



# Engaging young children and their families: Best practices for remote and hybrid learning

November 12, 2020

**Link to slides:** <https://learningforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Webinar-11-12-20-1.pdf>

## Contact info for the panelists:

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## Resources and links from the panelists:

*From Cecelia Doyle:*

- [South Washington County Schools Early Learning Facebook Page](#)
- [Preschool Family Newsletter](#)

*From Dominique McCain:*

- [Texas Home Learning](#)
- [Book: \*Building Equity: Policies and Practices to Empower All Learners\*](#)

*From Kristin Valdes:*

- [CLASS Concepts: COVID Series](#)
- [Effective interactions in socially distanced classrooms during COVID-19](#)
- [Guidance for providing effective teaching strategies in virtual classrooms](#)
- [Coronavirus resources for educators and parents](#)

## Learning Forward resources:

- [2020 Virtual Annual Conference – Register NOW!](#)
- [The Learning Professional: Supporting Each Other](#)
- [\(New\) Professional Learning State and District Planner](#)
- [COVID-19 online resource page](#)
- [Learning Forward webinars](#)

- [Learning Forward blog](#)
- [Learning Forward membership](#)

## Check-In Poll Results

### 1. This year, my students are...

More engaged than in past years (40) 6%



About as engaged as in past years (185) 30%



Less engaged than in past years (401) 64%



### 2. This year, connecting with students' families is...

Easier than in past years (131) 21%



About the same as in past years (148) 24%



Harder than in past years (347) 56%



## Participants' suggestions and resources:

- For the weekly virtual meetings, it would be good to have an interpreter. Have them walk through the technology platform, explaining all the icons and what they do. How to navigate the program.
- [Google Meets](#) will live translate now! Maybe that is a viable option?
- My preschool uses [The Remind App](#) to stay connected to families!
- We use [Learning Genie](#) and [DRDP](#).
- We use [Microsoft Teams](#).
- We use [My TS family app](#).
- We use [ReadyRosie](#), the parents are doing great responding on there.
- [CLASS](#) is my favorite tool!
- We have asked kids to bring along a toy for discussion and engagement. It works great. We also teach the kids to move the laptop camera so we can see what she or he is doing.

- I use [VOOKS](#)! The children love it!
- I use VOOKS and the children love the animation. There's a narrator but I mute it and pause as I go.
- [Document cameras](#) are another option.
- We just read a story as guests in a virtual classroom with the PDF. We had second grade students see how fast they could mute/unmute to say a recurring line in the story. It was a bit garbled and took a bit of time, but kept the students engaged and made it really fun!
- We use [Eric](#), which has wonderful nonfiction books, videos, and read alouds on most topics.
- Normally in my class, the first five minutes are for my student to talk each other to socializes, and teacher turn off the camera.
- I use [ClassDojo](#) and [Google Translate](#) to communicate with my Spanish speaking parents.
- I translate it back and forth-English to the language and then back again on Google Translate before I send something out so I am sure that it is as close to what I am trying to communicate. If it is off I try to reword it in more simpler terms.
- We utilize Class Dojo to connect with families too. The families can set their Class Dojo to be received in their language of choice.
- [DeepL](#) is a great website for translation as well.
- In virtual classes, always, always, always thank the family for welcoming you into their home virtually!
- One of the teachers I work with is doing a survey to get feedback from families.
- We do a 15-min weekly, zoom check-in with the family and student.
- We have a question and answer session at the start or end of each class session.
- Daily, we end with a zoom check-in with all families.
- I have found it wonderful to have a parent sitting next to their child while we practice SEL and mindfulness. They are hearing the same thing we tell the kids and they "finally" understand what their child is doing when they talk about being mindful.
- I hold three live sessions for my virtual families to log into during our school day.
- Our zooms are recorded so the parent can share it with their child at their own pace. Our children are mostly three-year olds, so they cannot sit through that long of a Zoom meeting sometimes.
- We let our parents know it's ok if their child needs a snack, or a stuffy to hold, or just needs to take a break it is OK.

