

# Parents = the Difference

**\*\*News Flash — Number 7\*\***

As we turn the page on the calendar and the weather changes, quarantine is proving to be harder than any of us imagined. Taking 'spring fever' into account, expect the children to become even more restless! Getting them outside and moving will give you the best chance of managing the next few weeks. Realize the entire family needs to play and be playful to maintain good mental health. Play can be organized or unstructured but should include the entire family. Imaginary floor play with open-ended toys gives children control and understanding of their worlds. Play involving movement affords body and emotional expression. Organized play like board games and puzzles exercises the mind. The world has become too serious. Play has become more important than ever!

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## Will My Child Be Ready For Kindergarten?

Kindergarten offers are in the mail. You may have already received yours. It is an exciting time of year knowing your little one is about to make the leap into a bigger classroom. It is also a time of anxiety because you may worry if your child will be adequately prepared. That worry is never more real than now.

There is a natural adjustment at the start of each new school year, but next year will be different. The reality that no one has sat in a physical classroom since March 13th will be huge factor. Schools and teachers are working hard to keep children up to speed academically, socially, and emotionally, but without the physical classroom to ground experiences it is challenging. Over two hours of each pre-k day was spent working collaboratively with friends in centers. No matter how hard everyone tries, virtual isn't the same as working with friends in a classroom.

Every child will walk into kindergarten without having been in a physical classroom for over five months. Children will return with giddy excitement. Relearning and catching up will be required. Children will have to regain the skills of sitting in their seats and listening. I trust there will be lots of outdoor time for the first month giving children the chance to move, burn off excess energy and temper bubbling excitement.

What will make a difference for children entering kindergarten will be the parents. You've certainly heard the phrase "*Parents are a child's first and best teacher.*" Never has this been so true as during quarantine.

If a child walks into kindergarten with an advantage, it will be because his or her parents/family were able to extend class learning in the home. Young children learn from the hand to the head, which is why play is so important to the cognitive

development of young children. It takes both teacher and parent to bring out a child's potential. Teachers can call remote meetings, but without parents supporting children they wander away (bored), become distracted by toys (looking to learn through play), or jump up and down on the sofa (need to move).

Teachers post learning activities based on play, but if the parent doesn't work with the child, the project can't be done. Play is active learning and teachers are continuing to explore ways to make the virtual classroom developmentally appropriate through play-based activities. This is challenging, bordering on impossible, without parental support.

Some teachers are focusing on social connections by adding small groups to their weekly schedules. Small groups afford children individualized attention and promote rich language. Small groups give every child the chance to be heard. Some parents have expressed a preference for the larger group setting because children get to see their friends. Yes, the children see their friends, but a larger meeting fails to promote meaningful connections between teachers or children. Some children even become sad because they can see but not play with each other.

I realize two weeks ago this News Flash suggested it is sometimes fine to step back from pre-k classroom expectations. You don't have to attend every meeting if time is tight, however hands-on-problem-solving projects suggested by the teacher or created on your own is the foundation for kindergarten preparation. Consider the activities on the May parent/child calendar for ideas to engage hands-to-head learning insuring your child will be as ready as his friends for kindergarten.



This letter has been posted on several social networking sites. I am reposting it here because the message is powerful.

April 17, 2020

Dear Parents,

Don't stress about schoolwork. In September, I will get your children back on track. I am a teacher and that's my superpower. What I can't fix is social-emotional trauma that prevents the brain from learning. So right now, I just need you to share your calm, share your strength, and share your laughter with your children. No kids are ahead. No kids are behind. Your children are exactly where they need to be.

With love,  
All the teachers on planet Earth

### Big Muscle Movement Challenges

(gross motor skills)

<https://www.facebook.com/michele.gambrel.9/videos/10157792502277928/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0zsQyf0zvE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66FgmcaQkyg>

## YOUR KIDS ARE GOING TO BE FINE.

You don't have to  
re-create school at home.

Love your kids.

Be their safe place.

Read, create, play, sing,  
and talk together.

## The Corona Virus Monster



A teacher recently reported a child brought his "Corona Virus Monster" puppet to morning meeting, a small drawing, cut out and pasted on a popsicle stick. Wisely the teacher asked him about his monster. The child explained, "To get rid of it and to be safe you have to wash your hands." The other children responded with interest. "Cool!" This child is trying to understand his world in the healthiest of ways—through play. It is a perfect example the important role play holds in a child's life. For children, play is so much more than just 'playing'.

As a parent, how comfortable would you be if your child made a 'Corona Monster'? What would you say? What would you think they were trying to tell you? What more would they need to know?

Our children are digesting snippets of information about what is going on in the world around them. They overhear adults talk, see people wear masks, are told they can't go to school or see their friends and pick up random facts from the news. Your child has created a story in his or her head to explain what is going on. As a parent, do you know their story? If not, I'd advise you to find out.

Ask your child if they have any questions or worries about what is happening. Listen and answer as simply and honestly as you can. Just like we deserve honest information, so do they. There's no need to tell them things they haven't asked about. Stay with their concerns. Every child will have unique questions and thoughts based on their family's situation. My experience is the stories children make up in their imaginations are twisted and often worse than reality. Facts are misconstrued because their brains haven't developed fully enough to understand reality. An unrelated, but pertinent example, would be the ideas you may have imagined about the 'birds and the bees' before you found out the truth.

Parents report children are restless and fighting with each other. Yes, they are restless! Their life (along with yours) has been ripped from them. You bet they are fighting! They have built-up energy and emotions to unleash. As an adult, you are better equipped to understand and interpret our current situation. A young child's perspective is limited by age. In other words, you have many years of living under your belt and they have all of four or five.

Playing out elements of quarantine, the virus, sickness, and death are healthy expressions for a child. After 9/11, children everywhere retreated to their rooms and built tall towers and knocked down with toy airplanes. It is much the same now. Children need to express their feelings and confusion about what is happening. Play is the very best vehicle to do that. You can help them by supporting their play, listening, and dispelling their misconceptions. Here's a little developmentally appropriate information to help —

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVvVTDhGqaA>