

Georgia's Pre-K Program School Year 2020 - 2021 Guidance

July 8, 2020



**Georgia Dept
of Early Care
and Learning**
BRIGHT FROM THE START

A close-up photograph of several wooden alphabet blocks. The blocks are light-colored wood with various letters and numbers painted on them in different colors. Visible letters include 'O', 'N', 'R', 'E', and 'I'. Numbers include '0', '2', and '8'. The blocks are scattered and overlapping, creating a textured background.

Preparing for the 2020 – 2021 Pre-K School Year

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning has developed this guidance to support Georgia's Pre-K Programs in preparing and providing high-quality instructional classrooms during the 2020 – 2021 school year. The purpose of this guidance is to support Pre-K programs in creating high quality instructional environments which foster the overall development and growth of children while prioritizing the health and safety of staff and children.

Early childhood is the time for being social, learning through play, making new discoveries, and practicing new skills. Four-year-olds learn best from hands-on activities with many opportunities to interact with peers and teachers. This reopening toolkit provides developmentally appropriate guidance to support Pre-K programs in their planning for a safe school year. DECAL recognizes that each program will have to make many decisions that are specific to its students, families, and resources.

This guidance was built upon the guidance and recommendations from the [Georgia Department of Public Health](#), [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), and [American Academy of Pediatrics](#). It is aligned with [Georgia's Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools](#) which provides guidance for reopening K-12 schools.

Preparing for the 2020 – 2021 Pre-K School Year

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School



In this document, guidance will be provided in the following areas:

- Definitions
- Intermittent School Closures
- Preparing for Temporary Pre-K Class Closures
- COVID-19 Spread and Determining Instructional Models
- Approved Instructional Models and implementation requirements
- Instructional Model Recommendations
- Recommendations for health and safety practices to mitigate the spread of COVID-19
 - Enhanced health and safety practices
 - Cleaning and sanitization
 - Physical distancing and cohort groupings
 - Learning environment
- Community COVID-19 spread and school closures
- Resources to support students and families

Definitions



Temporary Pre-K Class Closure: a temporary, intermittent school closure due to COVID-19.

- Students should receive instruction through distance learning.
- Lead and Assistant Teachers should provide distance learning and be paid during temporary closures.
- Days closed due to a temporary Pre-K class COVID-19 closure are not required to be rescheduled if distance learning is provided.



Vulnerable Populations: people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 including Older Adults and People with Underlying Medical Conditions (serious underlying health conditions including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune system is compromised).



Instructional Model: approved methods of operating Georgia's Pre-K classrooms for the 2020 – 2021 School year.

- Three models: Traditional, Hybrid and Full Distance
- A model must be approved for each Pre-K classroom.

Preparing for Intermittent Pre-K Closures

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 their Pre-K Specialist of any closures.
- Lead and Assistant Teachers are expected to work during closures.
 - Programs can determine if teachers should report onsite or work from home.

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, Zoom (or other 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.

COVID-19 Spread and Determining Instructional Models

The Georgia Department of Education, in partnership with the Georgia Department of Public Health, has developed [*Georgia's Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools*](#) to support school districts and communities in determining their plans and strategies for reopening schools. Local public health departments and school districts will utilize available COVID-19 data to determine the level of community spread (substantial, minimal/moderate, and low/no). Level of community spread will be one factor in determining the instructional model for local school systems.

All Pre-K Programs are encouraged to work with their local school systems and health departments in determining appropriate instructional models and temporary program closures. It is not required that Pre-K Programs select the same instructional model as their local K-12 district as the program needs and family needs may differ.