- All children do not need to be still to learn. Sometime children who are moving are gathering more information than a child who is still. Engagement is not just a child sitting still.
- I asked parent to have a specific space at home for zoom class, that help child to get in the routine of learning or school time.
- I have learned that its helpful for parents to understand developmentally appropriate behaviors and to discuss expectations. Brain breaks work.
- Plan the lesson with an emphasis on age appropriate active hands on learning!
- Play with a toy is a great ice breaker.
- I have two 45-minute PreK times each day. We have a morning song, flag pledge, mindfulness, a story, brain break, a little bit more literacy or math, and a SYLSH (See ya later scavenger hunt) where they find things within the house.
- During the Friday Planning, teachers make contact either phone or text as decided prior to the end of the week. Friday's are open for teacher planning and parent contact.
- I create activities in a way that is enjoyable for both, children and parents. When they feel included, they tend to engage more.
- Some of our teachers are recording classes for parents who have scheduling conflicts.
- I try to do a movement activity between writing and story activities.
- We have lessons for one hour for students at four different times of the day. We also send engagement activities for families to do at home to continue the learning. There is a mixture of all content areas: writing, gross motor, science, social/emotional, math, & reading. We also give links to click on and we have it translated into Spanish.
- We have Facebook posts daily, read aloud's, music, and movement or self-care activities. Then we have daily Zoom meetings incorporating large group activities. We have take-home family engagement kits which are either delivered or picked up weekly. We also do one-on-ones with the students weekly. We have a set of expectations for the parents and let them know that it is okay if their child cannot sit.
- Make time to have one-on-one with parents who are having difficulties with their children staying engaged -- just be a listening ear for parents.
- We created name tags for our children's stuffed animals that we were continuously seeing on our daily Zoom Chat.
- We play music and then we ask children to post their finished work samples on Class Dojo.
- We do a song to unite / introduce concept. We also do a simple activity and encourage parents to expand it at home at a later time if child is struggling and later they can try again and share photo/video on [Learning Genie Engagement App](#). At the end of our Zoom session we have a share time where children share something. It could be related to the theme or concept we are discussing or just something special that happened.

Children are able to stay engaged when they know they will have a chance to share. They love it! We also use First/Then signs, review expectations using simple visuals. It helps a lot!

- I think keeping goals short and realistic helps.
- Building the bridge between the teacher and the parent is crucial and if you can achieve that things work well for the betterment of the student.

**Participants' responses to panelists' comments and strategies:**

- Zoom meetings are easier for parents than having to drive to the site, find child care, for in person meetings.
- More needs are present, starting from logging in to the virtual platform. Keeping all children at home engaged sometimes in small areas of the home. Sometimes the adults are with the TV on. Other times older students care or support younger students.
- For some of our working parents it is actually easier to talk to them and conduct parent meetings via zoom. toddler parents had our highest turn out for our fall parent meeting this year.
- I think parents understand that connecting with me is more important than ever, since I don't see their child in person. They seem more accepting of messages and calls.
- As was said, I'm finding it easier to connect with families because they are present and involved due to the virtual setting.
- I find it easier to get information from parents now because I am able to hold Zoom meetings and face time with parents. I also I now have access to Parent Learning Engagement Program.
- It's much, much harder to keep the attention of our PreK kids for engagement on Zoom, but the parents are sitting (most anyway) there with their child so we are able to connect with the parents more this year!
- Great idea to do parent teacher conference nights!
- I can see that the Parent Educator Nights and the 1:1 Connecting are valuable strategies for engaging parents in their students learning.
- You have to know your students and meet them where they are at.
- What's developmentally appropriate is not always on-grade.
- Parents who are actively engaged in their child's learning is a plus in helping to minimize learning loss.
- SEL is always important, but it is especially important right now.
- We have seen some very positive changes in the children who have been able to attend in person classes. It was extremely difficult to keep their attention in ZOOM gatherings last year.
- I love how CLASS zones in on just the engagement of the teacher and children.
- I worked with our School District Tech dept. to align Seesaw & TS Gold.

- I added the learning objectives one-by-one into the Seesaw "system" but the tech department had to put on the finishing touches.
- Yes, the children all have stuffed animals and may have a connection to engage other students.
- I love that idea of PDF with reading a story!!!
- When you are creating PDFs of book, you MUST be aware of copyright.
- I like how this online learning can be an intimate source of connecting with our students. I read to my grandson over zoom and he is truly engaged. We are reading from the same book. He's 3 years old and can tell me what he thinks will happen next in the story, etc.
- The movement idea is awesome. The energy is so high.
- I love the idea of scheduling physical movement breaks even on a virtual format. Our classroom gets more involvement during song and dance activities than any other time during our scheduled face to face day.
- The children love talking with each other on zoom just as in the classroom.
- We need to have grace for the families. This isn't easy for anyone.