

August 2020

Ideas for Adapting the Learning Environment

Georgia's Pre-K classrooms should be organized around clearly defined learning centers and interest areas that allow children to experience high quality materials and activities. These materials and activities should be changed frequently to meet children's growing developmental needs and changing interests. Young children are active learners and need to touch, feel, experiment, and create. Appropriate learning areas should be established, and the setting should promote and motivate children's learning while being welcoming, inviting, and inspiring.

However, during this unprecedented time, we need to think outside the box to allow every child

the "Pre-K" experience of interacting with materials and each other while still complying with physical distancing and health and safety guidelines.

Here are some suggestions for the learning environment to adapt to COVID safety:

- When a center is not open on a given day, hang a stop sign on the center.
- Limit the number of students in each center.
- Consider bringing center materials to small cohorts of children in an area of the room rather than having the children retrieve them.
- Paint easel: red container for used brushes and green container for sanitized brushes.
- Art collage materials can be sorted into small baggies with each child's name on the baggie. Community materials would be eliminated; however, children have independent use of materials and can still create their unique artwork.
- Use individual carpet squares with a child's picture taped to the square indicating that this is his/her carpet square for seating during large group time.
- Use red and green circle cut outs: Children use the red cut outs and put them in centers or next to items that need to be sanitized after a child has used the item.
- Create prop boxes that can be rotated on a regular basis. Examples of themes for prop boxes include birthday celebration, picnic, flower shop, or office.
- Limit the sensory table/tub to water only and open to only one child at a time. Or make smaller individual containers for children to use individually.
- Outdoor spaces should be used for extending the physical classroom learning environment. For example, paint easels can be taken outside.
- Learning materials can be taken outside for individual or small group play to extend "center time" opportunities.
- Have story time or other large group activities outside so that children can more easily physically distance.

Learning Kit Suggestions

Pre-K programs should be prepared to provide Learning Kits to every child participating in each of the three Instructional Models.

When implementing the Traditional Model, a distance learning plan should be in place for providing activities and materials during a temporary closure due to COVID-19.

For the Hybrid and Full Distance Models, learning materials and supplies must be provided on a regular basis to support at home learning. Learning materials should include

consumable and non-consumable materials with instructions on how the items are to be used. Learning Kits might include items such as:

Consumable Materials:

Crayons, glue stick, paper (variety of types), pencils, colored pencils, markers, watercolors, stickers, collage materials, chalk, etc.

Non-Consumable Materials:

Books, puzzles, manipulatives (items for sorting, counting, ordering size), file folder games, magnifying glass, lacing cards, pattern

blocks & cards, ruler, sequencing cards, name card with picture, letter/number tiles, and picture/word cards.



Tips:

- Organize materials in a large bag, manila envelope, plastic storage container, etc.
- Include a list of the materials provided and indicate materials to be returned.

- Include a copy of your Daily Class Schedule.
- Traditional Model - Lesson Plans for two weeks including specific ideas for parents to do at home (consider using Choice Boards).
- Incorporate activity ideas that include common household items or don't require materials (ex. socks for sorting, "I Spy" colors/shapes around the home, etc.).

Worksheets, ditto sheets, and workbooks would not be considered appropriate materials.

Emergency Closure Tips

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 is provided.
- Programs must notify Pre-K specialists of any closures.
- Lead and Assistant Teachers are expected to work 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, 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.

Additional Resources

[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.

[Georgia SEEDS for Success](#)—DECAL Inclusion and Behavior Support Specialists are available to provide training, coaching, resources, and referrals to teachers, administrators, and families. Specialists provide training on topics such as including children with disabilities, preventing challenging behavior, and promoting strong social emotional skills. Specialists can also provide coaching to help teachers develop strategies to create a positive classroom climate and are also available to assist with development of behavior support plans for children exhibiting persistent challenging behavior.

[Georgia's Pre-K at Home](#)—Bright from the Start has a webpage with resources for parents to use with their children while at home. Activities are updated on a weekly basis.

For additional resources, refer to the Georgia's Pre-K Program School Year Guidance tool kit below:

<http://www.dec.al.gov/documents/attachments/SchoolYearGAPre-KProgramGuidance.pdf>

Tips for Sanitation and Enhanced Health/Safety Practices

Programs should develop a process to ensure that health and safety practices are maintained throughout the instructional day in all classrooms. Below are suggestions of how to maintain a clean and safe environment.

- Consider implementing a daily sanitation/cleaning checklist.
- Health screening and temperature checks prior to entry into building and classrooms.
- Limit direct contact with families as much as possible. Consider holding orientation, conferences, and family nights virtually.
- Consider having children and staff wear face masks.
- Frequent handwashing should be practiced. Hand sanitizer should be used when handwashing is unavailable.
- Have children wash hands prior to each new activity. (Put a stamp on students' hands to encourage the required length of time for hand-washing.)
- Provide hand soap, paper towels, and no-touch trash cans in all bathrooms, classrooms, and frequently trafficked areas.
- Clean, sanitize, and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared materials after each use.
- Consider rotating materials daily or only opening a few centers each day.
- When selecting materials for use in the classroom, consider what type of materials are easily sanitized vs. those that require more cleaning effort and attention.
- Set up a Red Table/ Green Table: Designate a Red table where children can place items touched or used which means the teachers have to sanitize items prior to going back on the green table where they can be used by children. Children can use the items on the green table only.
- Keep each child's belongings separated and in individually labeled storage containers, cubbies, cups, or baskets.
- Consider bedding for rest time that can be washed. Keep each child's bedding separate and store in individually labeled bins, cubbies, or bags. Cots and mats should be labeled for each child.
- Consider having separate mobile equipment (balls, hoops, etc.) for each cohort, or clean and disinfect equipment between use by different groups.