



Family Engagement Newsletter

Ways Parents Can Help Teach Life Skills within Daily Routines

By Wendy Overturf

COVID-19 has changed how students access educational opportunities. While some children may still be attending school as they were prior to the pandemic, many are accessing learning through technology at home. It is recognized that some students have significant challenges accessing distance learning. There are students who are unable to sit in front of a computer screen to access learning. Many students, especially those with intellectual disabilities, require a more hands-on, life skill embedded method of instruction. This type of instruction is often more difficult to do via technology. However, there are ways parents can work with their child on these life skills at home.

Life skills are functional skills or tasks that develop independence, self-esteem, and increase the likelihood that a person will be successful across multiple environments. Supporting and creating opportunities for children to practice skills during the COVID-19 pandemic can be challenging for any parent. Parents can incorporate different sets of skills throughout different activities. For example, have “chores” scheduled into your child’s daily schedule. Helping out around the house can offer a sense of pride and accomplishment and, depending on their level of independence, may also relieve the parent/caregiver of certain tasks.

Below are a range of chores which a child or young person can be involved in and/or useful resources and strategies to assist in the development of life skills.

Life Skill Tasks and Resources Related to Food Preparation

- Learning to follow a written or picture recipe. This [website](#) has fairly simple recipes that you can make with your child. Recipes include a written version as well as the corresponding picture recipe.
- Preparing a simple snack—check this [website](#) for a video modeling of how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. (Note: there is no audio included with this video.)
- [Setting the table](#)
- [How to clear the table](#)
- [Washing dishes \(by hand or by loading dishwasher\)](#) Teaching your child to wash dishes has numerous benefits and helps with the development of life skills. For younger children, it promotes the use of fine motor skills, and it encourages learning through play with water and bubbles. For older children it encourages cleanliness, discipline and helps them feel as though they are contributing to the household.

Life Skill Tasks and Resources Related to Doing the Laundry

Laundry is a universal, never-ending task and presents a great opportunity for children to help. You can teach laundry skills in a variety of ways, from pouring soap and opening/closing washer and dryer doors, to sorting, carrying, and putting clothes away.

- [Sorting laundry](#)
- [Using the washing machine and dryer](#) This video shows how you can mark the washer and dryer for non-readers. The adaptation can be modified to fit the dials of your washer and dryer.
- [Folding towels](#)
- [Sock matching and folding](#) This video introduces your child to matching and folding socks, helping to develop visual discrimination, independence, fine-motor control and concentration.

The resources and links given are only examples of some life skill activities that parents can do with their children. There are many more available by doing a search on the internet. Use Google and search for “*life skill videos for children*”.

To make it easier for both parents and their children, start with one task. When children are struggling with a certain task encourage them to ask you for help. Asking for help promotes self-advocacy skills. Strengthening a child’s organizational and planning skills will ensure independence in future tasks.

Statewide Events

[Transition 2021: Discovering the Next Step](#)

Date: February 11-12, 2021

In addition to the live virtual conference, breakout sessions and connections, attendees will have access to the on-demand content throughout the conference experience.

[State Superintendent's Conference on Special Education and Pupil Services](#)

Date: February 16, 2021

This no cost virtual event will feature both federal and state legal updates.

[Wisconsin Head Start Association Conference](#)

Date: February 22-24, 2021

The theme of this virtual conference is "Stronger Together." This theme represents the power and flexibility found in every Head Start student, parent, volunteer and staff member.

[Special Education Conference](#)

Date: February 25-26, 2021

Join hundreds of teachers, administrators, support staff, counselors, school psychologists, parents, stake holders and many more across the state and region. In addition to the live virtual conference, breakout sessions and connections, attendees will have access to the on-demand content throughout the conference experience.

[Preserving Early Childhood \(PEC\) Annual Conference-Save the Date](#)

Date: April 14-15, 2021

Registration for this virtual conference opens in early February.

