?

Each model has specific requirements for implementation.

Pre-K Instructional Models 2020-2021

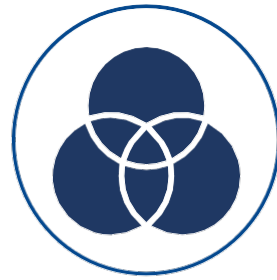
Maryland's Pre-K Expansion Grant Program is built upon developmentally appropriate, play-based, interactive instruction and environments. Some children may be medically fragile or have medically fragile family members and need access to distance instruction. MSDE also wants to provide flexibility in program delivery to meet the needs of children and families, Pre-K staff, and communities.

The models below are possible instructional models for the 2020 - 2021 school year. Full descriptions and requirements follow.



Traditional

Pre-K is provided in the regular classroom setting. All students attend each day on site.



Hybrid

Pre-K is provided via a combination of traditional classroom and distance learning.



Full Distance Learning

Pre-K is provided through full distance learning. Instruction is a combination of virtual learning and remote hands-on learning.



Choosing an Instructional Model 2020-2021

1. Review requirements for each model. Ensure that requirements can be met.
2. Gather feedback from families and staff.
3. Determine model to be used for each classroom.
4. Submit instructional model selection form to MSDE for each class (if selecting multiple models).
5. Develop program policies for staff including:
 - Procedures if a staff member, child, or family member becomes sick.
 - Distance learning requirements for staff (i.e. telework, leave, job responsibilities).
6. Develop program policies for families including:
 - Procedures if a staff member, child, or family member becomes sick.
 - Distance learning procedures for temporary school closures (if appropriate for model).
 - Any specific family commitments based on model selected (i. e. family agrees to provide support for distance learning).
 - Fee structure for wrap-around services outside of the Pre-K day (if applicable)
 - Taking daily attendance for in-person and distance learning.
7. Communicate model and policies with families and staff including school calendar and daily schedule.
 - Provide orientation (virtual or individually).
 - It is recommended that families and staff acknowledge model and policy in writing.

Traditional



Purpose: The Traditional model allows for daily in-person instruction for all enrolled students five days a week following normal operating hours. It follows a traditional school day and calendar.

Suggestions for Utilizing this Model:

- Programs should monitor community COVID-19 data and recommendations from the local health department to determine if there should be a temporary Pre-K closure.
- Must have written distance learning plans available for any temporary closures due to increased COVID-19 spread.

- This model provides in-person instruction for all students each school day.
- Programs should consider dividing students into smaller consistent cohorts to minimize exposure. The cohorts could be served within the same physical space or in separate spaces.
- Programs should implement appropriate health and safety practices to minimize the spread of COVID-19.
 - Pre-K funds may be utilized to purchase appropriate sanitation supplies, hand soap and hand sanitizer, and face masks.
 - Deep cleaning of classrooms should be conducted prior to staff and students returning. Periodic deep cleaning should occur as needed and/or during weekends or school breaks.
- Established program procedures should be followed if a staff member, child, or family member becomes sick. The local health department should be contacted for additional guidance.
 - Close classroom as directed by the local health department. Teachers and students must transition into distance learning during the closure until the classroom reopens.
 - A distance learning plan must be implemented when a class is closed due to COVID-19.



Traditional Model Requirements

Consider dividing the class into two groups or “cohorts” for large group activities.

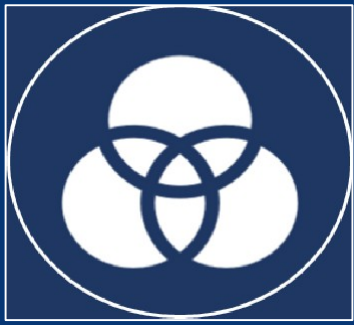
- Morning Opening Activity/Circle Time
- Large Group Literacy
- Story Time
- Small group literacy
- Small group math
- Outside Time
- Closing Activity

Different areas of the classroom (or outdoor space) can be used thus allowing children to be more socially distanced.

- The Lead and Assistant Teachers can both lead the same “smaller” large group activities concurrently. For example, both teachers lead circle time at the same time for two smaller groups of children.
- One teacher can lead one activity while the other leads an alternate activity. The Lead Teacher has a Large Group Literacy Lesson while the Assistant Teacher takes the 2nd group outside for outdoor play.

Consider limiting the number of children in learning centers during center time. In lieu of the whole class participating in center time at the same time, teachers should consider smaller groups at different times during the day.

Hybrid



Purpose: The Hybrid or Blended model allows for programs to decrease the number of students and staff exposed to each other.

