



# Family Engagement Newsletter

## Maintaining Grandparent-Grandchild Relationships in Era of COVID-19

By Wendy Overturf

Older adults and those with underlying health conditions are at greater risk of serious complications if they become ill with COVID-19. This has led many older Americans to choose to stay home and avoid contact with others—even their own extended families—to prevent possible exposure to the virus. This has resulted in many grandparents not seeing their grandchildren regularly or being able to make a long-distance trip for a visit.

Social distancing is hard on everyone, but it can be especially difficult for grandparents who miss their grandchildren and feel they are missing out on watching them grow and being part of their lives. Now more than ever, children and teens need the support of trusted, loving adults in their lives. While it is easier to have a video or phone conversation with an older child, it is difficult to maintain a meaningful conversation using these platforms with a young child. So, what tips can parents give to grandparents to keep the grandparent-grandchild bond strong while social distancing? How might these interactions help the young children with learning as well?

Here are some ways to make those socially distanced visits more meaningful:

- If you are tech-savvy, do a video chat instead of a phone call. Video allows more connectedness because you can see one another's faces and reactions. Try [FaceTime](#), [Zoom](#) or [Google Meet](#), to name a few. Most of these platforms offer a basic plan at no cost. [Recent research](#) (abstract only) shows that children as young as one or two years old can develop a social connection with someone they see and talk with using video calling.
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- One of the most important activities for preparing children to succeed as readers is reading aloud together. Reading books aloud to children stimulates their imagination and expands their understanding of the world. It helps children develop language and listening skills and prepares them to understand the written word. Even at a very young age, an infant can look at pictures, listen to your voice, and point to objects on cardboard pages with assistance. By drawing attention to pictures and connecting the words with both pictures and the real-world objects, children will learn the importance of language. Even after children learn to read by themselves, it is still important to read aloud together. By reading stories that interest them, but may be beyond their reading level, you can stretch young readers' understanding and motivate them to improve their skills. While reading together in-person may not be possible due to COVID, there are still ways to accomplish this. For example, if the grandparent and the child have the same book, parents can assist the child to follow along as the grandparent reads. [Caribu](#) is a site that makes it even easier for grandparents and grandchildren to look at the same digital book at the same time. Caribu lets both parties share an activity on the screen, so they can see and talk to each other, as well as draw pictures, play games or read more than 1,000 books in eight languages together and a basic plan is free.
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- It is also possible to play while using a video format. Both parties need to have the same toy. For example, let's say that each has a farm set. The grandparent can say, "Let's put the horse in the stable," and then model that on his farm set. Then have the child do the same, e.g. "Now, I am going to put the dog between the two horses. Can you do the same?" This type of play can be adapted for almost any toy.
  - It is also easy to find additional activities by doing an internet search for "online activities grandparents can do with their grandchildren."

Note: If neither the grandparents nor the family has ability to access a video platform, these activities can be modified for use with a phone. Additionally, significant other persons in a child's life can also stay connected in this manner.

## Statewide Events

### Promoting Early Childhood (PEC) Annual Conference

**Date:** April 14-15, 2021

PEC 2021 will celebrate the lessons learned and adaptations created and implemented to support our youngest learners and their families. Registration for this virtual conference is open.

### Inform, Influence and Innovate Together: Virtual Autism Conference

**Date:** April 21-24, 2021

This virtual conference will feature dozens of livestream breakout sessions, virtual exhibit booths, an autism resources bookstore, and Temple Grandin as a keynote speaker.

### Circles of Life

**Date:** May 6-7, 2021

Circles of Life is Wisconsin's annual conference for families who have children with disabilities and the providers and other professionals who support them. This year's conference will be held "virtually" using Zoom video-conferencing.

### Wisconsin Summer Inclusion Institute 2021

**Date:** July 26-28, 2021

The 28th Annual Statewide Institute on Best Practices in Inclusive Education 2021 Pre-Conference and Inclusion Institute will be held virtually. This Institute will offer opportunities to learn from other professionals, consultants, and presenters and collaborate with your school teams, administration, co-teachers, paraprofessionals, and families. Institute Staff and DPI Consultants will be available to assist you and your colleagues in planning and problem-solving. Registration will open sometime in March.

### Endless Possibilities 2021:

#### Successful Transitions

**Save the Date: August 6, 2021**

This virtual conference, coordinated by WI FACETS and other family support/disability organizations, allows parents and professionals affordable access to gain knowledge from experts to enhance their ability to better support students with disabilities.

**Keynote:** Creating a Roadmap for Inclusive IEPs and Transition

**Keynote speaker:** [Dan Habib](#), is an award-winning filmmaker at the University of New Hampshire's Institute on Disability.



## At Home Learning Strategies



### Early Literacy Calendar: March 2021

Fun activities that encourage families to spend time together while learning to read, singing songs, and discovering science.

### Read Across America Day - March 2, 2021



Read Across America Day was established by the National Education Association in 1998 to help get kids excited about reading. The day occurs each year on March 2nd, the birthday of beloved children's book author Dr. Seuss. Reading one of his books would be a perfect activity for this day. On National Read Across America Day, students, teachers, parents, and community members around the nation come together to read books and celebrate the joy of reading. Plan a fun activity for that day with your child.