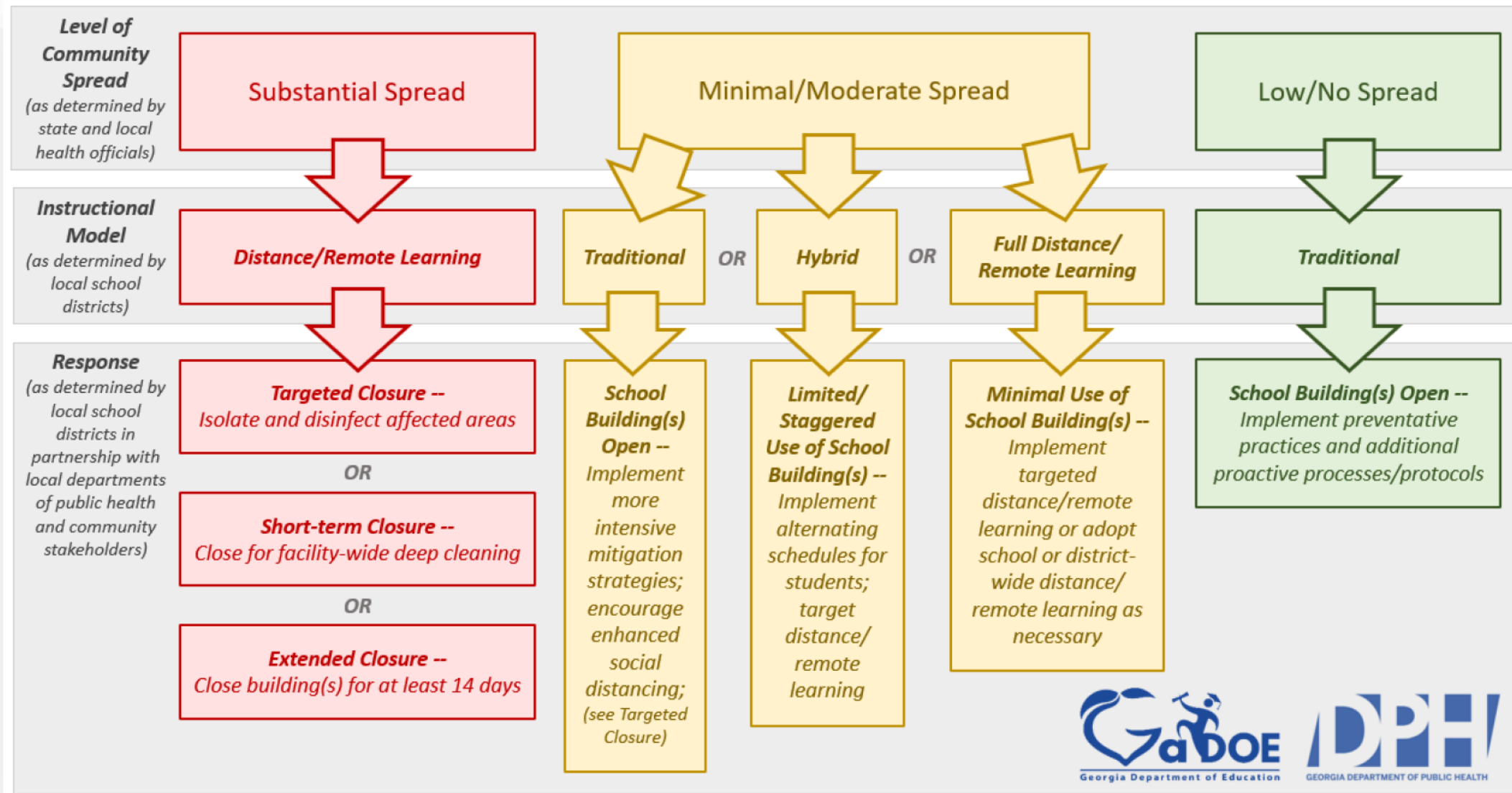
Addressing Community Spread in K-12 Schools

LEVEL OF COMMUNITY SPREAD (AS DETERMINED BY STATE AND LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIALS)

Substantial Spread	Minimal/Moderate Spread	Low/No Spread
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with local and state DPH health officials • Participate in contact tracing efforts and specimen collection efforts as directed by local health officials (to the extent feasible) • Schools that are closed, remain closed. Implement distance/remote learning (see <i>Serving School Meals</i> and <i>Supporting Teaching and Learning</i>). • Close off affected areas and if possible, wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. • Consider ways to accommodate needs of children, teachers/staff, and families at higher risk for severe illness (see <i>Protecting Vulnerable Populations</i> for considerations) <p>For additional guidance on addressing community spread, see the CDC's Considerations for Schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and maintain communication with local and state DPH health officials • Participate in contact tracing efforts and specimen collection efforts as directed by local health officials (to the extent feasible) • Implement enhanced social distancing measures (see <i>Transitioning, Large Group Gatherings, and Teaching and Learning</i>) • Post signage in classrooms, hallways, and entrances to communicate how to stop the spread. COVID-19 symptoms, preventative measures (including staying home when sick), good hygiene, and school/district specific protocols • Establish a protocol for students/staff who feel ill/experience symptoms when they come to school (see <i>When a Child, Staff Member, or Visitor Becomes Sick at School</i>) • Isolate and deep clean impacted classrooms and spaces • Consider ways to accommodate needs of children, teachers/staff, and families at higher risk for severe illness (see <i>Protecting Vulnerable Populations</i> for considerations) <p><i>Districts have the authority and flexibility to close school buildings and utilize distance/remote learning as needed.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and maintain communication with local and state DPH health officials • Participate in contact tracing efforts and specimen collection efforts as directed by local health officials (to the extent feasible) • Post signage in classrooms, hallways, and entrances to communicate how to stop the spread. COVID-19 symptoms, preventative measures (including staying home when sick), good hygiene, and school/district specific protocols • Establish a protocol for students/staff who feel ill/experience symptoms when they come to school (see <i>When a Child, Staff Member, or Visitor Becomes Sick at School</i>) • Consider ways to accommodate needs of children, teachers/staff, and families at higher risk for severe illness (see <i>Protecting Vulnerable Populations</i> for considerations)

<https://www.georgiainsights.com/recovery.html>

Georgia's Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools



School Decision Tree

All Schools Regardless of Community Spread

Confirmed person
with COVID-19 in
building?

Assess
Risk

*Short (potential 2-5 Day)
Building Dismissal to
Clean/Disinfect/Contact
Trace in consultation with
local health officials*

No Community Spread

- Prepare
- Teach and reinforce healthy hygiene
- Develop information sharing systems
- Intensify cleaning and disinfection
- Monitor for absenteeism
- Assess group gatherings and events – consider postponing non-critical gatherings and events
- Require sick students and staff stay home
- Establish procedures for someone becoming sick at school

*Monitor changes in
community spread*

Minimal to Moderate OR Substantial Community Spread

M/M

Is community spread Minimal to Moderate or Substantial?

