



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

# Remote Learning Options for State Funded Preschool in the 2021-2022 School Year as a Result of COVID-19 Health Concerns

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## Background and Purpose

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For the 2020-21 school year, in consideration of public health and safety measures made necessary by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Colorado Department of Education offered guidance and flexibilities to districts regarding acceptable practices related to remote learning to address:

- Instructional hours requirements
  - “CDE Policy on Instructional Hours and Attendance for the 2020-21 Academic Year”
- Funding requirements
  - “Addendum to the 2020 Student October Count Audit Resource Guide”

In both cases, the guidance provided was explicitly limited to modifications made to the educational process for the 2020-21 school year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, some of these modifications may continue to be necessary for the 2021-22 school year for districts across Colorado. ***The purpose of this document is to outline requirements for continuing/implementing virtual remote learning options for state funded preschoolers during the 2021-22 school year as schools and districts begin the transition back to normal operation.***

**Note: Preschool is not included as a grade level in designated online schools or programs ([online schools serve children 5 - 21](#)). Outside of this designation, preschool children participating in remote learning are expected to be the exception. Remote learning is to be provided based on parent choice due to COVID-19-related health concerns only. As with the K-12 remote learning policy, it is anticipated that this will be the last year CDE will offer these types of flexibilities.**

The intent of this guidance is to provide flexibility to allow remote learning while outlining the required approval, assurances and documentation that must be in place for the 2021-22 school year for children enrolled in state funded preschool to access remote learning. These approval, assurances, and documentation requirements are increased expectations and accountability for remote learning for children enrolled in the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) and Preschool Special Education in 2021-22. Please be aware that there are increased expectations from what was allowed during the 2020-2021 school year.

Definitions and procedures in this guidance are aligned with the [CDE Guidelines for K-12 Remote Learning Options](#) to the extent applicable to preschool. However, this guidance is specific to implementing remote learning options for children enrolled under the CPP Act or found eligible for Preschool Special Education entitlements. Importantly, the education statute and rules that govern CPP and Preschool Special Education requires that programs be licensed by the Office of Early Childhood at the Colorado Department of Human Services and operate in compliance with the rules that regulate Child Care Centers. Programs approved to offer remote learning options for preschoolers are expected to continue to abide by the CPP Act and School Finance Act, as well as the Child Care Center rules, just as if they were operating in-person. For example, programs will not be approved to access funding for remote preschool if they enroll more children than the licensed capacity of the program, utilize teachers who do not meet the minimum qualifications, or do not offer all aspects of the program. Districts must ensure that whatever combination of in-person and/or remote learning they implement allows students to learn the same content (developmental and academic) as they would have learned under the in-person bell schedule. Additionally, children who receive preschool special education services through the implementation of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) must have the same access to the remote learning option as other children in the program who are funded by CPP.



**Preschool programming is expected to be offered to all families as an in-person option.** Only when a family has made a choice to decline in-person learning due to COVID-related health concerns should remote learning be offered, and then may only be made available when the district has a remote learning plan approved by the CDE Preschool Team and has submitted Preschool Assurances for Remote Learning (found later in this document). To fully support every child’s development and learning across all domains and content areas, to the extent possible, in-person and on-site opportunities should be prioritized, including preschool special education services.

CPP is a capped program and is intended to serve children with the highest risk of experiencing later challenges in school. Therefore, care should be taken in determining enrollment and eligibility processes in connection with implementing remote learning options for families. Many communities have fewer allocated CPP positions than potentially eligible children, CDE therefore expects districts to ensure that policies effectively enroll children most at risk as a priority, as outlined in the CPP Act.

