



Illinois State Board of Education

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EARLY CHILDHOOD GUIDANCE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SEPTEMBER 11, 2020

How is portfolio documentation collected if a child is being served remotely?

ISBE does not expect that portfolio documentation and assessment data for preschool children will be collected during remote learning. Portfolio documentation and assessment data is only collected when there is sufficient in-person learning to support evidence of growth.

Do you know if/when more information will be released regarding limits on class sizes for Preschool for All (PFA) programs in public schools?

There will be no additional guidance released on class sizes. PFA/Preschool for All Expansion (PFAE) programs can have a maximum of 20 students per class in public schools. Licensed child care centers that host Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) programs must follow Department of Children and Family Services guidelines for class sizes.

Should grantees provide the number of children served and their times based on what was originally proposed in the fiscal year 2020 grant or adjust them to meet estimated to-be-served numbers for this year?

Grantees must provide their estimated number to serve as listed in the initial grant.

How many hours per day should a PFAE program meet? Should it still align with first grade, as was the previous guidance, or should it follow the guidance on page 58 of the June 23 document?

Preschool for All Expansion programs must meet for a full-day equivalent to the first-grade classroom in the local school district. If in-person hours are less than the minimum time, programs must provide remote learning materials to support continued learning at home.

Can programs that are serving the number of spots from their grant and meeting 12.5 hours a week per student meet those hours in a variety of ways?

Yes, you may serve children in a variety of blended in-person and remote learning models.

If the K-8 classrooms in a district have remote instruction in the fall, does the preschool program follow the district? Or should an in-school program be offered, since it is funded by a PFA grant?

It is up to each district to decide if PFA children will be taught remotely or in person this fall.

Are programs required to offer a remote learning option for children of parents/guardians who do not feel comfortable sending their children back to school?

Remote learning options must be available for parents/guardians of children enrolled in your program who are not comfortable with an in-person learning environment.

Can a district state in writing that remote learning will not be offered for PFA students at this time? This would be to maximize the number of PFA in-person learners while still adhering to Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) guidelines.

Districts may choose to provide in-person or remote instruction.

Have there been changes to the minutes of screen time allowed for PreK-aged children during remote learning? Can they have longer screen times?

Technology should only be used when it is the best way to support the child, even when children are learning remotely. Technology use should be minimized or limited. Please see page 61 of the Fall 2020 Learning Recommendations at <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Fall-2020-Learning-Rec.pdf> for additional information regarding developmentally appropriate use of technology. Additionally, the World Health Organization recommends that tots between the ages of 2 and 5 should also be limited to no more than an hour of sedentary screen time each day. See <https://nypost.com/2019/04/24/who-releases-guidelines-on-screen-time-for-children/>.

Can programs purchase items, such as playground equipment, that may not be used this school year due to remote learning?

Yes, if it is an allowable expense under the ECBG.

Does a remote learning class of 20 students have to include a teacher and a paraprofessional, as an in-person class does?

PFA/PFAE teachers providing direct instruction remotely or in person must hold a current Professional Educator License (PEL) with an early childhood education endorsement or proper temporary approval (Public Act 100-0645). Teachers providing special education supports remotely or in person for students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) must also have an early childhood special education approval unless itinerant services are provided per the IEP.

The Learning Recommendations published on July 23, 2020, recommend 1.5 hours of synchronous learning for students who normally receive a half day of instruction and 2.5 hours for students who normally receive a full day of instruction. What does this look like in early childhood settings?

The synchronous learning recommendation of 1.5 hours or 2.5 hours in early childhood settings, including PreK – kindergarten, can be met through a variety of methods. ISBE recommends the use of hands-on activities that support a strength-based approach and encourage students to learn in all developmental domains. ISBE further recommends that activities be provided for parents or caregivers to engage with students for a total of 1.5 hours or 2.5 hours throughout the day. It is important to understand that preschool children and kindergarten students will learn best in remote learning through hands-on, developmentally appropriate activities that take place in their natural environment. As a result, districts or programs should provide parents with guidance on how daily routines, such as cooking dinner, cleaning the house, sorting laundry, and taking walks, can become learning activities. A portion of the 1.5-hour or 2.5-hour recommendation may also be met through some technology, which may include virtual hang outs with a teacher and classmates or a virtual interaction with a teacher for students, to retain a connection with the school and teacher (e.g., story time with a teacher). Preschool-aged children should not engage in 90-150 minutes of uninterrupted digital learning. Additional materials should be provided to parents and/or caregivers to fulfill the remaining clock hour requirements for Preschool for All and Preschool for All Expansion programs and kindergarten.

Are dress-up clothes, kitchen food, baby dolls allowed? Can you clarify if teachers can use soft dolls and dress-up clothes?

Dress-up clothes and soft dolls are not recommended in the classroom due to circumstances that exist because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Programs must consult the ISBE/IDPH Joint Guidance as a final check on plans for use of classroom materials, outdoor play, and interest centers.

Are programs required to serve the afternoon students lunch or is a snack sufficient? Can snacks be sent home and count for meal requirements?

“The U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) announced the extension of four nationwide waivers through June 30, 2021. The waivers provide key flexibilities to sponsors so they can provide meals to children with appropriate safety measures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Non-Congregate Feeding** ([Nationwide Waiver to Allow Non-Congregate Feeding in the Child Nutrition Programs](#)): Under this waiver, sponsors can provide non-congregate meals during COVID-19 related operations through June 30, 2021. Under normal circumstances, Child and Adult Care Food Program meals must be served in a congregate setting and must be consumed by participants on site. FNS is allowing meals to be served to children outside of the normally required group setting to support social distancing.
- **Meal Times** ([Nationwide Waiver to Allow Meal Service Time Flexibility in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)): Under this waiver, program operators may establish meal service times that support streamlined access to nutritious meals. FNS is waiving requirements that meals be served at certain standard times to allow for grab-n-go options. This also allows for multiple days-worth of meals to be provided at once.
- **Parent Pickup** ([Nationwide Waivers to Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children](#)): Under this waiver, program operators may distribute meals to a parent or guardian to take home to their children. FNS is allowing parents and/or guardians to pick up meals and bring them home to their children.“

Can a paraprofessional be in their own room with 10 children if class sizes are decreased? Does a remote learning teacher have to have the same teacher qualifications as the classroom teacher?

Teachers providing direct instruction remotely or in person must hold a current PEL with an early childhood education endorsement or proper temporary approval (PA 100-0645). Teachers providing special education supports remotely or in person for students with IEPs must also have an early childhood special education approval unless itinerant services are provided per the IEP. Instruction must be provided by a qualified teacher during remote learning.

What online curriculums are available for Pre K-aged children?

Online curriculums are not recommended. Remote learning activities should be based on play, and technology should be limited.

Is there a recommendation on how frequently the district should communicate with families?

Communication with families should take place at least weekly via a variety of communication methods that meet their needs. Communication guidance can be found on page 60 of the Fall 2002 Learning Recommendations. See <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Fall-2020-Learning-Rec.pdf>.