S

- Coordinate with local health officials.
- Implement multiple social distancing strategies for gatherings, classrooms, and movement through the building.
- Consider ways to accommodate needs of children and families at high risk.

- Coordinate with local health officials.
- Implement multiple social distancing strategies for gatherings, classrooms, and movement through the building WITH EXTENDED SCHOOL DISMISSALS.
- Consider ways to accommodate needs of children and families at high risk.



Pre-K Instructional Models

2020 - 2021

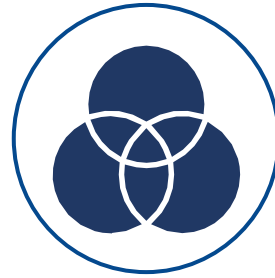
Georgia's Pre-K Program is built upon developmentally appropriate, play-based, interactive instruction and environments. **DECAL strongly encourages programs to place a priority on having students physically present in Pre-K classrooms.** However, DECAL acknowledges that the level of COVID-19 community spread may necessitate the temporary closure of Pre-K classrooms and instruction will need to be provided through distance learning. Additionally, some children may be medically fragile or have medically fragile family members and need access to distance instruction. DECAL also wants to provide flexibility in program delivery to meet the needs of children and families, Pre-K staff and communities.

The models below are possible instructional models for the 2020 - 2021 school year. Full descriptions and requirements follow.



Traditional

Pre-K is provided in the regular classroom setting. All students attend each day on site.



Hybrid

Pre-K is provided via a combination of traditional classroom and distance learning.



Full Distance Learning

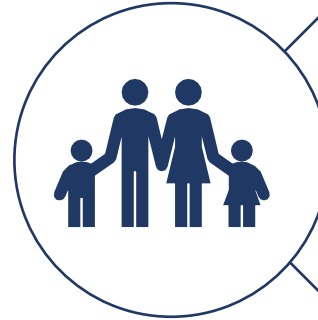
Pre-K is provided through full distance learning. Instruction is a combination of virtual learning and remote hands-on learning.

Choosing an Instructional Model

2020 - 2021

Each Pre-K Program is required to select an Instructional Model for each Pre-K classroom for the 2020 – 2021 school year.

- Programs are not required to select the same model for every classroom.
 - A site with only one classroom must select only one model.
 - A site with multiple classrooms can select more than one model (one model per classroom).
- Programs should consider the needs of children and their families as well as their Pre-K staff when selecting a model.
- Programs should select a model that best fits the needs of their families, community and program.
 - Private Program Pre-K Providers should review and consider the model used by the local system; however, it is not required.



What are the needs of the families you serve?

Consider surveying your families to determine their concerns and needs.



What is the current spread of COVID-19 in your community?

Consult with your local health department.



Can your program meet the model requirements?

Each model has specific requirements for implementation.

Choosing an Instructional Model

2020 - 2021

1. Review requirements for each model. Ensure that requirements can be met.
2. Gather feedback from families and staff.
3. Determine model to be used for each classroom.
4. Submit model approval form to DECAL for each class.
 - **Instructional Model Approval form will be provided by Wednesday, July 15th.**
5. Develop program policies for staff including:
 - Procedures if a staff member, child, or family member becomes sick.
 - Distance learning requirements for staff (i.e. telework, leave, job responsibilities).
6. Develop program policies for families including:
 - Procedures if a staff member, child, or family member becomes sick.
 - Distance learning procedures for temporary school closures (if appropriate for model).
 - Any specific family commitments based on model select (i. e. family agrees to provide support for distance learning).
 - Fee structure for meal fees, before and after care or care outside of the Pre-K day.
 - Taking daily attendance for in-person and distance learning.
7. Communicate model and policies with families and staff including school calendar and daily schedule.
 - Provide orientation (virtual or individually).
 - It is recommended that families and staff acknowledge model and policy in writing.

Traditional



Purpose: The Traditional model allows for daily in-person instruction for all enrolled students five days a week following normal operating hours. It follows a traditional school day and calendar.

Requirements for Utilizing this Model:

- Programs should monitor community COVID-19 data and recommendations from the local health department to determine if there should be a temporary Pre-K closure.
- Must have written distance learning plans available for any temporary closures due to increased COVID-19 spread.

- This model provides in-person instruction for all students each school day.
- Programs should consider dividing students into smaller consistent cohorts to minimize exposure. The cohorts could be served within the same physical space or in separate spaces.
- Programs should implement appropriate health and safety practices to minimize the spread of COVID-19.
 - Pre-K funds may be utilized to purchase appropriate sanitation supplies, hand soap and hand sanitizer, and face masks.
 - Deep cleaning of classrooms should be conducted prior to staff and students returning. Periodic deep cleaning should occur as needed and/or during weekends or school breaks.
- Established program procedures should be followed if a staff member, child, or family member becomes sick. The local health department should be contacted for additional guidance.
 - Close classroom as directed by the local health department. Teachers and students must transition into distance learning during the closure until the classroom reopens.
 - A distance learning plan must be implemented
 - when a class is closed due to COVID-19.





Traditional Model Requirements

Consider dividing the class into two groups or “cohorts” for large group activities.

- Morning Opening Activity/Circle Time
- Large Group Literacy
- Story Time
- Phonological Awareness
- Outside Time
- Closing Activity

Different areas of the classroom (or outdoor space) can be used thus allowing children to be more socially distanced.

