

# Office of Early Learning Newsletter



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Dear Parents and Educators,

Feeling anxiety amid a global pandemic is normal and natural for everyone. As the adults, it's critical that we take care of our own mental and physical health, and that will help us to better support our young people. NYSED has compiled numerous resources offering guidance for self-care as well as strategies for talking about COVID-19 honestly and effectively with young people. Please read [Resources for Mental Health and Talking to Young People About COVID-19](#).

## Message from the Director, Jason Breslin

As we navigate through these unprecedented times, I want to first and foremost thank all educators for continuing to provide instruction to the students of New York. Our earliest learners will need us now more than ever as we move forward through this pandemic. It has been inspiring to watch teachers, families, and communities come together during this time to support one another. The Office of Early Learning has provided resources that are on the NYSED's [Continuity of Learning](#) webpage. I would encourage you all to look at it for further resources to support student learning while schools are closed. Thank you again for your continued support for our state's youngest learners. Stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,  
Mr. Jason Breslin, NBCT

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### VIRTUAL SPIRIT WEEK

(an idea to engage students while learning from home)

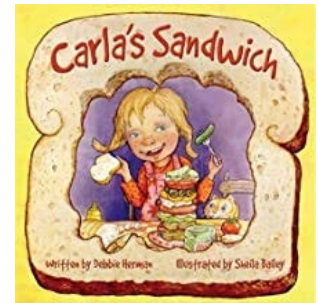
- MONDAY: FUN SOCKS DAY**
- TUESDAY: FAVORITE COLOR DAY**
- WEDNESDAY: HAT DAY**
- THURSDAY: BEACH WEAR DAY**
- FRIDAY: FANCY DRESS UP DAY**



## Activities for Pre-K and Kindergarten Students from Scholastic!

Scholastic, Inc. has promised four weeks of engaging at-home learning, free to teachers and families. The activities for Pre-K and Kindergarten have been [posted online](#), adroitly combining literacy and STEM. For example, Day One features rabbits--reading about them, watching a video about their habits, and then using masking tape on the floor to measure off how far different animals (and 4- or 5-year-olds!) can jump.

## Fan of Allison Janney, Viola Davis or Lily Tomlin? Free Actor Read-Alouds Plus Activities at Storyline



The Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) combined forces to build an [online library of read-alouds](#) by well-known actors. It's won awards from parent and library groups – and an Emmy. For example, Sean Astin does the honors for *A Bad Case of Stripes* while Allison Janney presents *Carla's Sandwich*.

## Additional Resources for At-Home Learning

- The Nassau School Library System has announced that Capstone Publishers' [Pebble Go](#) is offering a range of no-cost resources.
- **Good Things for Young Children** has created a set of developmentally appropriate ideas to engage with children and made those resources available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#). The activities support learning and development across all domains.

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- [\*\*Fun and Learning for Parents and Children: An Activities Handbook\*\*](#) contains fun activities for parents and children to do together at home, away from home, indoors, and outdoors.
- [\*\*NAEYC for Families\*\*](#) A good way to see all the options at this site is to click first “Browse Articles by Topic.” You’ll find lots of information and ideas organized by topics that range from play to math and includes playful approaches to math! Select a topic, then enjoy the many options that are available.
- [\*\*Vroom\*\*](#) is a set of tools and resources from the Bezos Family Foundation designed to inspire families to turn everyday moments into “brain building moments” by layering activities that are essential to healthy brain development onto existing routines. Vroom’s website offers a variety of tools to download for free, as well as a mobile app that provides easy access to daily “brain building” activities. Many resources are available in English and Spanish. Check out examples of [\*\*Vroom videos\*\*](#).
- [\*\*ZERO TO THREE\*\*](#) Click on one of the three topical headings (early development and well-being, early learning, parenting) to find articles, tools, podcasts, and videos for engaging and supporting infants and toddlers, some of which are available in Spanish. The site also provides [\*\*resources for early childhood professionals\*\*](#) during the COVID-19 outbreak.

[\*\*How You and Your Kids Can De-Stress During Coronavirus\*\*](#), by PBS, is geared toward families of children in grades P-2.