Make a Dr. Seuss Hat: Make an easy, "Cat in the Hat" hat out of paper plates and construction paper.

Read Dr. Seuss Books Online at No Cost: [Cat in the Hat](#), [One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish](#), [Wacky Wednesday](#), [The Lorax](#), [Oh, The Places You'll Go!](#) (a great book for transitions)

Check out the [Seussville website](#). It is filled with many fun activities, additional books, as well as games that can be done online.

### Saint Patrick's Day - March 17, 2021



Challenge your child to see how many words can be made from "Saint Patrick's Day".

For younger children, it may be helpful to write each letter on an index card so that the letters can be easily moved around. Word Suggestions: pack, tap, rat, icy, pat, sad, tar, trick, sick, yard.

Check out these [Saint Patrick's Day math activities](#) for older children. These math puzzles give your children an opportunity to think critically and deeply about mathematics, develop problem-solving strategies, and work through challenging problems.

### Twenty Fun and Healthy Food Ideas to Celebrate St. Patrick's Day



### Earth Day - March 20, 2021



Teach your child the value of water conservation and practice measuring with this simple activity that can be incorporated within a daily routine. Place a bowl under the faucet and have your child brush his teeth with the water running for two minutes.

Measure the water in the bowl. Then the next time, have your child turn off the water and brush his teeth for two minutes with the water running just as necessary. Measure the water in the bowl and compare the difference. For this activity it might be better to use a kitchen sink when the water is running so the bowl can be big enough to catch the water.



Making a pinecone bird feeder is a great Earth Day activity. Check out the [website](#) for directions.

### First Day of Spring - March 20, 2021

On the first day of Spring the amount of sunshine is 12 hours. Then the amount of daily sunlight increases very gradually until summer. Have your child keep track of sunrise and sunset times for several weeks. These times can be easily found on this [website](#). At the end of the time period have your child determine how much longer the sun is now shining.



Time to get outside! After being isolated due to weather and COVID-19, now may be a great time to take a family walk and enjoy the outdoors. Check this [website](#) for games that can be played on a family walk.

# Online Resources: Early Childhood

## [Center for Parent Information and Resources \(CPIR\)](#)

This website has a variety of resources related to early childhood education. It also has a link to a [webinar series](#) on inclusion and early childhood education. Additionally, if you are concerned about your child's development [this section](#) of the website has tips for parents because there are many immediate things you can do to help your son or daughter. It also has information on early intervention services.

## [Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program](#)

The first three years are the most important building blocks of a child's future. The Birth to 3 Program is a federally-mandated Early Intervention program ([Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act—IDEA](#)) to support families of children with developmental delays or disabilities under the age of three.

## [Significant Developmental Delay \(SDD\)](#)

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction website has information related to SDD. Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams may now consider identifying SDD as a disability category for children ages 3 through 9, for both initial and reevaluations. A section on frequently asked questions related to SDD is also included.

## [Too Small to Fail](#)

Too Small to Fail aims to help parents and businesses take meaningful actions to improve the health and well-being of children ages zero to five, so that more of America's children are prepared to succeed in the 21st century. The website has an abundance of links to resources related to children from 0-5 years of age.

## [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#)

NAEYC is dedicated to improving the well-being of all young children, with a focus on the quality of educational and developmental services for children from birth through age 8. The Association administers a voluntary, national accreditation system for high-quality early childhood programs, sponsors a variety of initiatives to improve professional preparation of early childhood educators, and produces a wide array of early childhood resources.

## [ZERO TO THREE](#)

ZERO TO THREE's mission is to support the healthy development and well-being of infants, toddlers and their families. This multidisciplinary organization advances its mission by informing, educating, and supporting adults who influence the lives of infants and toddlers.

## [Wisconsin Head Start Association \(WHSA\)](#)

WHSA is a private not-for-profit membership organization representing over 16,000 young children and their families and over 4,000 staff composing the 62 Head Start/Early Head Start programs in Wisconsin. WHSA provides a network for information, training, advocacy, support, and action for directors, parents, and staff of Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Wisconsin.

## [Get Ready to Read](#)

It is critical to help young children be ready for school by working with them to develop early literacy and learning skills. Because strong reading skills form the basis for learning in all subjects, it is important to identify those who struggle with reading as early as possible. Children who have been read to at home come to school with important early literacy skills. This site has a rich variety of great information related to early literacy. The site also has videos and webinars of examples of how parents can promote literacy skills.