Children with disabilities are expected to have access to a Free and Appropriate Public Education; in Colorado this is [defined for preschool](#) as being the same amount of programming as for children funded by CPP. Care should be taken to ensure that policies and options guarantee access to appropriate activities as well as specialized instruction and related services that enable the child to make progress. Services outlined in the IEP are not intended to be offered as a standalone service separate and apart from access to the preschool standards and curriculum, and Least Restrictive Environment requirements must remain in place. Programs are expected to be mindful that students may not have equitable access to the devices, internet service, and/or the family support needed to most effectively engage in a remote learning model that relies on the use of technology. Ensuring equitable access to instruction, learning supports, and comprehensive programming is critical, particularly for historically marginalized communities (students of color, families living in poverty, dual language learners, students with disabilities, migrant students, and students experiencing homelessness or in the foster care system). Districts should keep in mind that all applicable federal laws for services for students with disabilities and English language learners are still in effect and should be considered when developing plans for remote learning. Input from families and students, especially historically marginalized communities, is expected to guide design and implementation decisions.

## Remote Learning Definitions

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For purposes of this document, **remote learning** refers to *teacher-pupil instruction and contact time* that would normally occur in-person (on-site) but occurs remotely (off-site) during the 2021-2022 school year, because of public health and safety measures and precautions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Remote learning may not work for all families and should not be offered in all circumstances when a family has chosen not to participate in in-person learning. As stated previously, remote learning is *only an option for families with COVID-19 health related concerns*.

- During remote learning, students access the general education preschool standards and curricula from home, or another location other than the school/licensed childcare center that they are eligible to attend as a result of having been determined eligible for state funded preschool.
- Remote learning may include various methodologies, including online learning; however, remote learning is not expected to be fully synchronous. This is particularly important for the preschool age group based on national recommendations from the [American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry](#) and the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) limiting screen time. For these reasons, synchronous



learning will be a daily requirement, but will also include daily limits and requirements for daily asynchronous learning as well.

Remote learning is expected to have both synchronous and asynchronous components. Remote learning instruction is not allowed to be offered as self-paced or independent study. Preschool students are expected to have real-time access to a qualified teacher providing instructional support (synchronous learning) during every designated school day being counted towards required instructional hours. Remote learning for preschoolers is required to include daily synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. A minimum of 20% synchronous instruction each school day is expected. As an example, if the program's on-site preschool schedule is 2.5 hours each day, at least 30 minutes of synchronous instruction is expected on each scheduled day. In consideration of screen time limits for this age group and the need for hands on learning, it may be beneficial to offer multiple shorter periods across the day, however, and to limit synchronous learning to 45 to 60 minutes each school day. See the [Preschool Remote Learning Sample Schedule for 2021-2022](#).

## Synchronous Learning

**Synchronous learning consists of real-time teacher-to-student instruction and interactions.**

Preschool examples of synchronous learning include:

- Connecting with children in large groups, small groups, or one-on-one conversation (e.g., circle time, mealtime, peer-to-peer breakout rooms with adequate adult support, etc.).

### Strategies for developmentally appropriate synchronous learning:

- Limit whole group time so that it does not become a passive activity.
- Use large group meetings for music and movement activities.
- Maximize real-time teacher-to-child interactions and instruction with smaller groups of children. Smaller group meetings are opportunities for children to take turns and ensure that they have time to speak and be heard.
- Include the teacher and teacher assistant to ensure that you maintain a 1:8 adult to child ratio when offering synchronous portions of the classroom schedule to monitor the interactions and engagement of all the children.
- Greet each child and parent/caregiver onscreen and take the time to check in with them and their social/emotional well-being.
- Schedule and implement planned, routine, 1:1 contact with each child's family (e.g., phone calls, emails, text messages, FaceTime, Duo, Facebook Messenger)
- Meet with special education teachers and related service providers to collaboratively plan activities and join in the large group connection to support children who have an IEP. This provides access and informs modifications and accommodations that may need to be implemented in this environment. This type of specialized instruction or service may be considered telehealth as related to the child's disability.



## Asynchronous Learning

**Asynchronous learning consists of teacher-to-student instruction and interaction that does not occur in real-time.**

Preschool examples of asynchronous learning include:

- Teacher provides a specific learning goal and instructions for a caregiver to implement, along with any needed supplemental materials.