Suggestions for Utilizing this Model:

- Selected instructional model must be communicated clearly to families.
- Must plan for instruction in-classroom and for distance learning.
- Distance learning can be provided through virtual learning and at-home, hands-on learning activities.
- Both the Lead and Assistant Teacher are actively engaged with students each day.

- Pre-K instruction is provided through a combination of face-to-face instruction and distance learning.
 - There is flexibility allowed in the specific format to allow programs to design a structure to meet family and program needs (Examples on next page).
- Families should arrange for an alternate learning environment for distance learning (i. e. at home with parent or other caregiver).
 - If the majority of families need on-site care for the 6.5-hour instructional day, then the program should consider another format or instructional model.
 - Any fees charged for care outside of Pre-K instruction must be communicated to families in writing.
- Learning materials and supplies must be provided by the Pre-K Program on a regular basis. These should include consumable supplies such as pencils, crayons, markers and paper and non-consumable materials such as manipulatives, puzzles, and books.
- It is recommended that teachers and students have access to high speed Internet and a device (computer, tablet, smartphone) for virtual instruction.
- Families should be provided written guidance for distance learning activities.



Hybrid Model Requirements

Types of hybrid learning may include but are not limited to the following examples:

- **Entire class:** All children in a class attend in-class learning two to three days per week. On the days when children are not attending in-class learning, interactive instruction is provided by the teacher through distance learning. This model is appropriate for reducing exposure for classes to each other and is appropriate for sites with multiple Pre-K classes or other grades onsite.
- **Two-day rotation:** Children are divided into two smaller consistent cohort groups. Cohorts would receive in-person classroom instruction two days a week. On days not in the classroom, children participate in distance learning that would include a combination of online instruction and learning activities prepared by the teacher and sent home to be completed with family support. Using this schedule would allow programs to thoroughly clean classrooms and other areas of the building on the day when no in-person instruction is provided.

“Student Cohorts” in Traditional & Hybrid Models

Create cohort classes to minimize crossover among children and adults.

It would be appropriate to set up cohorts of students that participate in activities together as a consistent small group to reduce interaction among all students. Cohorts don't mix, but physical distancing isn't always observed within the cohort group.

- In the traditional model, the class would be split into two consistent groups and the groups would participate in activities separately (i.e. one group has circle time while the other group goes outside).
- In the hybrid model, the class might be split into two groups that attend on different days.

Children should be included within the same cohort each day, and the same teacher could remain with the same group each day or the teachers could switch between activities.

- Lead Teacher could be assigned to one cohort. The Assistant Teacher assigned to another cohort.
- Lead Teacher is responsible for writing lessons plans and ensuring assessment data is collected. Co-planning is encouraged between the Lead and Assistant Teacher.

Full Distance



Purpose: No in-person instruction is provided which minimizes COVID-19 exposure; especially for more vulnerable populations.

Requirements for Utilizing this Model:

- All instruction is conducted through virtual learning and at-home learning activities.
- Distance learning **must** be provided through virtual learning **and** at-home, hands-on learning activities.
- Must ensure Lead and Assistant Teachers AND students have distance learning tools.
- Must have digital infrastructure to offer distance learning, sufficient number of families requesting model, and teachers with sufficient training in distance learning. Must be consistent with program operating model.

- Both the Lead and Assistant Teachers are actively engaged with students each day.
- Families must commit to support distance learning for their child.
- Learning materials and supplies are provided by the Pre-K program on a regular basis. These should include consumable supplies such as pencils, crayons, markers and paper and non-consumable materials such as manipulatives, puzzles, and books. **Packets of worksheets should be used minimally.**
- This model requires that teachers and students have access to high speed Internet and a device (computer, tablet, smartphone) for virtual instruction. Pre-K funds can be used to provide tools as needed. Please contact your Grant Monitor to discuss technology needs as a grant amendment may be required.
- Written instructions to support families in completing the activities are provided.
- Program maintains ongoing communication with families.



Full Distance Model Requirements

To implement a Full Distance Model, the Pre-K Program must provide a robust virtual experience for every child. It must include the following at a minimum:

- Lead and Assistant Teachers must have access to high speed internet and a device (laptop, tablet, smartphone) that is appropriate for virtual instruction.
- All children enrolled in the Pre-K Full Distance Model must have access to high speed internet and a device (laptop, tablet, smartphone) that is appropriate for virtual instruction.
- Programs should provide families with supplies and materials to support distance learning. Non-consumable materials such as manipulatives, books, and puzzles should be provided regularly. When supplies are returned, follow guidance for sanitizing materials before sharing them with other families.
- Instruction should include a balance of virtual instruction, family-led activities, and independent hands-on activities.
- Weekly lesson plans including plans for large group, small group, individualized instruction and assessment.
- Lead and Assistant Teachers should plan collaboratively and have established planning times.
- Teachers must have regular, weekly communication with families.