## WI FACETS



Event title links to information & registration for WI FACETS FREE workshops & webinars:

To register by phone: 877-374-0511

All webinars 12:00 PM—1:00 PM (unless otherwise noted)

### [WSEMS: Dispute Resolution Options](#)

**Presenter:** Nissan Bar-Lev, CESA 7 and Courtney Salzer, WI FACETS

**Date:** March 1, 2021

### [Bridging the Gap: Health Care Transition for Community Partners](#)

**Presenter:** Tim Markle, Waisman Center

**Date:** March 2, 2021

### [Compassion Resilience - Self Care Snapshot Series: Self Compassion](#)

**Presenter:** Emily Jonesberg, Rogers InHealth

**Date:** March 8, 2021, 12pm-12:30pm

### [IEP 5: Writing the IEP \(Part 1\)](#)

**Presenter:** Jan Serak, Serak Consulting

**Date:** March 9, 2021, 12pm-12:30pm

### [Using Medical Information & Reports Within the IEP Evaluation Process](#)

**Presenter:** Eva Kubinski, WI DPI

**Date:** March 10, 2021

### [Evaluation and Eligibility in the IEP Process \(Spanish\)](#)

**Date:** March 11, 2021

Training in Spanish - To register, contact Nelsinia Ramos, [nramos@wifacets.org](mailto:nramos@wifacets.org)

### [How to Provide Students with IEPs Accessibility to their Grade Level Reading Materials](#)

**Presenter:** Nissan Bar-Lev, CESA 7

**Date:** March 17, 2021

### [IEP 6: Writing the IEP \(Part 2\)](#)

**Presenter:** Jan Serak, Serak Consulting

**Date:** March 23, 2021, 12pm-12:30pm

### [Comprehensive Special Education Evaluations](#)

**Presenter:** Tim Peerenboom and Sharon Madsen, WI DPI

**Date:** March 24, 2021

### [IEP 7: Writing the IEP \(Part 3\)](#)

**Presenter:** Jan Serak, Serak Consulting

**Date:** March 30, 2021, 12pm-12:30pm

### [Becoming a Better Self Advocate through the Stages of Transition](#)

**Presenter:** Amanda Jones, TIG

**Date:** March 31, 2021

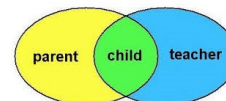


## Preschool During the Pandemic: Early Childhood Education in Extraordinary Times

It has been said that "necessity is the mother of invention". When the pandemic struck last year, practitioners in early education and early childhood special education, and parents came together to support young children and their families through remote service delivery. This [multi-part video series](#) features preschool staff and families from five states and illustrates their working together to use technology to make the virtual learning experience exciting, effective and engaging for young children. Currently, there are 12 videos in the series, each ranging from five to 16 minutes in length. The videos cover the perspectives of professionals and parents on topics such as inclusion, equity and family support, the challenges and joys of remote learning, hands-on and play-based experiences, a family's approach to supporting a preschooler in a virtual environment, promoting social skills, relationships and positive social emotional development, and the use of green screens to engage preschoolers.

## Council on Special Education Electronic Public Forum: March 1-5, 2021

The Wisconsin Council on Special Education and Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction wants to hear from parents, families, educators, and community members. Participants can add their comments in [English](#) or in [Spanish](#). For more information about the council on special education go to the [DPI council web page](#), [Spanish Flier](#), [English Flier](#)



## Research to Read

### Partnering with Families for Early Language and Literacy Development: Research-based Strategies for Early Childhood Teachers

Boone, B.J., Wellman, M.E., & Schenker, V. (2017). *Partnering with Families for Early Language and Literacy Development: Research-based Strategies for Early Childhood Teachers*.

#### [Article Link](#)

This article was created for teachers, pre-K through 3rd grade, looking to improve their strategies for partnering with families for children's language and literacy development. Teachers know that trusting relationships between the home and school make a difference for student learning. Strong family and teacher partnerships include open communication, respect for differences, commitment, trust, and equal power (Semke & Sheridan, 2012; Turnbull, Rutherford Turnbull, & Kyzar, 2009). Research demonstrates that family support for language and literacy activities at school and at home is positively related to children's outcomes including reading acquisition, language, vocabulary learning, conceptual development, and literacy achievement (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Rowe & Fain, 2013; Senechal, 2006). The strategies listed in this article are drawn from the research literature and offer opportunities for teachers to build stronger partnerships with families to support children's language and literacy development.

This monthly update is provided by the Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support (WI FACETS) to share statewide information regarding parent leadership and family involvement. *If you would like to receive this monthly update or if you would like to have your name removed from the distribution list, contact: Wendy Overturf at [woverturf@wifacets.org](mailto:woverturf@wifacets.org).*



## **Contributions to the Newsletter**

**Upcoming newsletter topics:** April: Autism Spectrum Disorders  
May: Mental Health  
June: ADD/ADHD

*To submit contributions of articles, events, or resources, you may use the attached word document. Send submissions to [woverturf@wifacets.org](mailto:woverturf@wifacets.org). If you are unable to access the form, you may send the information in an email.*

*Material appropriate for the monthly newsletter include web links to sources of family involvement/parent leadership resources, advertisements for statewide trainings for parents, youth or parent/educator audiences, information about statewide parent agencies, recent research pertaining to family engagement, and family engagement success articles.*

***The WI FACETS Family Engagement E-Newsletter  
can be found online at:***

***<https://servingongroups.org/resources>***



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