- The Lead and Assistant Teachers can both lead the same “smaller” large group activities concurrently. For example, both teachers lead circle time at the same time for two smaller groups of children.
- One teacher can lead one activity while the other leads an alternate activity. The Lead Teacher has a Large Group Literacy Lesson while the Assistant Teacher takes the 2nd group outside for outdoor play.

Consider limiting the number of children in learning centers during center time. In lieu of the whole class participating in center time at the same time, teachers should consider smaller groups at different times during the day.



Hybrid



Purpose: The Hybrid or Blended model allows for programs to decrease the number of students and staff exposed to each other.

Requirements for Utilizing this Model:

- Model and distance learning schedule must be communicated clearly to families.
- Must plan for instruction in-classroom and for distance learning.
- Distance learning can be provided through virtual learning and/or at-home, hands-on learning activities.
- Both the Lead and Assistant Teacher are actively engaged with students each day.

- Pre-K instruction is provided through a combination of face-to-face instruction and distance learning.
 - There is flexibility allowed in the specific format to allow programs to design a structure to meet family and program needs (Examples on next slide).
- Families should arrange for an alternate learning environment for distance learning (i. e. at home with parent or other caregiver).
 - If the majority of families need onsite care for the 6.5-hour instructional day, then the program should consider another format or instructional model.
 - Any fees charged for care outside of Pre-K instruction must be communicated to families in writing.
- Learning materials and supplies must be provided by the Pre-K Program on a regular basis. These should include consumable supplies such as pencils, crayons, markers and paper and non-consumable materials such as manipulatives, puzzles, and books.
- It is recommended that teachers and students have access to high speed internet and a device (computer, tablet, smartphone) for virtual instruction.
- Families should be provided written guidance for distance learning activities.





Hybrid Model Requirements

Types of hybrid learning may include but are not limited to the following examples:

- **Split schedule:** Children are divided into two groups. One group attends Pre-K in the morning; the other half of the class attends in the afternoon. Children have planned instructional activities including materials provided by the teacher for the time they are not in class. Lunch should be provided for both groups. Meals could be provided concurrently but groups cannot be served in the same room.
- **Entire class:** All children in a class attend in-class learning two to three days per week. Instruction is provided through distance learning the other days. This model is appropriate for reducing exposure for classes to each other and is appropriate for sites with multiple Pre-K classes or other grades on site.
- **Two-day rotation:** Children are divided into two smaller consistent cohort groups. Cohorts would receive in-person classroom instruction two days a week. On days not in the classroom, children participate in distance learning that could include a combination of online instruction and learning activities prepared by the teacher and sent home to be completed with family support. Using this schedule would allow programs to thoroughly clean classrooms and other areas of the building on the day when no in-person instruction is provided.



“Student Cohorts” in Traditional & Hybrid Models

Create cohort classes to minimize crossover among children and adults.

It would be appropriate to set up cohorts of students that participate in activities together as a consistent small group to reduce interaction among all students. Cohorts don't mix, but physical distancing isn't always observed within the cohort group.

- In the traditional model, the class would be split into two consistent groups and the groups would participate in activities separately (i.e. one group has circle time while the other group goes outside).
- In the hybrid model, the class might be split into two groups that attend on different days.

Children should be included within the same cohort each day, and the same teacher could remain with the same group each day or the teachers could switch between activities.

- Lead Teacher could be assigned to one cohort. The Assistant Teacher assigned to another cohort.
- Lead Teacher is responsible for writing lessons plans and ensuring assessment data is collected. Co-planning is encouraged between the Lead and Assistant Teacher. Assessment data should be collected by both teachers. The Lead Teacher will be responsible for entering assessment data into WSO on a regular basis.

Full Distance



Purpose: No in-person instruction is provided which minimizes COVID-19 exposure; especially for more vulnerable populations.

Requirements for Utilizing this Model:

- All instruction is conducted through virtual learning and at-home learning activities.
- Distance learning **must** be provided through virtual learning **and** at-home, hands-on learning activities.
- Must ensure Lead and Assistant Teachers AND students have distance learning tools.
- Must have digital infrastructure to offer distance learning, sufficient number of families requesting model, and teachers with sufficient training in distance learning. Must be consistent with program operating model.

- Both the Lead and Assistant Teachers are actively engaged with students each day.
- Families must commit to support distance learning for their child.
- Learning materials and supplies are provided by the Pre-K Program on a regular basis. These should include consumable supplies such as pencils, crayons, markers and paper and non-consumable materials such as manipulatives, puzzles, and books.
- This model requires that teachers and students have access to high speed internet and a device (computer, tablet, smartphone) for virtual instruction. Pre-K funds can be used to provide tools as needed.
- Written instructions to support families in completing the activities are provided.
- Program maintains ongoing communication with families.





Full Distance Model Requirements

To implement a Full Distance Model, the Pre-K Program must provide a robust virtual experience for every child. It must include the following at a minimum:

- Lead and Assistant Teachers must have access to high speed internet and a device (laptop, tablet, smartphone) that is appropriate for virtual instruction.
- All children enrolled in the Pre-K Full Distance Model must have access to high speed internet and a device (laptop, tablet, smartphone) that is appropriate for virtual instruction.
- Programs must provide families with supplies and materials to support distance learning. Non-consumable materials such as manipulatives, books, and puzzles must be provided at least on a monthly basis. When supplies are returned, follow guidance for sanitizing materials before sharing them with other families.
- Instruction must include a balance of virtual instruction, family-led activities and independent hands-on activities.
- Weekly lesson plans are required including plans for large group, small group, individualized instruction and assessment.
- Lead and Assistant Teachers should plan collaboratively and have established planning times.
- Teachers must have regular, weekly communication with families.