Full Distance Model Requirements

Teachers should provide a schedule of consistent large group instruction daily and work with families to design a schedule for small group and individual virtual instruction. Families should be supported in developing a consistent daily schedule to include the following activities.

Suggested Activities planned and scheduled by the teachers

- Daily
 - Large Group Circle Time
 - Story Time
 - Small Groups (Lesson with 3 – 6 children led by Lead or Assistant Teacher, must be planned for each child to participate in a daily small group lesson)
- Weekly
 - Individual virtual lessons with Lead or Assistant Teacher (lesson with individual child, differentiated based on child assessment data)

Daily Activities to be included as part of each child’s “school day”

- Outdoor play- *Teachers should provide weekly ideas for families to extend learning.*
- Center/ Independent play- *Teachers should provide weekly ideas for families to support learning.*



Full Distance Model Recommendations

Learning Format	<u>Suggested</u> Time Allotment	Learning Activity Examples
Virtual Whole Group	No more than 60 minutes per day, can be divided into smaller segments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher-directed instruction• Should be recorded and posted or emailed to families	Circle Time, Story Time, Music and Movement, Large Group Math, Large Group Social Emotional, Large Group Literacy, Science and Social Studies
Small Group	15 – 30 minutes per day: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher-directed instruction• 3 – 6 children per group• Can be provided by Lead or Assistant Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open ended activity utilizing materials provided to families• Activities should be aligned with the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards (MCCRS)• Small group literacy and supporting activity(1X week)• Small group math and supporting activity(1X week)
Individual Instruction	15 – 20 minutes, weekly per child: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher-directed instruction with an individual child• Can be provided by Lead or Assistant Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activities should be aligned with the MCCRS• Differentiate based on the needs of each child• Consider the child's learning style• Use assessment to inform instruction
Independent Play & Outdoor Play	Independent Play: 60 minutes per day Outdoor Play: 60 minutes per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide weekly activities for extending learning during independent learning that can be facilitated by family• Provide materials on a rotating basis to support learning



Full Distance Model Requirements

Communication with Families

- Teachers work with families to create a consistent daily routine for learning and play.
- Teachers contact each family **weekly** to discuss child's progress and answer any questions about instruction.
- A variety of methods are used to maintain ongoing communication with families (phone calls, emails, newsletters, social media posts, etc.).
- Teachers keep a communication log to ensure they are communicating with every family.
- Program has a plan for communicating with families of English language learners using their preferred language. Plan includes how the program will address language barriers (translation services, interpreter, translated materials in primary home language).
- "Office hours" are established for communication with families.
 - Teachers communicate a consistent time when they will be available for questions and conversations, and to provide guidance on learning activities.



If you have questions, please contact your Grant Monitor:

Pre-K Grant Manager:

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**To review additional guidance and information from the Office of Child Care, please use the link below:
<https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/covid-faqs>



How to Support Families in Preparing Their Children for Pre-K

Encourage families to practice handwashing with their child so the child can independently wash his or her hands.

Consider providing families with conversation starters or “social stories” to teach physical distancing, wearing masks or having temperature taken.

I Am Going Back to School:

<https://bestpractices.gsu.edu/document/i-am-going-back-to-school/wpdmdl=862&refresh=5ee106382ad141591805496>

We Wear Masks:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnP-uMn6q_U

Wearing a Mask to School:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1R1ISbfZ8TRchbHCiK_4svK7WLH62ISIH/view?blm_aid=32695

Time to Come in, Bear: A Children's Story About Social Distancing:

https://www.youtube.com/watchv=DA_SsZFYw0w&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0Bz6RmVPLV8YD2whhYT2RKz1jhjacGVu43g6mv3wLbDy-e9Kuowf6wWQk&blm_aid=32695

Video Teaching the Importance of Handwashing:

<https://www.autismresourcecentral.org/social-stories-for-young-and-old-on-covid-19/>

Additional Resources

General Tips and Information

- [Zero to Three - At-Home Activity Guide](#) This list of activities helps support development through play for infants and toddlers. The activities suggested for the toddlers can easily apply or be adapted for preschoolers.
- [Coping with COVID-19](#) Online resources to provide information from NAEYC, the CDC, and other educational organizations. There are multiple resources to support children's learning during this time.
- [Learning Keeps Going](#) ISTE and EdSurge have curated a list of free tools and resources as well as an Educator Help Desk.
- [National P3 Center - At-Home Teaching and Learning in PreK-3rd Grade](#) Guidance related to school districts' and elementary schools' supports for at-home learning across the primary grades (PreK-3rd grade).

