



How to Use the Early Learning Standards and Distance Learning Guide to Support Children and Families

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency, many early care and education programs made the difficult decision to temporarily close. As a provider, teacher or caregiver for children from birth to age 5, this may be the first time you are fully implementing distance learning. This how-to guide will help you use the [DC Early Learning Standards \(DC ELS\)](#) and [Distance Learning Guide](#) to support children and families.

The updated DC ELS provide families and educators with information about expectations for what children know and are able to do, and describe how children progress at various ages and development levels. They focus on the whole child and include a broad range of domains because young children’s learning and development are interrelated. The DC ELS are aligned to the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five* (2015), the *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics* (2010) as well as the *Next Generation Science Standards* (2013). Not only can providers, teachers and caregivers implement practices associated with the standards but families can reference the standards in [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Amharic](#), [French](#), [Korean](#), [Chinese \(Mandarin\)](#) or [Vietnamese](#) for ideas to support their children at home. The following at-a-glance shows one example:

DC ELS At-A-Glance

For standard 6, *Uses language to express self*, indicators, examples, supportive practices and alignment to *Common Core State Standards* are highlighted. The DC ELS offers research-based examples and supportive practices as a springboard for your lesson planning and activity development. It is also important to consider how families will need your help adapting these practices for distance learning.

PRESCHOOL	PRE-K EXIT EXPECTATIONS	K EXIT EXPECTATIONS
Indicators	Indicators	Common Core State Standards
<p>6a. Uses new vocabulary in everyday speech to meet own needs and to explain, describe and manage social relationships</p> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say, “A caterpillar is in the cocoon.” <p>Supportive Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage children to tell stories about everyday routines such as walking to school. 	<p>Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas</p> <p>6a. Describes familiar people, places, things and events and with prompting and support, provides additional detail</p> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell about a trip to the grocery store, mentioning some items and when asked, say that they came from the freezer. <p>6b. Expresses thoughts, feelings and ideas verbally, enunciating clearly enough to be understood</p> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During small-group time, clearly repeat the directions given for an activity because classmates said they did not understand what to do. <p>Supportive Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When children are arriving in the morning, have them tell how they got to school. Ask questions to encourage them to give details about their journey (e.g., “Did you pass any stores? Did you see any stop signs? Did you go when the light turned green?”). • Encourage children to think of another way to ask their questions if you cannot understand what they are asking. 	<p>Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas</p> <p>SL.K.4. Describe familiar people, places, things and events and with prompting and support, provide additional detail.</p> <p>SL.K.5. Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail.</p> <p>SL.K.6. Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings and ideas clearly.</p> <p>Vocabulary Acquisition and Use</p> <p>L.K.4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on kindergarten reading and content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify new meanings for familiar words and apply them accurately (e.g., knowing duck is a bird and learning the verb to duck). • Use the most frequently occurring inflections

Can you prepare a vocabulary list that children are likely to encounter at home?

What other routines could families use as prompts now that children are not walking to school?

Knowing the children in your program, are there additional strategies you would recommend to their families to develop this skill?

Distance Learning Guide

The Distance Learning Guide can help you develop lesson plans and activities to support children and families learning at home. While extended screen time is not developmentally appropriate for children, you can use platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Google Meet to demonstrate activities and strategies that families can use independently with their children. The family engagement online session planning tool, on page two of the [Distance Learning Guide](#), gives an overview of this strategy and is summarized on the following page.



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- **Know It:** Identify the standard with which you want to support children and families using the DC ELS. Consider what adaptations you may make to the supportive practices based on distance learning. Think through the lessons and activities you have implemented in the classroom in the past and how you may adapt them for families to implement during distance learning.
- **See It:** Arrange time with families, either as a group or individually, to demonstrate the activity or strategy. Use online platforms, phone calls or other means to convey the information. Help families identify resources commonly available in the home to use during the activity.
- **Try It:** Encourage families to try the activities and strategies at home each day. Ask families to give you feedback on how their children are responding to and engaging with the activities.
- **Revise It:** Based on families’ feedback, consider any updates you can make to the activities and strategies, or any additional resources you can share.

