



The New York State Office of Religious and Independent Schools PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE CENTER (PDRC)

The Upstate PDRC - All NYS Regions North of NYC

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E – Newsletter

Issue 4



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How should we be approaching Early Childhood education in the era of masks and social distancing?

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Meet Elizabeth Senecal, Preschool teacher at St. Mary's School in Waterford, NY

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Professional learning and CTLE opportunities, free of cost to our NY Religious and Independent Schools

Resource Round Up:

Resources for live, remote and hybrid teaching students in the Early Childhood years.

FLASH Resource:

Learning Forward's recorded webinar: "Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Learners" [here](#).

Focus on Early Childhood Education:

Teaching our littlest learners...from a distance

One of the many challenges of teaching young learners virtually during a pandemic is that there isn't any playbook from which to draw. Every article, book chapter and web post on the topic has a 2020 publication date so we're left to pair what we already know of best practice in early childhood education with some lessons learned from teachers who have been the front line experts for the past few months. [\(1\)](#) Here's a snapshot of what we're learning about how to use technology while offering a developmentally appropriate educational experience for our youngest learners.

Social Emotional Health and Relationships: *The cornerstone*

- SEL is most effective when it's made part of the daily curriculum. There's an abundance of resources for including SEL during distance learning. [\(2, 2.5\)](#)
- Technology can help children make connections to their classmates, their families, and their world, allowing for 1:1 chats, family or small group meeting time, and 'visits' to or connections with students in other geographic regions. [\(3\)](#).
- Online interactions need to be balanced with off line activities that promote the development of SEL core competencies of self awareness, self management social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. [\(4\)](#)

Instruction: *Keep it varied yet predictable*

- Daily check ins (by whatever means work best –email, zoom, phone calls) at the same time every day assure students that you'll 'be there.' Knowing that each Monday or each Zoom meeting will start with [circle time](#) and that every Friday is Show and Tell builds students' connections to their classmates and reinforces autonomy skills as they learn how to prepare for their daily or weekly routines.

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- Teach students gestures to use consistently to indicate that they're engaged throughout virtual lessons. ([5](#))
- Provide weekly templates with daily routines that vary content and help families and students anticipate upcoming lessons. Families can reinforce routines and behavioral expectations so students enter the virtual 'classroom' knowing what to expect.
- Embed opportunities for play in your weekly routines and help parents understand the importance of off line activities that support learning—including independent play, exploration, role play, creative and performing arts. ([6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#))

Family Partnerships: to ensure technology is “appropriately used with the support of knowledgeable adults.” ([10](#), [11](#))

- Plan time with families to better understand their concerns and needs around access, language, and equity issues.
- Keep your communication and LMS systems streamlined. Offer cheat sheets or videos to guide parents in the use of the platforms.
- Help parents see themselves as media mentors, attentive to screen time *and* the quality of the content that children watch or create. ([12](#), [13](#))
- Be attentive to your use of (and help parents distinguish between) interactive and non-interactive media to ensure that young children are active learners, not passive viewers. ([14](#))

Embedded within this report are some resources to support you as you enter into the new school year. We hope that you will find them helpful as you continue to teach, love, and inspire--from a distance.



Upcoming Events

NEW On-Demand webinars:

[“Beyond the Book Report: How to Use Google Tools to Create a Project-Based Classroom”](#)

[“Best Practice in Preparing Online Classroom Content”](#)

NEW Quick Guides:

- Project-Based Learning
- Outdoor Learning
- Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
- Looping

[RESOURCES & TOOLS | Nys Pdrc Ros](#)

SAVE THE DATE:

RISE (Religious and Independent School Educators) Annual Conference, Nov. 8-10 (online live and recorded sessions)
[HOME | Upstate New York Professional Development Resource Center](#)



Practitioner’s Spotlight

Meet Elizabeth Senecal, preschool teacher at St. Mary’s School in Waterford, NY (where she also attended as a student). She is entering her second year of teaching.

Tell us how your spring went.

“It was a little crazy! In the beginning of remote learning, it seemed like I changed my system every week. The parents were very understanding, and by late April/early May, I had a consistent routine that allowed the class to progress from **lots** of review into new topics and learning.”

How do you use technology to stay connected, and what benefits have you seen?

“I use Class Dojo to record a 5-8 minute video every day. I record myself going through all of the elements of our Morning Meeting-- singing the good morning song, weather song and day of the week song. Then I read a story and connect it to our theme. Last year, I posted a follow-up activity for the kids to do at home, and their parents would share a photo or video response back on Dojo. This sharing let the families enjoy each other’s work and pass along messages from child to child.”

Communication with families is so important. How have you been working with family engagement?

“We all got very familiar with using Dojo for communicating and accessing lessons, and will keep using it even when we are teaching in person. In the spring, I held a Zoom meeting every two weeks so that we could gather as a class. It was hard to find a time that everyone could make, especially as the weather got nicer. I found that consistency and repetition was really important for families with young children. I try to keep it simple and stay with one method for communication that we all use.”

What are you adding to your Fall 2020 program?

“If we go back online, I’ll offer 4 choices for follow-up activities, and let the families choose 2 of them. This will stand in for the learning centers we have in the classroom. I’m also planning to do more parent education on why I pick certain activities -- how a simple activity like play-dough can develop the fine-motor skills that lead to writing in kindergarten. I want them to know why preschool work is important for their child.”



Resource Round Up:

Support for Preschool and Kindergarten Teachers



Read:

The Dos and Don'ts of Virtual Learning for Preschool Students



Watch:

Activities to Support Distance Learning: Engaging your Preschooler



Listen:

Podcast-Kindergarten Kiosk



Tools and Tips:

Pre-K Teacher Semester Planner Google Slides and PowerPoint template



Read:

Empowering Families for Distance Learning in Early Childhood



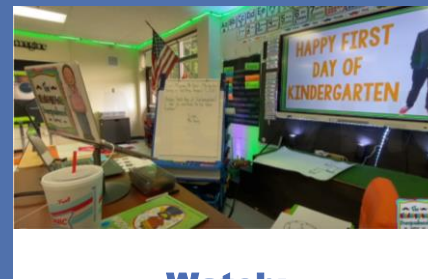
Tools and Tips:

Distance Learning Idea List for Preschool, Pre-K, and Kindergarten



Tools and Tips:

Virtual Preschool Circle Time Lessons, Videos, & Printables



Watch:

First Day of Kindergarten Virtual Teaching!



Read:

A New Approach to Learning Centers



Find us at: <https://www.nysed-soris-upstate-pdrc.org/>