Additional Resources

- [Take Home Learning Bags](#) Information on creating Take Home Learning Bags from A Pocketful of Preschool.
- [Coronavirus Hub for CCR&Rs and Child Care Providers](#) Information from Child Care Aware of America
- [Free Printable Handwashing Posters](#) These printable posters can be used to help raise awareness about handwashing.

Virtual Teaching Tips

- [Pre-K Virtual Lesson Example](#) from Conscious Discipline
- [What I've Learned about Teaching Preschool Virtually](#) article from We are Teachers
- [Tips for Distance Learning](#) In this one-hour virtual learning seminar, PBS master trainers and educators share tips and techniques to support engaging, effective distance learning.
- [7 Tips for Managing Distance Learning in Preschool](#) from Melanie Muskin, education director at a progressive preschool in Brooklyn.
- [How to Teach Distance Learning Preschool](#) article provided by “No Time For Flash Cards.”

Additional Resources

Supporting Dual Language Learners

- [PK-Elementary Online Resources for English Learners](#) Resource list divided by grade level and language level.
- [Learning Together at Home](#) Information and tips from Colorín Colorado
- [Wearing Masks Social Story in Spanish](#)

Social and Emotional Learning

- [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning](#) Offers suggestions for educators on addressing the social and emotional needs of students
- [National Association of School Psychiatrists](#) A set of materials for schools and districts to support their students and community around COVID-19 and pandemics
- [The National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations \(NCPMI\) - Teaching Social Emotional Skills](#) Activities, materials and tools to help children promote self-regulation or problem solving
- [Talking with Children about Coronavirus](#) Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- [Something Strange Happened in my City Social Story](#)

Additional Resources

Supporting Children with Disabilities

- [United States Department of Education Guidance](#) Question and answers on providing services to children with disabilities during Coronavirus
- [Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities](#) has a wealth of resources focused on making online learning more accessible, engaging, and effective for students with disabilities
- [Common Sense Media](#) A curated list of Applications and Websites based on recommendations by educators who work with students with special needs. Applications support the development of academic and social-emotional skills, as well as sites to assist teachers in providing differentiated learning opportunities
- [COVID-19, IDEA-related Q-and-A](#) In order to ensure that students with disabilities continue to receive the services guaranteed by IDEA and Section 504, the Department of Education has published a Q&A document for state and local educational authorities. This information answers the most common questions schools have about when and how they must provide instruction, including when to consider use of online or virtual instruction and other curriculum-based instructional activities



Additional Resources

Virtual Field Trips

- [We are Teachers: Best Virtual Field Trips](#) List of 25 virtual field trips
- [Google Arts and Culture](#) Google Arts & Culture has partnered with thousands of museums around the world to offer virtual tours
- [San Diego Zoo Webcams](#) Keep up with your favorite animals in these 10 different webcams
- [Monterey Bay Aquarium Webcams](#) The Monterey Bay Aquarium offers webcams so you can experience underwater life from anywhere

Resources for Families

- [Prop Boxes as Mini Learning Centers at Home](#) article from NAEYC describing easy ways to provide mini learning centers for at home instruction
- [The Importance of Play During Distance Learning](#) article from Edutopia with ideas that will help ensure children have rich play experiences at home
- [10 Things Every Parent Should Know about Play](#) NAEYC article explaining the importance of play



Additional Resources

Resources for Families

- [How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus](#) from the Public Broadcasting System (PBS). Offers ideas, tips, videos and suggestions to help support families and children in understanding COVID – 19
- [Learning Is Social, Emotional and Academic](#) A blog by Lorea Martinez offers parents' home with their children tips to ensure social emotional learning is a part of student learning
- [ReadyRosie - Healthy at Home: A Toolkit for Supporting Families Impacted by COVID-19](#) A free toolkit as a resource to support families with information and resources for supporting the children in their care
- [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\) - Family Resources Page](#) This website provides resources, tips, and ideas around child development and early learning domains
- [Conscious Discipline: Why Can't I Go to School Social Story](#)
- [Helping Children Cope](#) Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- [Helping Children Cope with Changes Resulting from COVID-19](#) Information from the National Association of School Psychologists
- [At Home Morning Meetings](#) information from Conscious Discipline for families on holding morning meetings which includes links to songs and activities.