Distance Learning Resource Guide for Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

OSSE has also published the Distance Learning Resource Guide for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to support administrators and teachers in the District’s public schools. Although not specifically targeted to early care and education programs, the strategies can help you successfully engage with children and families at home. The resource guide can be downloaded in [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Amharic](#), [French](#), [Vietnamese](#), [Korean](#) and [Chinese](#).

How can I help families support children while learning from home?ⁱ

In addition to preparing and adapting learning activities and strategies for families to use with their children, helping families establish healthy routines can help children with the transition to distance learning. Consider the following guiding questions families may have and how you can support them:

Guiding Questions	Relevant Resources	Ways to Use These Resources
How can I help my child to be ready for distance learning?	Make a schedule.	Most children are used to having a schedule for the program day, so recreating something similar at home can ease the transition to a different learning environment.
	Build-in breaks and provide physical activities.	Traditional schools and early care and education programs incorporate some sort of recess or outdoor time and a distance learning schedule should be no different. Outside time and fresh air have huge physical and mental health benefits.
	Get crafty.	Art and manipulative activities are an important part of education. Working with children at home provides families with an opportunity to get creative and artsy.
	Stick to a sleep schedule.	While it might be tempting for children to stay up late every night and sleep late every morning, changing healthy sleep habits is not beneficial to their physical and mental health. Sticking to nap schedules is also important for children’s development.
	Communication is key.	Maintain open communication with families to help them feel supported.



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How can I help multilingual families support children while learning from home?ⁱⁱ

The primary language used in your early care and education program may be different from the primary language(s) families use at home – partner with families and leverage linguistic and cultural assets to support children’s distance learning. Consider the following guiding questions families may have and how you can support them:

Guiding Questions	Relevant Resources	Ways to Use These Resources
How do I know what my child will do, learn and practice while learning from home if I don’t speak English?	Stay connected with your child’s early care and education program to understand what their plan is for instruction during your child’s time at home, in addition to the technology needs you may need to consider.	Call your child’s teacher or program to receive information about the procedures, dates and times for conferencing. Make sure to save the teacher’s email or another communication channel available.
How can I support my children to express their feelings and emotions while spending time with them at home?	Provide a journal or notebook to your child. Writing, sketching or drawing in a journal helps young learners to process their feelings in this uncertain time.	You can set aside time to talk as a family about how everyone is feeling and coping with the virus.
What do I do to check my child’s learning and development if I don’t speak English?	The DC ELS has developmental milestones that families may utilize. DC ELS is published in English, Spanish, Amharic, Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese (Mandarin) and French. Your child is not in the same room as the teacher. Don’t think you must be in the same room as your child or speak English to help.	You can set a time to talk about what content and/or learning tasks were assigned. Ask your child what was his/her favorite activity, what activity or content was the most difficult to accomplish and why.
Do I need to speak the language used in my child’s early care and education program to help my child while at home?	You don’t need to speak the language used in your child’s early care and education program. You can always use the language in which you feel most comfortable explaining your ideas or giving directions.	You don’t have to be an expert! One of the most supportive things you can do is to be a partner in your child’s interests. Think out loud or describe what you are doing as you do it, whether it is cooking, fixing something, taking care of pets or other housework. Ask questions, even when you do not know the answer!

Professional Development

Would you like more support? The [Distance Learning Guide](#) links you to professional development resources, including virtual sessions published in the Professional Development Information System (PDIS), online courses in Quorum and Early Childhood Investigations webinars. [PDIS](#) and [Quorum](#) are free to early childhood teachers and caregivers working in the District’s child development centers and homes. Contact the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Help Desk at ECehelpdesk@dc.gov, or (202) 478-5903 if you need help registering for PDIS or Quorum.

ⁱ Adapted from the [Distance Learning Resource Guide for Local Education Agencies](#).

ⁱⁱ Ibid., pg. 2