



Birth to Five Blended Learning Considerations

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Purpose

Throughout the summer, the Division of Early Childhood Education will release resources to support planning and implementation of blended learning (a combination of in-person and remote learning) for children ages 0-5. **This document outlines some big ideas to consider when beginning the planning process, together with policy and other guidance relevant to your setting.** Please also reach out to your early childhood contacts for support and further questions.

Context

Young children learn best in the context of relationships and through play and engaging hands-on activities. In early childhood classrooms, the relationships children develop with their teaching teams and caregivers are crucial to their development and learning. Additionally, the toys, games, and other materials in their classrooms support discovery and exploration – an essential component of early learning. At home, families, caregivers, and children build on those explorations by engaging in joyful, fun play and activities that build on children’s natural curiosity. **With this in mind, the focus of blended learning for children ages 0-5 is centered around building connections between in-classroom and at home experiences.**

Big Ideas

1. Relationships are key. ([Harvard University Center on the Developing Child](#))

As young children learn in the context of relationships, a focus on the teacher-child/family relationship is particularly key during times of transition. Developing safe, nurturing and predictable learning environments at school and home is critical. Remember that children are adaptive and resilient. The relationship between a child and a caring, responsive adult can mitigate the impact of the grief, loss and trauma that children are experiencing right now.

2. Maximize in-person experiences. ([National Association for the Education of the Young Child](#))

The younger the child, the more in-person experiences are recommended. This is because young children learn through play and in the context of relationships with caring adults, and are not yet independent users of technology. This may include selecting/creating a blended learning model that provides younger children with more in-person opportunities than older children. As always, the needs of the families in your school community and policy guidance and requirements should inform the specific model you select (e.g. do families have an easier time finding alternative childcare on alternating days as opposed to consecutive days?).



3. Ensure age-appropriate spaces. ([NYCDOE InfoHub: Setting Up Your Classroom](#))

Materials from age-appropriate classrooms should be moved to make other spaces safe and engaging for young children. This includes child-sized tables and chairs instead of desks, an age-appropriate library, centers (including arts and other materials), a child-facing schedule, and easy access to bathrooms and hand-washing stations. Note that the younger the child, the closer to the size-appropriate bathroom their classrooms should be.

4. Young children can and should play together. ([American Academy of Pediatrics](#))


Keep in mind that social distancing looks different for younger children. Children can play together





in smaller groups than usual, with a focus on washing hands and washing toys, instead of keeping children apart. In certain centers, like the art center, children can have their own set of materials on separate trays, bags or containers. During meals and rest times, furniture placement should be spaced out to support distancing. Outdoor time each day is essential.

5. **Use remote experiences intentionally.** ([National Association for the Education of the Young Child and the Fred Rogers Center](#))



Blended learning looks different in early childhood. Young children learn through play and active exploration. Therefore, teaching teams should keep in mind active and passive screen time and the quality of the content that young children are exposed to when learning remotely. Use your existing early childhood curriculum (DECE curricula can be accessed [here](#)) to adapt activities that can be implemented in the classroom and at home to support continuity of experiences.

6. **Continue partnering with families.** ([NYCDOE InfoHub Building Family-Community Relationships](#))

As you know, families are critical partners in remote and blended learning. Short synchronous or asynchronous activities are most successful when using technology, but at-home activities can also be non-technology based. If a specific tech platform will be used (e.g. Google Classroom), consider what training and support families will need to use that platform. Additional remote learning guidance, including at-home activity suggestions, can be found [here](#) and [here](#), with translations available [here](#).