Strategies for developmentally appropriate asynchronous learning:

- A recorded morning greeting, story time, and/or lesson where the teacher is modeling a strategy (e.g., a student was not able to attend synchronously at the scheduled time and views the recording at a different time with the parent or another adult).
- Families record the child completing a suggested activity and share the recording with the teacher.
- Families share in a collaborative online space about conversations with their children and the results of activities.
- Provide choices for how children may demonstrate their learning (e.g., in a lesson about plants, children can take a picture of plants, draw a plant, plant seeds the teacher has provided and document growth, write a song about plants, practice writing names of plants).
- Virtual field trips (tied to content) where students participate with a caregiver at a time that works best for them.
- Provide families with hands-on learning activities to implement, that build on the curricula and expand upon synchronous or in-person learning. Provide the learning goal and instructions as well as any needed supplemental materials (e.g., markers, crayons, glue sticks, blocks, puzzles, books, etc.) to families at no cost.
- Special education and related services providers offer separate telehealth sessions as part of the direct services they provide. These sessions should be directly related to the learning activities that are planned for all children in the classroom and address the IEP goals that have been identified to ensure that each child makes progress in the preschool curriculum.

Below are some examples of asynchronous learning activities that, *if provided in isolation without daily teacher-to-student instruction* **do not meet the definition of remote learning and are not allowable:**

- Counting interactions between adult caregivers and the child as instructional time when it is not focused on the instructional goals, preschool curricula, or under a qualified teacher’s direction.
- Families are only given links to learning apps and/or games instead of teacher-directed content.
- Asking children to watch YouTube videos to supplant teacher instruction.
- Providing a digital curriculum with pre-recorded videos that the child clicks through at their own pace (i.e., the digital curriculum is being relied upon wholly to “instruct” the students).
- Packets or worksheets only.
- Children with an IEP only receive telehealth as a delivery method for special education and related services but are not included in the remote learning (synchronous and asynchronous) that is available to other children.
- Children with an IEP receive telehealth for special education and related services as a standalone activity with no intentional connection to the standards-based curriculum or classroom instruction.



## Remote Learning Scenarios

**Remote learning in preschool may only be implemented in response to public health and safety associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.** CDE has defined three different remote learning scenarios. **Programs intending to enroll part day preschool students in 100% remote learning and hybrid learning options based on parent choice should be the exception and based only on parent choice due to COVID-19-related health concerns.**

*Note: Children enrolled in full day state funded preschool may only be served in-person or a combination of in-person and Temporary Remote Learning Option. **As with the K-12 remote learning policy, it is anticipated that this will be the last year CDE will offer these types of flexibilities.*** Please note, districts may also implement remote learning for emergency school closures within certain limits and guidelines; this guidance will be available on the [Pupil Count webpage](#).

Programs that intend to enroll preschoolers in 100% Remote Learning Options or Hybrid Learning Options must follow an approval process from the CDE Preschool Team to include remote learners in the student pupil count request for funding. Temporary Remote Learning Options in direct response to COVID-19 quarantine/exposure/illness do not require CDE Preschool Team approval, however, the Preschool Assurances for Remote Learning must be adhered to in provision of any type of remote learning scenarios. Once an approved plan and assurances are on file with the CDE Preschool Team, only part day preschool funding is allowable to support 100% remote or hybrid learning options.

### 100% Remote Learning

100% Remote Learning refers to a 100% remote learning option implemented by the district/school and/or provided by the district to families who, because of public health and safety measures or precautions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, do not want their student(s) to receive in-person learning for the duration of a term as defined by the district (e.g., hexter, quarter, semester, full-year, grading periods, etc.).

