

Robert C. Carr, Ph.D.¹

Theresa Nardone

Center for Child and Family Policy, Sanford School of Public Policy
Duke University

During the spring of 2020, a statewide survey was undertaken to understand how early childhood educators sought to navigate the transition to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.² This survey focused on the teachers who administer North Carolina's flagship early childhood education program—the NC Pre-K program. In this survey, lead teachers and teacher assistants were asked to give advice to teachers who may be providing remote learning services for the first time. The following quotes highlight the three most prominent themes that teachers identified to engage with families and overcome barriers to remote learning.³

Communicate with families – 55% of teachers recommended using various methods of communication to contact and build relationships with families

“Offer multiple ways to communicate with families and let them pick the one that works best for them! Offer packets, zoom meetings, reminder apps, text messages, and phone calls. Every family needs something different” – Lead Teacher

“Communication and relationships are key. I built meaningful relationships with parents. Keeping it personal and real for families is essential in creating the connections that support participation in remote learning” – Lead Teacher

“Send out a survey at the beginning to determine each family's preferred method of communication, time/days, etc. Find out what technology they may or may not be interested in using for remote learning. That way, you will know how to communicate with them from the get-go” – Lead Teacher

Be patient and flexible – 25% of teachers recommended being flexible with each family's preference and availability

“What works with one family might not work for another. Work with your parents and they will work with you. Have open conversations about the barriers each family faces and see if you can help them resolve that barrier” – Lead Teacher

“Some families will want instruction frequently. Other families may only want learning packets. Try to work with families to find the best method to meet their needs” – Lead Teacher

¹ robert.carr@duke.edu

² Carr, R. C. (July, 2020). *The North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten program and remote learning services during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Findings from a statewide survey of teachers*. Center for Child and Family Policy, Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University. Retrieved from www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu

³ Quotes were edited for clarity and length

"The biggest thing is being flexible. Some days you may need to rearrange your work hours so that you can meet the needs of your families. If you know you have a few parents who are working until 6 and unreachable during your 'normal' work hours, maybe you can rearrange your day a little so that you are working later that day" – Lead Teacher

Be persistent – 23% of teachers recommended being persistent in contacting families and encouraging participation

"Don't get discouraged when families are not open or willing to communicate with you. Keep trying to find different ways to connect" – Lead Teacher

"If your families fall behind on their remote learning activities, give them the chance to get back on board, and call to check in on them regularly" – Teacher Assistant

"Just take deep breaths and remember not to stress" – Lead Teacher

"Please don't give up trying to reach everyone. I tried different methods in order to be able to get to every single family that we served. It really means a lot to the families to know that we care and are there for them, supporting them through it all!" – Lead Teacher