Full Distance Model Requirements

Teachers should provide a schedule of consistent large group instruction daily and work with families to design a schedule for small group and individual virtual instruction. Families should be supported in developing a consistent daily schedule to include the following activities.

Required Activities planned and scheduled by the teachers

- Daily
 - Large Group Circle Time
 - Story Time
 - Small Group (Lesson with 3 – 6 children led by Lead or Assistant Teacher, must be planned for each child to participate in a daily small group lesson)
- 2x Weekly
 - Individual virtual lessons with Lead or Assistant Teacher (lesson with individual child, differentiated based on child assessment)

Daily Activities to be included as part of each child's "school day"

- Outdoor play- *Teachers should provide weekly ideas for families to extend learning.*
- Center/ Independent play- *Teachers should provide weekly ideas for families to support learning. Materials for independent play should be provided on a rotating basis.*





Full Distance Model Requirements

Communication with Families

- Teachers work with families to create a consistent daily routine for learning and play.
- Teachers contact each family **weekly** to discuss child's progress and answer any questions about instruction.
- A variety of methods are used to maintain ongoing communication with families (phone calls, emails, newsletters, social media posts, etc.).
- Teachers keep a communication log to ensure they are communicating with every family.
- Program has a plan for communicating with families of English language learners using their preferred language. Plan includes how the program will address language barriers (translation services, interpreter, translated materials in primary home language).
- "Office hours" are established for communication with families.
 - *Teachers communicate a consistent time when they will be available for questions and conversations, and to provide guidance on learning activities.*





Full Distance Model Recommendations

Learning Format	Time Allotment	Learning Activity Examples	
Virtual Whole Group	No more than 60 minutes per day, can be divided into smaller segments <ul style="list-style-type: none">Teacher-directed instructionShould be recorded and posted or emailed to families	Circle Time Music and Movement Phonological Awareness Large Group Literacy	Story Time Large Group Math Large Group Social Emotional, Science and Social Studies
Small Group	15 – 30 minutes per day <ul style="list-style-type: none">Teacher-directed instruction3 – 6 children per groupCan be provided by Lead or Assistant Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Open ended activity utilizing materials provided to familiesActivities should be based on GELDSSmall group reading and supporting activity (1X week)Small group math and supporting activity (1X week)	
Individual Instruction	15 – 20 minutes, 2x weekly per child <ul style="list-style-type: none">Teacher-directed instruction with an individual childCan be provided by Lead or Assistant Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Activities should be based on GELDSDifferentiate based on the needs of each childConsider the child's learning styleUse assessment to inform instruction	
Independent Play & Outdoor Play	Independent Play: 60 minutes per day Outdoor Play: 60 minutes per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide weekly activities for extending learning during independent learning that can be facilitated by familyProvide materials on a rotating basis to support learning	

Recommendations for Physical Distancing

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, the relative impact of physical distancing among children is likely small based on current evidence and certainly difficult to implement in Pre-K. Therefore, Pre-K should focus on more effective mitigation strategies. These include hand hygiene, infection prevention education for staff and families, adult physical distancing from one another, adults wearing face coverings, “cohorting”, and spending time outdoors.

Higher-priority strategies:

- Cohort classes to minimize crossover among children and adults within the program and within each classroom. (Divide children into two smaller groups to participate in activities together throughout the day.)
- Limit the mixing of children, such as staggering playground times and keeping groups separate for activities. Utilize outdoor spaces when possible.
- Limit visitors into the classroom and halt field trips.

Lower-priority strategies:

- Face coverings for children in Pre-K may be difficult to implement.
- Reducing classmate interactions and play in Pre-K classrooms may not provide substantial COVID-19 risk reduction.



Recommendations for Enhanced Health and Safety Practices

Consider implementing temperature checks and health screenings prior to children and staff entering the building.



Place hula hoops six feet apart for families to stand in while they wait for health checks.

Blow bubbles or set up a bubble machine to ease children's anxiety and boredom while waiting for health checks.

Consider having teachers and children wear face masks or coverings. DECAL is not requiring masks for staff or children. This is a program decision. Wearing masks all day may be difficult for some children.

Frequent hand washing should be practiced. Children should wash hands prior to or immediately upon entering the classroom. If a sink with soap and water is not available, provide hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. (Keep out of children's reach and supervise use.) Have children wash hands prior to each new activity.



Put a small stamp or marker doodle on children's hands to encourage them to wash their hands the required length of time by washing off the stamp/doodle.

Limit direct contact with families as much as possible. Have children dropped off at the entrance, have a staff member walk them to their classrooms, and at the end of the day, walk all children back to their cars or buses. Hold parent orientation, family nights and conferences virtually.