### Hybrid Learning

Hybrid Learning refers to traditional educational settings (i.e., brick-and-mortar schools) that are implementing a combination of both in-person and remote learning at the student level because of public health and safety measures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Temporary Remote Learning

Temporary Remote Learning are short term/temporary instances when students are quarantined due to COVID-19 exposure/illness or shift to 100% remote learning because of an executive order or local public health order suspending in-person learning, county COVID-19 dial levels indicate higher-risk, or other types of locally determined precautions related to COVID-19. *Note: When children enrolled in preschool enter temporary remote learning, programs may wish to amend the program schedule to increase in-person instruction after the quarantine, exposure, or public health order is lifted, rather than attempt to provide preschool programming through remote learning.*

### Considerations for Determining Whether to Deliver Remote Learning and Under What Circumstances

Preschool students for whom districts intend to receive state funding may only be enrolled in remote learning options in response to public health and safety measures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, and with approval of the district's remote learning plan and completion of Preschool Assurances for Remote Learning. In determining whether to deliver remote preschool, please consider the following:



- It is the program's responsibility to provide access to remote learning, including assuring that the child will be under adult supervision and have access to the internet, has access to needed devices, and is provided the learning materials needed to support children to make progress towards achieving the preschool standards across the school year. Preschool students must not be expected to independently access electronic devices and preschool learning materials and activities.
- The program has determined that adult caregivers for the child agree to provide direct supervision and to mediate the learning environment for the child, with guidance and support from the qualified teacher. Programs have verified and received a commitment from the family and does not offer remote learning when supervision and access is not available. Determining the availability of the parent or other caregivers to supervise and support the child to access remote learning is paramount in determining whether to agree to provide remote learning for individual children and their families when requested due to COVID-19 health related concerns.
- Remote learning relies heavily on caregiver and teacher partnerships. Communication and partnerships with families are imperative for remote learning to be successful. Programs should consider how they will communicate with families who do not speak English as their first language. Remote learning must be responsive to the needs of the family and build a partnership with each family.

## Requirements for Delivering Remote Learning

Districts that intend to enroll preschoolers in 100% Remote Learning or Hybrid Learning (in either district or community-based programs) ***must follow an approval process from the CDE Preschool Team in order to include remote learners in the student pupil count request for funding.*** The *Preschool Assurances for Remote Learning must be adhered to when offering all remote learning scenarios. Programs approved to provide remote learning must make corresponding documentation available upon request.* Temporary Remote Learning Options in direct response to COVID-19 quarantine/exposure/illness do not require CDE Preschool Team approval.

Plans and assurances must be submitted to the CDE Preschool Team via this [Google form](#) by June 30, 2021. Plans will be reviewed upon submission. *Failure to operate remote learning under an approved plan or in compliance with these assurances, or failure to provide the corresponding documentation upon request, may result in the district not being able to include remote learning time in the determination for funding for preschool students.*

Submitted plans and assurances are required to encompass all preschool sites operating under a school district program, whether operated by the school district directly, and/or community providers operating under a contract with the district. It is expected that the local CPP District Advisory Council provides input and approves the remote learning plan for preschool prior to submission.

### Families

1. Choice - The district assures that families can opt in to in-person instruction for their children as a permanent change in instruction.
2. Selection - The district assures that the children and families selected for remote learning have agreed that they are able to follow all plan requirements for student support and access to programming.
3. Communication - The district assures that communication and partnerships with families are a top priority and each family will sign a [remote learning family agreement](#) reflecting the expectations of remote learning as well as what support will be provided by the school district.
4. Placement - The district assures that Students are enrolled in the licensed childcare center they would be attending if not for the COVID-19 pandemic.



5. Support - The district assures qualified teachers will guide and support the adult caregivers who supervise the child, to ensure the child has access to the learning activities and instruction they would have if attending preschool in person.

## Funding and Accountability

6. Approval - The district assures that the CPP District Advisory Council will review and approve the remote learning plan prior to submission to CDE.
7. Documentation - The district assures that documentation will be provided upon request to demonstrate that the Preschool Assurances for Remote Learning are met.
8. Documentation - The district assures oversight and adherence of their approved plan and assurances for community-based programs that contract with the school district and will make such documentation available upon request.
9. Student Count - The district assures that all Student October Count, Instructional Hours, Calendar, Enrollment, Scheduling, and Attendance requirements outlined in the [K-12 Remote Learning Assurances](#) are met for preschoolers as well.
10. Not Allowable - The district assures that it will not offer remote learning options based on administrative convenience and understands that children enrolled in remote learning outside the requirements of this policy are not eligible for state funding.
11. Data Reporting - The district assures that individual student's status will be reported in the 2021 Student October count collection (and the 2021-2022 End of Year collection, if applicable). District will report the student's participation status (in the district's 100% remote learning option because of COVID-19 health concerns, based on family choice) at the time of the collection.
12. Teacher/Student Contact Time - The district assures that students will be scheduled to receive at least the minimum threshold of teacher-pupil instruction and contact time, which may include a combination of in-person and remote learning (synchronous and asynchronous) instruction, to receive per pupil funding.
13. Approval Process - The district assures that a plan for 100% Remote Learning Options or Hybrid Learning Options must be approved by the CDE Preschool Team prior to including remote learners in the student pupil count request for funding.

