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Teaching Young Learners in a Pandemic: Supporting Children in Pre-K – Grade 3 and their Learning Partners at Home

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Agenda

• Welcome and introductions

• Child development and the home–school connection in the context of a pandemic

• Strategies for teaching young children remotely

• How teachers can support parents and others in the home in their role as learning partners

• Preparing for the longer term: Strategies for states and districts to support remote early learning

• Q&A
A few terms

• **Learning partners** are a parent, guardian, or other adult in the child’s home, even a sibling, that educators can involve in supporting young learners.

• **Remote learning** describes all education that happens outside the traditional classroom, which could be:
  – **Synchronous**: A teacher and students interacting at the same time (via live video, phone, chat, or other medium)
  – **Asynchronous**: Students work on their own, and the interaction with the teacher is not simultaneous (for example, watch a recorded video book reading, email, text message, or completing instructional packets)
The need to address early learning during a pandemic

Students’ projected learning losses

**Slowdown** refers to students gaining no ground during the school closures.

**Slide** refers to students losing ground during the school closures.

Source: Tarasawa and Kuhfeld 2020
The challenge of addressing early learning during a pandemic

Support for learning varies by school, district, and state.

With instruction taking place from a distance, the challenge of teaching the youngest learners is substantial.

More than other age groups, younger learners need parents or other adults in the home to help them learn.
Child development and the home–school connection in the context of a pandemic
Home learning environment and parent involvement

Research suggests the home learning environment and parent involvement in children’s schooling are critical to children’s development and contribute to their academic success.

These influences can have the most impact in the early years of schooling.
Child development and the home–school connection

The interconnections between home and families and teachers and schools can shape a child’s development and capacity to learn.
Home–school connection in the context of a pandemic

With strong connections between home and school and support for their learning partners at home, young children can continue learning during these difficult times.
Equity issues

• Challenge of balancing work and family obligations

• Economic hardship

• Health challenges for family members

• Reliability of internet and accessibility of technology
Strategies for teaching young children remotely
What research suggests young children (PK-G3) need in order to learn

Practical strategies and tips for remote teaching that align with those principles
Research to practice: Routine and structure

Research suggests young children need...

Routines and structure

Strategies:

• Encourage parents to establish a daily schedule
• Send a sample school schedule with assignments and some flexibility
• Keep segments short for younger children
• Reach out to help where structure is lacking
Research suggests young children... Learn within the context of relationships with adults

**Strategies:**
- Learning partners can read to the child and monitor schoolwork
- Child and learning partner can watch online content together
- Offer synchronous online classes
- Offer opportunities to practice with the teacher to reinforce learning
Research to practice: Play and the learning environment

Research suggests young children...

Learn through play and manipulatives

**Strategy:**

- Teachers can encourage use of household items as manipulatives and materials
Research to practice: Provide choices

*Research suggests young children need...*

Choice to promote engagement in learning

*Strategies:*

- Offer multiple learning activities that allow choice by children
- Allow children to choose the timing of some learning activities
Research to practice: English learners

Research suggests …

When literacy and content instruction is integrated and contextualized in a child’s home language, learning may increase.

Strategy:

• Encourage parents and adults in the home to use their home language to read books and explain concepts
How teachers can support parents and others in the home in their role as learning partners
Involving and supporting learning partners at home

• Research offers information about:
  – Home and parenting characteristics that support children’s learning
  – Interventions that can improve the educational support for young children in the home
Research suggests principles for supporting involvement of learning partners

Practical strategies for supporting involvement of learning partners remotely
Research to practice: Teacher-parent relationships matter

Research suggests...

Programs that successfully connect with families to support children’s learning invite involvement and address parents’ specific needs and barriers

Strategies:

• Offer parent-teacher communication that can be initiated by either parent or teacher
• Show receptivity and openness
• Listen to families, identify barriers, and support overcoming them
• Leadership offers support and vision for family involvement
Research to practice: Brief and useful communication

Research suggests...

Providing tips for turning everyday home activities into learning lead parents to engage in these activities and children to make progress

Strategies:

• Use direct communication to engage parents
• Prepare brief, easy-to-understand tips for learning activities and make those communications accessible, e.g. using text messaging, email
Writing

Create a book at home. Staple or bind pieces of paper together. Before beginning the book, talk together about a favorite story or a new story that your child would like to “write.” Have him draw several pictures to fill the book pages. When the illustrations are finished, help him put words/sentences to the story. Start at the beginning and you can write as he dictates his story. As you write words, talk about the letters you are writing and the punctuation used in the sentences. Read the story aloud to him when finished and reread it with him throughout the week.

Math

Have your child make a prediction about how far he can jump just like the cow that jumped over the moon. How far can you jump backward? How far can you jump forward? How far can you jump outside? How far can you jump on carpet? How far can you jump on one foot? Work with your child to record the measurements (number of hops). Ask your child: Why do you think you jumped farther using two feet rather than one? Did you jump farther inside or outside? Why do you think that happened?

Literacy

The Cow Tripped Over the Moon read by author Tony Wilson

While reading the book, ask your child how the story is alike and different from the Hey Diddle Diddle nursery
Research to practice: Direct coaching

Research suggests...

Coaching parents on learning activities has promising results for children’s learning outcomes

Strategies:

- Promote attendance at virtual lessons by children and their learning partners
- Suggest various math activities and reading techniques
- Be available to explain assignments and learning objectives and offer tips on helping children understand a lesson
Research to practice: Literacy at home

**Research suggests...**

Home-based story book reading can promote children’s vocabulary development and early literacy skills

**Strategies:**

- Teachers can suggest ideas to learning partners on approaches to book reading and book discussions.
- REL Southeast’s resource page on [Supporting Your Child’s Reading at Home](#) provides useful examples and quick guidance.
Practical considerations for supporting learning partners

• Be clear about the objectives of home learning activities and about the instructions for the activity.
  – Quick tip sheets and activities that allow choice by parents and children may be easiest for parents to accommodate.

• Let parents know children need a few learning activities interspersed through the day, they don’t need to be sitting still and on task for the length of a school day.
Preparing for the longer term: Strategies for states and districts to support remote early learning
State and district planning

- Gather evidence of student participation and learning
- Support for learning in the home should not end with the school year
- Plan for the possibility of school closures and remote learning in 2020-2021
Strengthen infrastructure for home learning materials and technology

• Book circulation and distribution

• Further expand availability of devices and internet access
Continue communicating with families

• Help families maintain relationships with teachers and the school over the summer

• Support families whose students are not participating

• Continue outreach over the summer

• Consider how to contact families moving in and out of the district
Consider leveraging remote learning efficiencies

• Instruction may occur in multiple formats
  – REL Central Event: Strategies to Support Remote Learning Along a Continuum of Internet Access
  – REL is adapting teacher practice guides for at-home learning.

• But some remote learning can be offered to all, and teachers can collaborate and share.
  – PBS educational offerings can provide lessons for young children
  – Recorded lessons or book reading
  – Daily tip sheets of learning activities for parents
Children can learn and grow during this pandemic

By strengthening the connections with school and family supports, young children can continue learning during these difficult times.
Closing
Thank you and next steps
Where can I find more information?

https://compcenternetwork.org/covid-19
Contact us if you have any questions

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