[Inform, Influence and Innovate Together: Virtual Autism Conference](#)

Date: April 21-24, 2021

The virtual conference, "Inform, Influence, Innovate Together," will feature dozens of livestream breakout sessions, virtual exhibit booths, an autism resources bookstore, and Temple Grandin as a keynote speaker.

Learning Opportunities



At Home Learning Strategies

[Early Literacy Activity Calendar: February 2021](#)

The February early literacy calendar helps young learners stay engaged at home. Packed full of kid-approved activities, this calendar encourages families to spend time together while learning to read, singing songs, discovering science, and much more.

[Children's Activity Calendar: February 2021 \(for older children\)](#)

The February calendar is full of engaging children's programming ideas for activities, craft projects, and books suggestions that will help kids make it through the winter. Discover new stories, celebrate influential people, learn about science, and much more.



Groundhog Day - February 2, 2021

Is it time for spring or will we have six more weeks of winter? Find out more about the history of this holiday and about Punxsutawney Phil in this [short video](#) from PBS.



Valentine's Day-February 14, 2021

Valentine's Day class parties and card trading at school were holiday favorites for any child. But there are also plenty of ways to celebrate February 14 as a family if you are still social distancing come Valentine's Day 2021.

- Find Valentine songs and fingerplays at [The Holiday Zone](#). (more for younger children)
- In this "Hunting for Kisses" activity start by gluing circles in a heart shape on a paper plate. Number the circles and then number the bottom of Hershey Kisses. Have your child match the appropriate kiss to the number on the plate. This activity can be modified for older children by writing math facts on the Hershey Kiss and having the child match to the correct answer on the plate. This activity could also be modified into a literacy activity by having your child match rhyming words.
- Check out this [website](#) for Valentine's Day cards that can be customized with a message from your child. The cards can then be printed or emailed to friends or relatives. What a fun way to practice your child's writing skills!
- Your child can learn more about the history of Valentine's Day by checking out this [website](#). Adults might learn something about this holiday too!
- [Cupid Popcorn](#) is a fun and delicious treat. Make it with your kids to enjoy as a family.



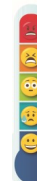
President's Day-February 15, 2021



President's Day is a federal holiday, popularly viewed as a day to celebrate all U.S. presidents, past and present. Help your child learn more about our presidents by checking out this [website](#). It has word scrambles that can be done online, coloring pages, mobile games, and links to additional information about our presidents.

[Feelings Thermometer](#)

Life has definitely changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. While it is always important to check on your child's feelings, perhaps now it is even more important. This tool from the [Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health](#) can help.



[WI FACETS's Literacy Page on Pinterest](#)

WI FACETS is a statewide non-profit supporting families of children with disabilities. Our literacy page includes tips & resources for families & professionals.

Online Resources: Intellectual Disabilities

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

This website has fact sheets on intellectual disabilities. It includes links to resources related to infants, toddlers, and school-age children. It offers tips for parents and educators. It also has links to other organizations that support individuals with intellectual disabilities.

[Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction](#)

This site has information related to eligibility criteria, programming and services, and assessment for students with intellectual disabilities.

[Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#)

Wisconsin has many programs designed to improve the lives of children and adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Information about the programs that assist families in caring for a child with developmental and intellectual disabilities at home and in the community can be found on this website.

[Exceptional Parent \(eParent\)](#)

This website has many resources related to children with disabilities. eParent is a forty-two-year-old, award-winning publishing and communications company. eParent provides practical advice, emotional support, and the most up-to-date educational information for families of children and adults with disabilities and special healthcare needs. It is also a valuable resource for the physicians, allied health care professionals, and educational professionals who are involved in their care and development.

[National Down Syndrome Society \(NDSS\)](#)

The mission of the National Down Syndrome Society is to be the national advocate for the value, acceptance, and inclusion of people with Down Syndrome. The vision of NDSS is a world in which all people with Down Syndrome have the opportunity to enhance their quality of life, realize their life aspirations and become valued members of welcoming communities. Their website gives facts about Down Syndrome, has a section that dispels common misperceptions, and also has numerous links related to advocacy.