## Policies

14. Enrollment - The district assures that enrollment policies prioritize children most at risk, rather than enrolling eligible children on a first come first serve basis and will offer remote or hybrid learning only based on parent choice due to COVID-19-related health concerns, or when required as a result of quarantine, exposure or public health orders.
15. Length of day - The district assures that 100% remote or hybrid learning is only available for children funded for part day programming and understand that 100% remote or hybrid learning options are not available for children submitted for full day preschool funding.
16. School Board Policy - The district assures that the local school board has an approved policy, resolution, regulation, and/or governance documentation adopted specifically to address the implementation of remote learning during the 2021-22 school year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, **which includes preschool.**

## Remote Learning Program Design

17. Teacher Qualifications - The district assures that all remote learning will be supervised by qualified teachers that meet the requirements in the CPP Act and childcare licensing rules.



18. Daily Interaction - The district assures that teacher-to-student instruction is provided through both synchronous and asynchronous methods each scheduled school day, while also ensuring that students have access to a live teacher for instructional support and interaction each day of the school calendar.
19. Daily Schedule - The district assures that students are provided with at least 20% daily synchronous instruction for each school day.
20. Assessments - The district assures that appropriate Results Matter assessments and other data will be used to measure student academic growth and provide targeted support to students who are not making appropriate developmental or academic progress and communicate those results with parents/guardians.
21. Assessments - The district assures that it will implement [Results Matter for students in remote learning](#) in accordance with state requirements and federal law.
22. Access - The district assures that it will do everything possible to provide equitable and appropriate access to instruction, learning supports and comprehensive services to students, particularly those from historically marginalized communities (e.g., students of color, families living in poverty, dual language learners, students with disabilities, migrant students, and students experiencing homelessness or in the foster care system), as well as gather input from families and students, to guide design and implementation decisions.
23. Materials - The district assures that children will be under adult supervision and have access to the internet, needed devices, and the learning materials needed to make progress towards achieving the preschool standards across the school year.
24. Experiences - The district assures that remote learning experiences are designed to equivalently replace in-person learning experiences such that students may learn the same content (developmental and academic) and make the same progress as they would have under the in-person schedule.
25. Group Size - The district assures that programs will maintain a group size of no more than 16 per classroom, a 1 to 8 adult to child ratio, and will not enroll children beyond the licensed childcare capacity of the program.
26. Student Engagement - The district assures that preschool students will not be expected to independently access electronic devices and preschool learning materials and activities without adult supervision and involvement.

## Special Education

27. Free and Appropriate Public Education - The district assures that children with disabilities accessing remote learning options have access to FAPE and will be included in the same educational experiences as children funded by CPP, and any required accommodations and modifications will be provided as outlined in their IEP. A contingency IEP will be developed following [the guidance of the Exceptional Student Services Unit](#) (ESSU).
28. Administration - The district assures that the Special Education Director and/or preschool special education coordinator has been involved in the decision and plan development for offering remote learning based on parent choice due to COVID-19-related health concerns.
29. Teaming - The district assures that the special education team will be involved in supporting synchronous and asynchronous learning and planning with the general education staff.
30. IEP - The district assures that IEPs will address the supplementary aids and services that children will require in this placement, how progress will be monitored, and the specific LRE setting code that matches their placement including access to remote learning. The IEP will also address what Parent Education activities are being delivered as services as well in order to carry out the teacher planned instruction.