Office of the State Superintendent of Education

DISTANCE LEARNING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT?

This document is intended for center directors, owners and the early care and education workforce to engage with the children and families that they serve. Given that the ages of children serves varies vastly, so too does the approach needed to engage with children and families remotely. The use of distance learning technology in early childhood education (ECE) as a medium to deliver training and technical assistance has significantly increased in recent years. Over the last few years, a host of organizations such as Head Start and businesses such as Kaplan Early Learning (Kaplan) have developed distance learning platforms and systems to deliver professional development to the ECE community. Many offerings target topics that are generally applicable to the professional development needs of staff working in child development centers (CDC) and homes (CDH).

This document provides staff working in CDCs and CDHs in the District of Columbia a detailed overview of distance learning opportunities available to the ECE community. This guide outlines an overview of distance learning systems, tips for online success and information on current distance learning opportunities available. In addition, the guide provides information on resources and strategies to engage families remotely.

WHAT DOES DISTANCE LEARNING MEAN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION?

Distance learning commonly refers to learning opportunities for children that are available online. Currently, there are a host of distance learning systems within the ECE community. The level of engagement and conversation needed often drives the platform used. Large-scale trainings are often supported using GotoWebinar, Cisco Webex and Adobe Connect. Smaller, more imitate courses with no more than 100 participants are often offered using Zoom, Microsoft Teams and GoToMeeting. Google Hangouts, Google Classroom and Blackboard are often used to teach ongoing courses, especially in K-12 settings, where extensive collaboration between students and teachers are warranted.

OSSE recommends that early childhood providers in the District use Google Hangouts to support web-based interactions with families. Google Hangouts is a free resource from Google, completely integrated with Google mail and calendar systems with an app available. A Google Hangouts training series has been developed to aid teachers and directors in utilizing the free resource. The training will provide an overview of Google Hangouts, assistance in navigating the system and share strategies for using it as a tool to support family engagement.

TRAINING EVENT	DATES	TIME	REGISTRATION LINK
Google Hangouts	Mondays in April and May	1-2 p.m.	Google Hangouts

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT: PARTNERS IN DISTANCE LEARNING

Online learning and various engagement distance learning platforms serve as a great opportunity to engage families in meaningful ways. Typically, teachers use "passive" communication systems and engage families using tools such as emails, e-newsletters, texts and Facebook. "Active" engagement is seeing the family as a partner in a child's development and engaging the child's family in meaningful ways to support child development. This is a great time to build an active system of communication with families and engage them deeply in the child development process.

ROLE OF THE TEACHER

The role of the teacher in this setting is to facilitate continued learning and interaction opportunities while the children are not physically in the classroom. This may mean reading a book to children and actively engaging them in the story, in the same way you would in a typical classroom setting. For preschool children, this may also mean sharing activities or assignments with children, reviewing the assignments and providing feedback to the children.

It is also helpful for you to provide parents and families with support to ensure continued learning while children are at home. For example, taking the time to provide parents and families with pointers –such as telling the children stories and asking the child to think of an interesting story, ultimately helping to improve their language and literacy skills. Additionally, guiding parents/families to name out loud key skills in numbers, colors, vocabulary, or other skills – e.g., counting snacks out loud, noting the colors of the world around them, etc.

GETTING STARTED

- Develop an outline for what you would like to accomplish with each session for families. See attached sample, Figure A, below as a guide. Family engagement sessions should be no more than 20 to 30 minutes focused on assisting families in teaching their children at home.
- Be practical. Online learning as a tool for family engagement is new. Start small and expand.
- Network with other teachers and colleagues to develop to develop plans and share across the system.
- Consider the developmental needs of all children and their families as you develop the plan.
- Attend a training on Google Hangouts.

- Collect feedback. Develop a brief poll or survey to collect feedback from families. Use the feedback to identify additional resources families need and as a tool to revise any areas in that need to improve.
- Develop a family engagement schedule and calendar of activities. Let families know the frequency of family engagement sessions, weekly, daily or bi-weekly.
- Create an engaging and easily remembered session title such as Family Fun at a Distance, Homebound Learning for All, etc.
- View parents and families as a Learning Hero[1], charged with supporting learning at home!

