

# PreK Learning from Home: Supplemental Resources for Families

## Purpose

This supplemental document to [Guidelines for Families and Guardians of PK-5 Students](#) is intended to support your family during the Continuity of Learning phase of school closure. As your family increasingly supports your child's learning at home, you may face questions about how your child learns best and how to structure their learning environment. The following resources are grounded in the Vermont Early Learning Standards and will support you and your child's learning at home.

## Supporting Your Child's Learning

Learning may look different at home than it does in a traditional school setting. Your family has unique strengths, interests, and culture that can be explored to enhance and celebrate your child's learning each day. At the same time, there are general recommendations that most families can benefit from, especially as related to setting routines and providing learning activities in a way that will make sense for your child, given where they are developmentally.

## Learning at Home

Your family is encouraged to keep the following ideas in mind when seeking to support your child's learning at home.

- **Learning occurs through play.** Play is the foundation for your child's development and learning. Your child engages in play to understand and learn about the world around them.
- **Offer learning activities to your child in a way that utilizes all five of their senses.** Your child learns through observation and exploration- touching, listening, talking, moving, smelling and tasting. Balance time between indoor and outdoor activities; encourage your child to explore materials (rocks, leaves, seashells, instruments, cooking utensils, etc.) that will motivate them to use their senses to discover differences.
- **Your child is an important member of your family.** Here are some ways to honor your child's membership and belonging:
  - Tending to your child's physical and emotional needs;
  - Tending to your child's general health and wellbeing;
  - Providing a stable and secure family environment;
  - Showing affection and unconditional love;
  - Respecting your child's individual personality and interests;
  - Taking a genuine interest in their lives;
  - Identifying and talking about what is important to them; and
  - Encouraging their curiosity, exploration, and motivation.

## Establishing Daily Routines

- You can help your child feel secure and safe and create a predictable, nurturing environment, by establishing consistent routines with built-in flexibility. Talk about the

routine with your child and incorporate it into your family's daily schedule. For example, in addition to learning and play activities, your child's daily routine might include eating breakfast, brushing teeth, feeding the dog, and story time.

- In addition to offering your child age appropriate activities, think about how long an activity should be to engage and hold their attention. Activities for three-year old's, are often 5-10 minutes long; for four- year old's, 10-15 minutes; and for five-year old's, 15-20 minutes. Posting and referring to schedules that incorporate visuals, like pictures or drawings, can help with transitions between activities (beginning and ending), and provide children with some predictability.
- The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (AAP) recommends watching and discussing television programs with your child. This will help your child understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them. While limits are still important, it's understandable that under these stressful circumstances, your child's screen media use will likely increase.

## **Strategies for Engaging and Supporting Your Child**

Click on the blue underlined text to learn more about strategies and resources to explore and share with your child.

[Listening to Your Child](#). Listening to your child shows them that you care about what they are saying. As they grow, it's important for your child to be able to manage their feelings, especially when you aren't immediately available. By acknowledging your child and telling them that you want to help, but need them to be patient, they will learn that you care even when you can't respond immediately.

[Practice wait time](#). Remember that your child is learning language and how to use it. Children need time to think about what is being said or asked of them, and how they are going to respond. It can take your child several seconds, or even minutes, to process information. Be patient as you wait for a response or answer. Quietly count to 7 before you repeat a direction or question. Using these simple tips, you may find that your child shows fewer challenging behaviors and enjoys more quality time with you.

[Encourage Pretend Play](#). Follow your child's lead in developing a pretend story to help prepare them for social scenarios or challenges. Play along and ask your children questions to find out their interests or what excites them. Keep your child talking and sharing by asking questions such as, "I wonder how that happened?". Even repeating back what your child says to you, as if it is a question, engages them in continued conversation. While watching television programs, using a computer, or engaging in on-line activities, you can interact with your child by discussing and asking questions.

[Keep Them Moving](#). Physical activity is essential for your child to be able to concentrate, learn, and have positive social interactions and relationships. Imaginative and dramatic play will allow your child to express themselves by building and creating in a variety of ways.

**Pass on Your Knowledge.** Share with your child what you are interested in and what excites you. Invite your child to help you in the garden, washing dishes, cooking, hiking, biking, or helping neighbors.

**Enjoy and share stories with your child.** There are many ways for families to enjoy stories together such as reading aloud (in person, online, or on the phone), listening to digital books and podcasts, sharing your own family stories, or even your child sharing tall tale from their imagination.

**Take advantage of being at home.** This time of change is an opportunity for your family to support your child’s growth, learning, and daily success.

*Adapted from The University of Texas Agency & Young Children. (2020) [Balancing Online Remote and In-Person Learning for Young Children.](#)*

## **Social and Emotional Support from a Young Child’s Perspective**

- I feel safe when...I can rely on you to meet my needs consistently, and when you greet me with a warm and loving smile every day.
- I feel confident when...you praise me for my efforts and encourage me to keep trying when I’m learning something new.
- I feel heard when... you look me in my eyes, tune into my thoughts and feelings or notice the things I’m looking at or pointing to in the world.
- I feel secure when...I know what to expect in the day, and when we cuddle up to talk, read, and sing together.
- I feel happy when...when we play games and do fun activities, laugh and act silly together, and share fun stories.
- I feel calm and loved when...you take care of my needs, hug me often, use gentle words, and show care and patience.

*Adapted from the U.S. Department of Education. (2020). [Fostering Healthy Social & Emotional Development in Young Children.](#)*

## **Tools and Resources to Explore**

**National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI) (2020).** The [Help Us Have a Good Day! Positive Strategies for Families](#) printable infographic from the NCPMI may help you positively support your young child throughout their day.

**Vermont Agency of Education. (2020)** The [Vermont Early Learning Standards-Family Resources](#) were developed with you, your child’s first and most important teacher, advocate, and nurturer, in mind. [The Vermont Early Learning Standards \(VELS\)](#) is an essential resource in ensuring your child’s healthy intellectual, physical, and social-emotional development.

**Vermont Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). (2020)** On [Vermont PBS Kids Corner](#), you and your child can view and discuss videos of “helpers” such as epidemiologists and doctors, tips for staying safe and healthy, and select episodes of PBS programs such as Daniel Tiger and Curious George. These videos support social and emotional wellbeing and can help empower your child during the COVID-19 outbreak. In the words of Mister Rogers, "Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary."

In addition, the Vermont Agency of Education has partnered with Vermont PBS to provide Continuity of Learning resources for Vermont school communities and students (PreK- Grade 12) during school closure. You can view the PBS schedule each week with supplementary activities on the Agency of Education's [Continuity of Learning webpage](#). The PBS KIDS channel features programming for PreK to Grade 3 and airs specialized learning content each weekday from 7 a.m.-11 a.m.

**Zero to Three. (2020)** [Choosing Media Content for Young Children Using EAIMS Model: Engaging, Actively Involved, Meaningful and Social](#) is a resource you can use to help your family choose engaging media. [Zero to Three](#) supports families based on the belief that parents and guardians are the true experts on their children, and that there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to raising children. The information and tools offered are designed to support families in developing their own ways to promote their children’s growth and development.

**American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). (2020)** The article [Working and Learning from Home During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#) addresses concerns you may have about screen time and offers other tips your family may find useful while working and learning from home.