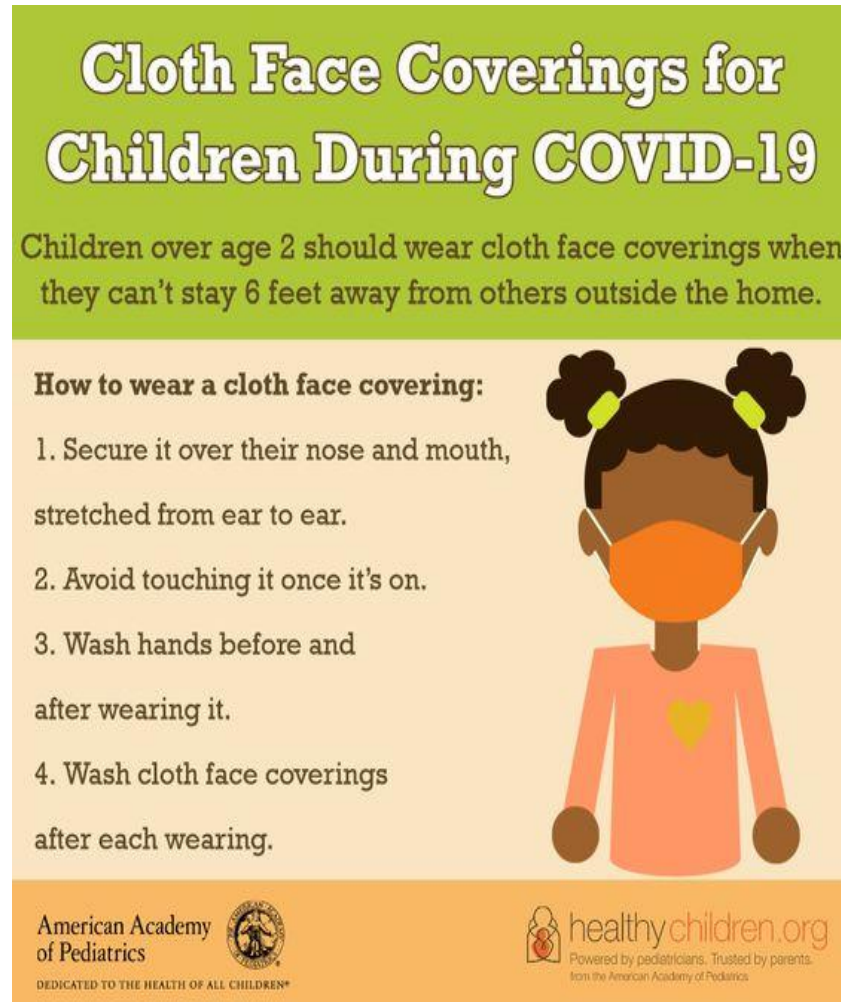


Record your drop off procedures for families to view with their child prior to the first day so children and families know what to expect.

Give a virtual tour of your classroom so that families can experience the classroom.

Recommendations for Enhanced Health and Safety Practices

Post signs on how to stop the spread of COVID-19, properly wash hands, promote everyday protective measures, and properly wear a face covering.



<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html>

Recommendations for Cleaning and Sanitizing

Provide hand soap and hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, 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 objects after each use. This may also include cleaning objects/surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily such as doorknobs, light switches, sink handles, countertops, nap cots or mats, chairs and cubbies.

Clean and sanitize materials, supplies and toys after each use. Programs may choose to rotate materials or only open a few centers each day.



When a center is not open on a given day, hang a stop sign on the center.

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. Examples of materials and toys easily sanitized include Legos, wooden and plastic blocks, plastic manipulatives, board puzzles, markers and plastic cars/figures.

Materials more difficult to sanitize include play-dough, soft surface blocks/manipulatives and crayons. Programs may choose to limit sharing of those materials.



Set up a “dumping station” for used materials and supplies. (Label each tub to reduce sorting later!) After completing an activity or playing with a toy, the child can “dump” the used materials into the tub so that another child will not use them until they are sanitized.

Recommendations for Cleaning and Sanitizing

Limit sharing of frequently used materials and objects.

- Keep each child's belongings separated and in individually labeled storage containers, cubbies, or areas.
- Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high-touch materials to the extent possible (crayons, scissors, pencils, glue stick, etc. assigned to a single child) or limit use of supplies and equipment by one group of children at a time and clean and disinfect between use.



Place a small basket or cup labeled with the child's name and store individual supplies in cubbies.

Limit the sensory table to water only and open to only one child at a time.

- Other materials typically used in sensory tables such as sand, beans and rice will be difficult to sanitize.

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. Bedding that touches a child's skin should be cleaned weekly.

- At nap time, try to space out children's naptime mats as much as possible, ideally six feet apart. Consider placing children head to toe in order to further reduce the potential for viral spread (CDC recommendation).

Recommendations for Learning Environments

Hallways

Consider marking hallways with directional arrows and footprints facing the direction the children's feet would be pointed when walking in the correct direction to indicate one way in and one way out.

- 💡 *Tape can be used to mark six feet on the floor to help children understand distancing in line and while waiting their turn.*
- 💡 *Have children use "airplane arms" to keep space between classmates when waiting for turns.*
Post six-foot-long posters of animals like sea turtles in the hallway to encourage physical distancing.



Recommendations for Learning Environments

Learning Centers

Consider limiting the number of children allowed in individual learning centers.

Consider bringing center materials to small cohorts of children in an area of the room rather than having the children retrieve them.