Figure A. Family Engagement Online Session Planning Tool

SESSION COMPONENTS	DESCRIPTION	RESOURCES	TIME
Know It	• Identify the milestone and skill you would like families to aid in developing based on the District's Early Learning Standards and developmentally appropriate practices. • Provide background information on the session.	• Center for Disease Control (CDC) has the Developmental Milestones curriculum, CDC's Developmental Milestones. The site provides information on developmental milestones for children 2 months to 5 years of age. • Office of Head Start has developed a series of practice guides designed to aid teachers and families in improving their interactions with children. Practice Guides	10 minutes
See It	• Demonstrate the skill using a live presentation or video. • Identify the resources used.	• The Head Start practice guides provides a host of videos on sample interactions based on the standards and milestones.	10 minutes
Try It	• Encourage families to try the activities at home each day. • Provide information on resources at little to no cost. • Encourage families to share pictures and videos of the activities on social media and with you. • Encourage families to provide feedback on the activity.	• Identify additional systems or platforms to share stories. • Develop a Facebook or Instagram account so families can share their Try It activities.	10 minutes
Revise It	• Revise the activity and share based on feedback received from families.	• Share revised plan with families.	

WHAT RESOURCES CAN BE USED?

- Ready4K is a virtual family engagement and parenting curriculum provider that connects with families directly through text messages, is currently offering their full platform free until the end of the 2020 school year. They have very strong research backing and results for increasing school readiness. During this COVID-19 period, Ready4K has offered to provide their services free of charge to the District and are specifically adding curricula to support out of school children and supportive tools for families to explain the situation to their young children. For more information on Ready4K, please visit https://ready4k.parentpowered.com/.

- The Office of the Administration for Children and Families has developed an early intervention toolkit, Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive, focused on assisting teachers and families in recognizing developmental delays in young children. Resources include a Developmental Screening Passport and tips and resources for families to promote child development. For more information on the resource, please visit https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/child-health-development/watch-me-thrive/families.

- The Office of Head Start's Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ELCKC) has developed a handbook for multilingual families with information on six themes: family well-being, health and safety, healthy brain development, early learning and school readiness, guidance and discipline and family engagement in early care and education. Programs serving refugee families, newly arrived immigrant families and others may use this resource with families to help ease their transition to a new country. For more information on the resource, please visit https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/raising-young-children-new-country.pdf.

- The Office of Head Start's ELCKC has developed a series of Effective Practice Guides to teachers and their families in implementing and supporting effective child development practices. One of the guides, Social and Emotional Development, aids staff and their families in fostering a sense of identity and belonging in young children. For more information on the guides, please visit https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/effective-practice-guides/sense-identity-belonging-know.

- DC Child Care Connections has identified a series of online trainings and resources to engage families. Please see Table 1 below for more information on additional resource.

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1   "Who Can Be a Learning Hero? Every Parent". Learning Heroes, https://bealearninghero.org/

ORGANIZATION	OVERVIEW	LINK	SPANISH SITE	SPANISH RESOURCES	RESOURCES BY AGE (MONTHS)				CONTENT AREAS			
					0-12	13 - 24	25 -36	PREK	MOVEMENT/ MUSIC	LITERACY	STEAM	SOCIAL- EMOTIONAL SUPPORT
ABC Mouse	Progressive learning activities in math, reading, science, social studies, and art.	ABC Mouse	No	No	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ready Rosie	Teaching Strategies provides a free toolkit, Ready Rosie, for supporting families impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19). The free toolkit provides daily lessons plans for families of children, birth to kindergarten.	Ready Rosie	Yes	Yes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Scholastic	Resources and activities for writing, reading, and enrichment, and even offers virtual field trips.	Scholastic Classroom activities	No	No	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sesame Street in the Communities	Sesame Street in the Communities is a resource website for families and teachers that provide resources, lessons and strategies to support literacy and numeracy development in young children, ages birth to kindergarten. The site includes several archived webinars and video presentations included to provide caregivers with additional support as they work with young children.	Sesame Street	Yes	Yes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
WETA At-home	Public Broadcasting System (PBS) local television affiliate, WETA, MPT and WHUT have announced a partnership to support the education needs of families whose children are learning from home during the coronavirus public health emergency. The group has developed a weekly e-mail newsletter with suggestions for books, games and activities that families can do together as they watch WETA PBS Kids and WETA PBS (this is the station formally known as WETA TV 26). Each day you'll find a TV show, a link to a reader sharing a related book, an activity that families can do together, and an online PBS Kids game to play. The language can be easily translated and adapted to fit a variety of platforms, from texting to WhatsApp to e-mail. The format is designed to be flexible: Lessons can be shared at once or incorporated into a message from you to your staff and families.	WETA At-home	Yes	Yes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

ONLINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

DC Child Care Connections, has an extensive list of online course offerings posted on the professional development portal, the professional development information system (PDIS). PDIS, funded by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) provides a host of online course offerings for teachers, administrators, coaches and technical assistance providers. Topics include sessions on understanding the Business and Program Administration Scales, Creative Curriculum, the Environment Rating Scales and Early Learning Standards 101 and 201. Please visit PDIS, https://dcpdis.org/, for additional information on available online course offerings.

