

Celebrating a Year of Growth and Learning

Thank you for your hard work ensuring children and families have positive remote learning experiences. With the extension of remote learning, we have the important task of considering how to end the school year remotely. This is a time that generally marks change and uncertainty for many children. This document offers guidance and suggestions on how to celebrate and acknowledge children’s accomplishments together with their families remotely.

We acknowledge that you, the adults who care for young children, are also experiencing grief, loss, and uncertainty. Take some time to talk with other adults in your program, and choose end-of-year rituals, celebrations, and reflections that feel right for you and your families. Sharing honestly about what we do and don't know is important when communicating with families and young children.

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Considerations when Planning End-of-Year Activities

Early childhood classrooms – and now positive remote learning experiences – are built on a foundation of relationships. Throughout the year, children, families, and teachers develop trusting relationships that support children’s development. It is important for everyone to have some closure to these relationships. It is also important that teachers provide some consistency and predictability for children as the year comes to a close.

For these reasons, we recommend that leaders and teachers consider providing the following supports as part of your end-of-year planning. Specific suggestions and resources are included in the following pages of this document.

- A family letter that explains how you plan to support children and families through the transition from their current classroom to their next school/program or class within their school.
- A virtual way of celebrating and highlighting the growth each child has made over the year, both in the classroom and remotely.
- An overview of what to expect as children continue to grow and develop, including what new areas of development families can look forward to over the next few months.
- An overview of what might be the same and different about next year, whether children are entering a new school, a new class within their current school, or continuing in their current family child care program. It is helpful to remind families that while we might not know exactly what school will look like next year, they will continue to be part of a learning community that will provide a safe and nurturing environment.
 - If children in your program are moving on to Kindergarten, this can be a time to support families in understanding how Kindergarten might be different from Pre-K and to provide suggestions of ways families can support their child with the transition.
 - Some children will remain in their same program, possibly with their same caregiver. Instead of using some of the ideas below as ways to say goodbye, consider how to use them to celebrate the growth, change, and development of children over the course of the year.

There are recommended end-of-year activities in this document for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. In determining how you provide closure for the year, it is important to consider the developmental differences between infants, toddlers, and children ages 3 and 4. For this reason, it is recommended that plans for closing out the year with infants and toddlers look different than those for preschoolers.

For programs who have experienced the loss of staff or family members, consider how those losses can be recognized during any celebration you choose to plan. Children are aware of grief and loss, and adults recognizing those losses is crucial to supporting their grieving process.

When deciding how you will choose to celebrate the end of the year and children's accomplishment with children and their families, please also refer to the [Authentic Assessment in Remote Learning](#) guidance for additional strategies.

**Please ensure that all families have completed the [DOE consent form](#) before sharing photos.*

Suggestions for Infants and Toddlers

Look How Much You've Grown. In a digital or homemade document, add a picture of an individual child from the beginning of the school year alongside a recent picture to show how much they have grown. Consider adding one or two accomplishments that the child made while in your classroom.

New Teachers, New Space. If the child is going to a new classroom or new setting, try to arrange for a virtual meeting with the child and their new teaching team. You may also send pictures of the new teachers and space to the child's family. Provide names of the teachers and room, and share that knowing *what* and *who* to expect can help children when they are getting ready to return to school.

Yearbook or Slideshow. Create a digital yearbook with a mix of photos of the child and work samples that have been collected from the beginning of the year. Include photos from remote learning, too. The photos should highlight growth, fun, and the exciting and memorable moments shared by children, families and staff.

Suggested Booklist. Create a recommended booklist that includes books celebrating the end of the school year, summertime fun, transitions, emotions, and developmental milestones. Also include some classroom favorites. Consider your children and families and choose books that are relatable to their lives, cultures, languages, and experiences. Consider providing links to these books when available.

Classroom Song Playlist. Create a playlist of some of your children's favorite and most memorable songs from the school year. Consider suggesting new songs as well as songs with which families may be familiar.

Goodbye Book. Create a digital or homemade book with photos of the activities, places, and materials that children enjoyed in the classroom to give children an opportunity to say goodbye to them (e.g. saying goodbye to crawling because now you are walking). Remind children that they are saying goodbye because they are growing and changing, and getting ready to start something new.

My Favorite Moments Book. Create a digital book that highlights some of your children's favorite moments from the school year. Be sure to include contributions from children and moments from remote learning with families.

Social Story. Develop a story for each child in the classroom about having to leave school suddenly, what is currently happening, and that they will not be returning to school this year. Encourage families to add what they are doing at home to the child's story.

