Introduction to the Virtual Pre-K Toolkit

This toolkit provides guidance for how to design and implement a virtual pre-K program in the 2020-2021 school year. The toolkit provides requirements for reimbursement eligibility and recommendations for quality implementation. Maintaining pre-K seats is a requirement of Strong Start 2020. While virtual learning does not replace the value of in-person interaction, it provides a flexible choice for families and is an important step in preparing children for Kindergarten.

Requirements for Pre-K Reimbursement

In order to be eligible for LA 4/NSECD reimbursements, the following criteria must be met:

- Teachers have daily contact with each child.
- Schools provide access to high-quality instructional materials - either printed or online - including supplies that families will need to participate in the lessons and activities.
- The school provides various methods for delivery in order to meet the needs of participating families, including a low-tech option for families who do not have device or internet access.
- The lead teacher must be certified, and standard ratios must be maintained. (Group size may not exceed 20 children with a 10:1 ratio.)
- Teachers keep track of daily attendance in a manner consistent with instruction and report to their school's attendance monitoring systems.

Some school systems have opted to create a separate virtual "class" or "classes" outside of a singular school building to meet the requirements for pre-K reimbursements. This is allowable for pre-K reimbursements, as long as the virtual classes meet the above requirements.

Synchronous Learning

Each child should have opportunities to participate in synchronous learning (live classes) at least once per day. For pre-K children, live classes should be planned for 20-25 minutes in length and a child should have the option to attend 2-3 live class sessions per day. Synchronous learning should be planned using a high-quality curriculum.

Synchronous Learning	Max Group Size	Length per day	Frequency
Morning Meeting	10-20 students	20-30 min	1x daily per group
Read Aloud & Response	10-20 students	20-30 min	1x daily
Small Groups	3-7 students	10-15 min	1x daily per group
Student Check-ins	1 student + family member	20-30 min	1x weekly per student

Asynchronous Learning

In addition to synchronous learning, children should have access to asynchronous learning (recorded classes, or learning planned by the teacher that is assisted by an adult in the home). Asynchronous learning should also be planned using a high-quality curriculum, and may be supplemented as needed.

Asynchronous Learning	Method	Length per day	Frequency
Math & Science	pre-recorded	20-30 min	1x daily
Music & Movement	pre-recorded	20-30 min	1x daily
Child-Directed Play	weekly outline	60 min	1x daily
Independent Activities	weekly outline	20-30 min	1x daily
Afternoon Wrap-Up/Meeting	pre-recorded	10 min	1x daily

Sample Daily Schedule

The following schedule provides an *example* of what a day might look like from a teacher and child's perspective.

	Teacher	Child/Family
8-8:30	Facilitate Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting
8:30-10:30	Facilitate Small Groups	Small Group Activity
		Child-Directed Play
10:30-11:00	Facilitate Read Aloud & Response	Read Aloud
11:00-11:15	Teacher Preparation (planning time, record and upload videos, prepare asynchronous learning activities, etc.)	Music & Movement
11:15-11:45		Lunch
11:45-12:15		Math
12:15-12:30		Independent Activity
12:30-1:30		Nap
1:30-2:30	Individual student check-ins (4 per day)	Gross Motor Indoor/Outdoor Activity
2:30-3:00	Office Hours (available for questions and individual follow up)	Afternoon/Wrap-Up Meeting
3-3:30		

Key	Synchronous learning
	Asynchronous Learning

Assessment

All children, ages 3-5, enrolled in public and nonpublic pre-K, Head Start, and child care centers that receive public funding must be assessed with *GOLD®*, regardless of the learning environment in which they are enrolled. Checkpoint data is reported to the LDOE three times annually, on the last days of October, February, and May. These checkpoint deadlines remain the same for the 2020-2021 school year. However, checkpoint documentation and data should be completed for all children enrolled on or before October 1. For children enrolled after October 1, only the February and May checkpoints should be completed. For more information on required item sets for traditional, hybrid, and virtual learning environments, please refer to ECE Guidance for Various Learning Environments.