Consider making materials that are typically used multiple times by individual children into “single-use.”

- 💡 *After painting at the art easel, have children put the “used” paintbrushes into a tub of water and give the next child “fresh” paintbrushes.*
- 💡 *In order to have more opportunities for children during center time, create prop boxes that can be rotated each day. Examples of themes for prop boxes include birthday celebration, picnic, flower shop or office.*
- 💡 *For center time and outdoor play, have tubs containing Legos, wooden blocks, and block accessories for individual children to use for indoor and outdoor play.*
- 💡 *Small sensory tubs can be used during center and outside time for individual use. Consider using items that can be sanitized daily. Examples: colored water with paintbrushes and water with cups for pouring.*

Learning Environment Recommendations

Outdoor Spaces

Enforcing physical distancing in an outside playground is difficult and may not be the most effective method of risk mitigation. Emphasis should be placed on cohorting students and limiting the size of groups participating in playground time. (All children should be given the opportunity for outside play daily.) Outdoor transmission of the COVID-19 virus is known to be much lower than indoor transmission (AAP Guidance).

Consider having separate mobile equipment (balls, hoops, etc.) for each cohort or clean and disinfect equipment between use by different groups.

Outdoor spaces should be used for extending the physical classroom learning environment.

Painting easels can be taken outside and placed six feet apart.



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.

Always wash hands immediately after outdoor playtime.

Create a cleaning schedule for playground equipment to be cleaned and sanitized between uses by groups of children.

Recommendations for Learning Environments

Meals

Children and teachers should wash hands before and after eating.

Based on the CDC recommendations for group settings, it is recommended that meals and snacks be served in the classroom instead of a communal cafeteria or common space. Family style dining should be suspended until further notice.

Suspend tooth brushing at school.

How to Support Families Prepare Their Children for Pre-K

Encourage families to practice handwashing with their child so the child can independently wash his or her hands.

Consider providing families with conversation starters or “social stories” to teach physical distancing, wearing masks or having temperature taken.

I Am Going Back to School:

<https://bestpractices.gsu.edu/document/i-am-going-back-to-school/wpdmdl=862&refresh=5ee106382ad141591805496>

We Wear Masks:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnP-uMn6q_U

Wearing a Mask to School:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1R1ISbfZ8TRchbHCiK_4svK7WLH62lSIH/view?blm_aid=32695

Time to Come in, Bear: A Children's Story About Social Distancing:

https://www.youtube.com/watchv=DA_SsZFYw0w&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0Bz6RmVPLV8YD2whhYT2RKz1jhjacGVu43g6mv3wLbDy-e9Kuowf6wWQk&blm_aid=32695

Video Teaching the Importance of Handwashing:

<https://www.autismresourcecentral.org/social-stories-for-young-and-old-on-covid-19/>

Communicating with Families

Update your policies. Parents will be wondering how drop-off and pick-up policies have changed following the closures.

Teachers should use apps such as Remind, Group Me, and Class Dojo to communicate with parents daily.

Teachers can also use classroom photos, weekly newsletters, text, emails, and phone calls to communicate with parents on a regular basis.



Providers might consider putting together a mock video of drop off and pickup procedures. This might ease some anxiety for parents and children.



Teachers should consider sending a "Welcome to School" packet to each student. The packet might include a personal note for each child, classroom paperwork, parent orientation date, and school policies including pick up and drop off procedures due to Covid-19.



At the beginning of school, teachers and individual parents should form a two-way communication system (text, email, phone call, or note).



Communication to all families, such as newsletters, should be sent home on the same day each week.

Additional Resources

General Tips and Information

- [Zero to Three - At-Home Activity Guide](#) This list of activities helps support development through play for infants and toddlers. The activities suggested for the toddlers can easily apply or be adapted for preschoolers.
- [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.
- [Learning Keeps Going](#) ISTE and EdSurge have curated a list of free tools and resources as well as an Educator Help Desk.
- [Georgia Public Broadcasting Learning Media](#) Find resources for early childhood lesson plans including activities aligned to state standards.
- [Screen Time and Preschoolers](#) The Academy of Pediatrics recommendations for screen time of high-quality programming for children ages 2 to 5.
- [High Scope COR - Resource and Tools for Parents and Teachers](#) An extensive database of family activities for both Infant-Toddler and Preschool children.
- [National P3 Center - At-Home Teaching and Learning in PreK-3rd Grade](#) Guidance related to school districts' and elementary schools' supports for at-home learning across the primary grades (PreK-3rd grade).

Additional Resources

- [Take Home Learning Bags](#) Information on creating Take Home Learning Bags from A Pocketful of Preschool.
- [Coronavirus Hub for CCR&Rs and Child Care Providers](#) Information from Child Care Aware of America
- [Free Printable Handwashing Posters](#) These printable posters can be used to help raise awareness about handwashing.

Virtual Teaching Tips

- [Pre-K Virtual Lesson Example](#) from Conscious Discipline
- [What I've Learned about Teaching Preschool Virtually](#) article from We are Teachers
- [Tips for Distance Learning](#) In this one-hour virtual learning seminar, PBS master trainers and educators share tips and techniques to support engaging, effective distance learning.
- [7 Tips for Managing Distance Learning in Preschool](#) from Melanie Muskin, education director at a progressive preschool in Brooklyn.
- [How to Teach Distance Learning Preschool](#) article provided by “No Time For Flash Cards.”