Portfolios. Create digital portfolios for each child that include photos, work samples, and anecdotes highlighting developmental milestones and growth throughout the school year. The portfolios should showcase children’s accomplishments and growth, as well as celebrate a successful school year. You may also want to ask families for current photos to include.

Support for Parents and Caregivers. For some parents and caregivers, saying goodbye to the teacher who cared for their child may be difficult. Give them space to share their thoughts about saying goodbye and support them through the process on an individual basis. Acknowledge the unique way each family has supported their child, especially in the past few months. Show your appreciation for their partnership with specific gratitude for something you have learned from them, or something they have done that has supported you and/or their child. Also consider providing them with helpful resources (see end of document for suggestions).

Suggestions for 3- and 4-year-olds

Virtual End-of-Year Celebration. If all families in your program have internet access, invite them to join a virtual get together to celebrate the end of the year. Use the time to discuss the individual accomplishments of each child and the class as a whole. Celebrate families' contributions by recognizing learning that has happened at home. You could create a slideshow and invite families to have a sing-a-long and/or dance party as part of the celebration.

End-of-Year Celebration Book. Create a book to celebrate the end of the year. Include a picture of each child and an individual accomplishment they made this year. Consider also including children's work samples that you have collected, including remote learning photos. The photos should highlight growth and fun moments shared by children, families, and staff.

Certificates of Recognition and Completion. Honor children with certificates highlighting a special skill or talent or more general certificates to commemorate the end of the school year.

- Option A - Create digital certificates for children and share them virtually.
- Option B - Provide families with steps on fun and creative ways to make their own children's certificates at home.
- Option C - Create a short, personalized video clip honoring each child and recognizing their contribution to their classroom community.

Classroom Song Playlist. Create a playlist of some of the children's favorite and most memorable songs from the school year. Consider suggesting new songs as well as songs with which families may be familiar.

Goodbye Book. Create a digital or homemade book with photos of the activities, places, and materials that children enjoyed in the classroom to give children an opportunity to say goodbye to them (e.g. saying goodbye to the class pet, a favorite center, etc.). Remind children that they are saying goodbye because they are growing and changing, and getting ready to start something new.

My Favorite Moments Book. Create a digital book that highlights some of your children's favorite moments from the school year. Be sure to include contributions from children and favorite moments from remote learning with families.

Virtual Dance Party. Invite all children and families to attend a virtual end-of-year dance party.

Portfolios. Create digital portfolios for each child that include photos, work samples, and anecdotes highlighting developmental milestones and growth throughout the school year. The portfolios should showcase children’s accomplishments and growth, as well as celebrate a successful school year. You may also want to ask families for current photos to include.

Suggested Booklist. Create a recommended booklist that includes books celebrating the end of the school year, summertime fun, transitions, emotions, and developmental milestones. Also include some classroom favorites. Consider your children and families and choose books that are relatable to their lives, cultures, languages, and experiences. Consider providing links to these books when available.

Transition Support. Plan a virtual session with children and families to discuss what they may experience in their new grade, class or school next year. Consider including visuals, sample schedules, or virtual tours, and if possible, planning a virtual meet-and-greet with the child’s new teachers.

End-of-Year Countdown. Share creative and fun ways families can countdown to the last day of school. Some ideas include making a paper chain where each link of the chain represents one remaining day of school, filling a jar with pom-poms, marbles, or any other available objects, or making or finding a calendar and crossing off each day as it passes.

Social Story. Develop a story for each child in the classroom about having to leave school suddenly, what is currently happening, and that they will be returning to a new school/classroom after the summer. Encourage families to add what they are doing at home to the child’s story.

Additional Resources

Child Development Resources

- [What does it mean to be an infant/toddler?](#)
- [What does it mean to be 3?](#)
- [What does it mean to be 4?](#)
- [Explorations 1: Validating Children's Emotions: Appendix G](#)
- [Connections 6 weeks - 12 months: Responsive Caregiving: Sections II, III, IV, V](#)
- [Connections: 12- 24 months: Responsive Caregiving: Section II](#)
- [Connections: 24-36 months: Responsive Caregiving: Section II](#)
- [CDC Developmental Milestones: 2 months to age 5](#)
- [Zero to Three: Ages and Stages: 6 months to age 5](#)

Other Resources

- [Unit 10: Transformation: Sample Goodbye Book: Appendix B](#)
- [How to Write a Social Story](#)
 - See this sample social story on coping with COVID-19 in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)
 - Read [Rainbows in Windows](#), a social story about sheltering in place
- Consider the [Authentic Assessment: Measuring My Child's Growth and Development](#) document for families as a guide when creating end of the year activities.
- [Tips for Transitions](#)
- [Early Intervention to Preschool Transition](#)
- [Turning Five Process](#)