ADDITIONAL ONLINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to PDIS, OSSE has also invested in Quorum, an online, 24-hour access professional development system for early childhood educators developed by Kaplan. Quorum subscriptions are provided to all ECE workforce members at no-cost. In addition to the courses listed in Table 2, also see the Quorum courses page for the required mandatory health and safety PD topics.

> Early Childhood Investigations is another free online professional development resources that is approved by OSSE in order for early childhood education staff to meet their annual professional development topic and hour requirements. Table 2 provides a sample of available courses in Quorum and Early Childhood Investigations.

ONGOING FEEDBACK

As part of a continuous improvement process, the systematic collection of feedback on training opportunities is essential to improvement efforts. At the end of each opportunity, participants will be asked to provide feedback on the training attended. The information collected will be used to identify new training opportunities and aid in addressing any areas in need of remediation.

In addition to providing feedback at the end of each online training opportunity, training attendees will periodically be asked to provide feedback on the status of the implementation of strategies and resources as it relates to their program improvement efforts.

Table 2. Additional Online Courses

Professional Development (PD) for Early Care and Education Workforce: Quorum and Early Childhood Investigations		
OSSE PD TOPIC	**A SAMPLE OF AVAILABLE COURSES COVERING EACH TOPIC**	
	QUORUM	**EARLY CHILDHOOD INVESTIGATIONS**
Developmentally appropriate programming for infants, toddlers, preschool, and/or school-age children, as applicable	☐ The Developing Infant and Toddler ☐ School-Age Care	☐ Supporting Young Children's Creative Thinking Using Problems They Care About: Engineering Design in ECE ☐ Skip, Turn & Hop into Teaching ECE Math and Language Arts Through Movement
Developmentally appropriate methods of positive behavior intervention and support	☐ Challenging Behavior ☐ Learning Environment: How Classroom Arrangement Impacts Behavior	☐ 4 Easy Steps that Will Flip Challenging Behavior in Your Early Childhood Program ☐ Lessening Challenging Behaviors': Teachers and Classroom as Partners in Facilitating Pro-Social Development ☐ Promoting Social and Emotional Learning in Preschool; Programs and Practices that Work
Inclusion of children with special needs, including the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;	☐ Basics of Inclusion ☐ Autism 101	☐ Inclusion in Early Childhood Programs: Successful Strategies from Experienced Early Childhood Educators ☐ Strengthening Inclusive Early Childhood Programs with Music Therapy Strategies: The Director's Role in Tuning up Music to Turn on Inclusion ☐ Inclusive ECE Classrooms and The Project Approach
Communication and collaboration with parents, guardians, and families	☐ Building Strong Relationships with Families ☐ Honoring All Families	☐ Communicating with Families in Head Start – 21st Century Techniques to Enhance Family Involvement and Relationships ☐ Digi-Engagement with Families in Early Childhood: Connecting the Way They Connect ☐ Build a Culture of Family Engagement Through Responsive Communication
Community health and social services resources for children and families	☐ Family Engagement	☐ Collaboration for ECE Program Success: How Community Collaboration Can Help Your Program Grow
Planning developmentally appropriate programs and activities for children and families;	☐ Developmental Milestones ☐ Curriculum Unpacked	☐ Coaching in Early Childhood ☐ How to Create Experiences WITH Young Children Rather Than Planning Activities FOR Them ☐ Technology and Digital Media in the Early Years: Big Ideas, Best Practices and Future Directions
Enhancing self-regulation and self-esteem in children;	☐ Building Resilience After Natural Disasters	☐ Using Story-time to Grow Executive Function and Self-Regulation in ECE: Setting the Stage for Success
Montessori curriculum, pedagogy, classroom management and other topics specific to the Montessori program, if applicable	☐ Enriching Play	☐ Executive Function and Language Development: Unpacking the Science and Exploring New Findings
Basic or advanced business practices	☐ Administrative Leadership	☐ "Systems Mindsets" as Business Solutions for ECE Program Leaders ☐ The Full Enrollment Formula: 5 Easy Steps to Your "Forever" Wait List ☐ Overcoming Obstacles to Enrollment, Recruitment, & On-boarding, and Say Hello to Innovative Possibilities ☐ Staff Retention in Child Care: Are you Rocking It or is Your Ship Rocky?