[\*\*Science Bob\*\*](#) encourages parents and teachers to practice “Random Acts of Science” by providing instructions and videos for interactive science experiments on his web site.

- [\*\*Google Arts and Culture\*\*](#) offers free access to visual artwork, musical, dance and theatre performances. In addition, students can [\*\*virtually visit museums\*\*](#), performance spaces and theatres or search by theme and zoom in on artwork.
- [\*\*The New York State Museum\*\*](#) is offering virtual field trips to tour their exhibits. Engage with scientists, educators, and historians as they take you behind the scenes to highlight finds and facts from the museum’s exhibits and collections.
- [\*\*PBS LearningMedia: Resources for Emergency Closure\*\*](#) As teachers, students, and families deal with school closures, PBS LearningMedia producers and educators have come together to curate a special collection of resources organized by grade and subject area. Find videos, lesson plans, and activities that support learning at home. Featured lesson plans in this collection contain full contextualization for the media they include. Plan and adapt their lessons in creative ways, using the Lesson Builder tool, Google Classroom, Remind, and more. PBS also has resources available on how to create and maintain a [\*\*home routine\*\*](#) during school closures. Maintaining predictable routines is reassuring for young children.

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## And don't forget e-books from the public library.

Buildings may be closed, and story hours cancelled, but anyone with a library card and an electronic device can borrow e-books, including thousands of children's titles. For more information, visit the website of the public library in your neighborhood!

### Talking with Children About the Coronavirus

News of the coronavirus COVID-19 is everywhere. Having children's lives change drastically can provide uncertainty. With the closing of schools and early childhood programs, it is important to talk with your child frequently about what is going on and share information that is appropriate for the age of the child. The [Children's Mind Institute](#) provides the following tips for talking to children about the COVID-19:

- **Don't be afraid to discuss the coronavirus.**
- **Ask your child** to tell you anything they may have heard about the coronavirus, and how they feel. Let them ask you questions.
- **If** you notice that you are feeling anxious, take some time to calm down before trying to have a conversation or answer your child's questions.
- **Be reassuring.** Talk with your child about what you are doing to take safety precautions and model ways they can take precautions; for example, teach them proper handwashing.
- **Develop** a routine at home.
- **Talk** about their feelings and acknowledge them.

### Understanding the Value of Play

NYSED OEL is excited to share the release of the latest [Developmentally Appropriate Practice Brief that highlights the use of play](#). The brief looks at how play can be used as an instructional strategy in prekindergarten through second grade classrooms.



[The Developmentally Appropriate Practice Briefs](#) are a series of briefs that address curriculum, classroom environment, instruction, interactions, assessment, family engagement and behavior in classrooms. This series of briefs aims to support administrators and teachers in making decisions that will lead to higher quality early childhood programs with positive outcomes for children.





### **Learning at Home Can Be Screen-Free**

Before anyone had heard the word "Coronavirus," the New York City Department of Education had created [resources for families](#) who want to promote learning at home. Suggestions about talking to children about the Coronavirus have been added. The list of activities for 3- and 4-year-olds is comprehensive, ranging from blocks and construction to dramatic play, sensory explorations and music. And no electronic devices needed! [Download](#) the 11-page "Early Childhood Instructional Resources." [Resources](#) for Kindergarteners are more academically oriented, and do require accessing some materials online, followed up with activities at home – for instance, drawing pictures after listening to a story read aloud.

#### **New York State Education Department**

##### **[Office of Early Learning](#)**

89 Washington Ave, Rm 319 EB

Albany, New York 12234

Phone: (518) 474-5807

Fax: (518) 473-7737

Email: [OEL@nysed.gov](mailto:OEL@nysed.gov)

#### **OEL Staff:**

Marybeth Casey

*Assistant Commissioner for the Office of  
Curriculum and Instruction and Early Learning*

Jason Breslin

*Director, Office of Early Learning*

DeSylvia Dwyer

*Supervisor of Education Programs*

Ashley DiMeo

Jane Fronheiser

Jason Gish

Karen McMahon

Meg McNiff

Tina Rose-Turrioglio