It is important to note that programs should preserve the observational nature of the assessment, to the extent possible. While families play a critical role in supporting their children, it is the responsibility of the teacher to collect sufficient evidence, regardless of the educational setting.

While virtual environments will look different for each program, the guidance outlined below may be helpful as teachers prepare to utilize GOLD®:
- Use photos, videos, and anecdotes shared by families (via email, text, or phone app) as documentation;
- Incorporate Intentional Teaching Experiences (available through users' *GOLD®* account) into lessons;
- Use the most recent assessment information to help individualize instruction and efficiently add documentation with preliminary levels;
- Use family activities associated with the selected curriculum that can be printed or shared digitally to extend learning at home and/or to facilitate distance learning, in order to document in *GOLD®*.

Teachers should utilize individual student check-ins and family-teacher conferences as opportunities to collect anecdotal evidence as documentation for *TeachingStrategies GOLD®.* Teachers can use these opportunities to communicate regarding a child's developmental progress, discuss plans to address any gaps or difficulties, and take notes about how the child is navigating curricular activities at home. This information can then be used to create documentation within *GOLD®*, and inform preliminary levels.

For additional information, please refer to *TeachingStrategies GOLD®*: Using GOLD for Formative Assessment.

Guidance for How to Provide Materials to Children at Home
Virtual models should include the following considerations to ensure that content is supported by developmentally appropriate materials and encourages interactive learning.
- **Incorporate digital learning materials** for children to access before, during or following a lesson. Programs should refer to the Department's Education Toolkit: Academic Resources and the Strong Start Instructional Materials Guidance for curriculum-based materials and vendors that support learning. Other resources include:
  - Building out a series of pre-recorded videos to accompany weekly lesson plans.
  - Utilizing supplemental resources like Storyline Online to support read alouds and promote engagement during a virtual class meeting.
- **Utilize a survey or needs assessments** to gain a better understanding of the types of materials that children may have at home, and develop plans to integrate accessible materials into lessons.
  - Programs should refer to the Department's Family and Teacher Communication Plan Guide for guidance on how to engage and support families.
- **Schedule on-site pop-up learning opportunities** that accompany virtual lessons so that children have access to hands-on experiences that accompany weekly lesson plans in a safe learning environment.
- **To the extent possible, provide technology support** to children and families who lack access to technology.
- **Develop a system to deliver materials and supplies** that can be used in conjunction with virtual lessons. Materials and supplies may include hands-on manipulatives, art supplies, paper and writing utensils, or other. The example *take home learning kits* (below) accompany the Frog Street Pre-K Thematic Units and could be disseminated in accordance with meal pick-ups at the beginning of each unit:

Frog Street Thematic Unit	Hands On Materials	Paper Learning Materials
Theme 1: My School and Me	1 box of crayons - Writing and coloring journal to write a letter to your new teacher - Book: This Way to Pre-K - Shape or pattern blocks to build a representation of school	- Vocabulary picture cards - Name puzzle - Poem or lyrics to a song - Writing prompt: draw a picture of your new classmates that you met in a virtual morning meeting
Theme 2: My Family and Friends	1 box of crayons - Writing and coloring journal to draw pictures of your family members - Book: Homes for Everyone - Shape or pattern blocks to pretend to set a table - Bag of loose materials to create pictures of family members	- Vocabulary picture cards - Name puzzle - Writing prompt: compare jobs that your family members do - Scavenger hunt: list of household items you may find

Tips for Publicizing a Virtual Program

There are many platforms to encourage families to enroll in a virtual pre-K program. The following tips provide a range of ways in which to advertise the program and increase enrollment.

- Send an email to families who are already enrolled in a traditional program to offer a virtual program as an option
- Post on social media pages including Facebook, Twitter, school websites, etc.
- Mail flyers with instructions for how to enroll in virtual programs
- Create short videos highlighting key components of the virtual program and advertise through social media
- Offer phone applications appointments for families that are unable to complete an application online