Additional Resources

Supporting Dual Language Learners

- [PK-Elementary Online Resources for English Learners](#) Resource list divided by grade level and language level.
- [Learning Together at Home](#) Information and tips from Colorín Colorado
- [Wearing Masks Social Story in Spanish](#)

Social and Emotional Learning

- [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning](#) Offers suggestions for educators on addressing the social and emotional needs of students.
- [National Association of School Psychiatrists](#) A set of materials for schools and districts to support their students and community around COVID-19 and pandemics.
- [The National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations \(NCPMI\) - Teaching Social Emotional Skills](#) Activities, materials and tools to help children promote self-regulation or problem solving.
- [Talking with Children about Coronavirus](#) Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- [Something Strange Happened in my City Social Story](#)

Additional Resources

Social and Emotional Learning

- [My Coronavirus Social Story](#)
- [Caring for Each Other](#) Sesame Street “Caring for Each Other” COVID-19 Initiative
 - Includes various tip sheets and video clips related to taking care of ourselves, talking to kids about COVID, and coping with life challenges.
- [I Am COVID](#) Social Story explaining COVID to children
- [While We Can't Hug](#) Video Story
- [Wearing Masks](#) Seeing Other People Wear Masks (Printable Story)
- [Children and Masks from Scared to Safe](#) Video Story
- [Healthy Coping Strategies for Kids](#) Tips and suggestions from Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta
- <https://bestpractices.gsu.edu/resources/social-emotional/> Printable Tools for Promoting Social-Emotional Development

Additional Resources

Social and Emotional Learning

- [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.

Behavior and Mental Health

- [How Stress Can Lead to Changes in Behavior](#) article from Children's Healthcare of Atlanta
- [Mental and Behavioral Health Resources for Schools and Families](#) A set of resources detailing the kinds of support that is targeted in the materials.
- [Finding the Right Mental Health Professional for Your Child Guide](#)
- ["Healthy Coping Strategies for Kids" Guide](#)

Additional Resources

Supporting Children with Disabilities

- [United States Department of Education Guidance](#) Question and answers on providing services to children with disabilities during Coronavirus.
- [Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities](#) has a wealth of resources focused on making online learning more accessible, engaging, and effective for students with disabilities.
- [Common Sense Media](#) A curated list of Applications and Websites based on recommendations by educators who work with students with special needs. Applications support the development of academic and social-emotional skills, as well as sites to assist teachers in providing differentiated learning opportunities.
- [COVID-19, IDEA-related Q-and-A](#) In order to ensure that students with disabilities continue to receive the services guaranteed by IDEA and Section 504, the Department of Education has published a Q&A document for state and local educational authorities. This information answers the most common questions schools have about when and how they must provide instruction, including when to consider use of online or virtual instruction and other curriculum-based instructional activities.
- [Emergencies and National Disasters: Helping Children and Families Cope](#) This resource from the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations provides guidance for teachers but would also be a useful resource for families.

Additional Resources

Virtual Field Trips

- [Georgia Public Broadcasting Georgia Field Trips](#) This website provides links to virtual Georgia Field Trips.
- [We are Teachers: Best Virtual Field Trips](#) List of 25 virtual field trips.
- [Google Arts and Culture](#) Google Arts & Culture has partnered with thousands of museums around the world to offer virtual tours.
- [San Diego Zoo Webcams](#) Keep up with your favorite animals in these 10 different webcams.
- [Monterey Bay Aquarium Webcams](#) The Monterey Bay Aquarium offers webcams so you can experience underwater life from anywhere.

Resources for Families

- [Prop Boxes as Mini Learning Centers at Home](#) article from NAEYC describing easy ways to provide mini learning centers for at home instruction.
- [The Importance of Play During Distance Learning](#) article from Edutopia with ideas that will help ensure children have rich play experiences at home.
- [10 Things Every Parent Should Know about Play](#) NAEYC article explaining the importance of play.

Additional Resources

Resources for Families

- [How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus](#) from the Public Broadcasting System (PBS). Offers ideas, tips, videos and suggestions to help support families and children in understanding COVID – 19.
- [Learning Is Social, Emotional and Academic](#) A blog by Lorea Martinez offers parents' home with their children tips to ensure social emotional learning is a part of student learning.
- [ReadyRosie - Healthy at Home: A Toolkit for Supporting Families Impacted by COVID-19](#) A free toolkit as a resource to support families with information and resources for supporting the children in their care.
- [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\) - Family Resources Page](#) This website provides resources, tips, and ideas around child development and early learning domains.
- [Conscious Discipline: Why Can't I Go to School Social Story](#)
- [Helping Children Cope](#) Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- [Helping Children Cope with Changes Resulting from COVID-19](#) Information from the National Association of School Psychologists.
- [At Home Morning Meetings](#) information from Conscious Discipline for families on holding morning meetings which includes links to songs and activities.

Next Steps

Questions?

Email prek@dec.al.ga.gov

- Programs will receive a Pre-K Instructional Model Approval form by Wednesday, July 15.
- Submit online by Wednesday, July 22nd.
 - Forms will be reviewed, and feedback provided within 48 hours.
- Additional resources for teachers will be posted on the DECAL website.
- Pre-K specialists will host virtual regional teacher meetings.