[Disability Scoop](#)

According to their website, Disability Scoop is one of the premier sources for Developmental Disability News. While the website provides news related to many disabilities, this link is specifically related to Intellectual Disabilities. There is also the ability to sign up to receive frequent email updates. (Free access limited to three articles a month)

[Arc](#)

The mission of Arc is to promote and protect the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively support their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes. Local chapters provide individual advocacy, programs, services, and supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. Information on local, state and national programs is available on the website.

[American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities \(AAIDD\)](#)

The AAIDD definition manual contains the world's most current and authoritative information on intellectual disability, including best practice guidelines on diagnosing and classifying intellectual disability and developing a system of supports for people living with an intellectual disability. There are also archived [free webinars](#) on the website



Winter Science Activities for Kids

Try some playful **winter activities** for preschool and elementary kids. Avoid cabin fever this season and keep your kids learning and playing with many great [science experiments and STEM projects](#)!

Late Winter Hibernation - Activities for Kids

Here are eight imaginative and TV-free activities for the kids in late winter...



Book Preview **Snow Melting Day—Seeking Signs of Spring** by Buffy Silverman



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: Facilitated IEPs

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

Date: February 1, 2021

Practical Tips as You Prepare for Mediation

Presenter: Wendy Overturf, WI FACETS

Date: February 2, 2021

Compassion Resilience - Self Care Snapshot Series: Compassion in Action

Presenter: Dr. Sarah Reed, Rogers InHealth

Date: February 8, 2021, 12pm-12:30pm

IEP 3: Evaluation and Eligibility in the IEP Process

Presenter: Jan Serak, Serak Consulting Services

Date: February 9, 2021, 12pm-12:30pm

What are Executive Function Skills & How can they be Addressed in Student's IEP

Presenter: Eva Kubinski, WI DPI

Date: February 10, 2021

Starting the IEP Process: Referrals, Time-lines and the IEP Team (Spanish)

Date: February 11, 2021

Training in Spanish - To register, contact Nelsinia Ramos, nramos@wifacets.org

Virtual Learning / Teleservice

Presenter: Andrea Bertone, WI DPI

Date: February 17, 2021

IEP 4: Reevaluation and Independent Educational Evaluations

Presenter: Jan Serak, Serak Consulting Services

Date: February 23, 2021, 12pm-12:30pm

Alternative to Expulsionary Practices: Ensuring a Free Appropriate Public Education for Students

Presenter: Eva Shaw, WI DPI

Date: February 24, 2021

WSEMS – Mediation (Spanish)

Date: February 25, 2021

Training in Spanish - To register, contact Nelsinia Ramos, nramos@wifacets.org



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](#)

IRIS Center Assistive Technology: An Overview

The [IRIS Center](#) has updated and expanded their module on Assistive Technology: An Overview. The module covers a comprehensive overview of assistive technology (AT). The modules are engaging and are developed with input from AT experts across the nation. They include exploring the consideration process, implementation and evaluation of AT for students as well as practical application of AT services for students.

IRIS Center Bookshare: Providing Accessible Materials for Students with Print Disabilities

This [IRIS Center](#) module provides information on how students with IEPs, regardless of disability area, can receive accessible materials to support access to printed text. This module includes information about how such students can access textbooks, other instructional materials, and text-reader software at no cost, as well as how teachers can use this information in their daily instructional planning.

Research to Read

Examining the impact of COVID-19 in ethnically diverse families with young children with intellectual and developmental disabilities

citation (C. Neece, L. L. McIntyre, R. Fenning. Examining the impact of COVID-19 in ethnically diverse families with young children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, August 2020.)

Article Link

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced challenges to families with young children with developmental delays. Beyond the widespread concerns surrounding illness, loss of employment and social isolation, caregivers are responsible for overseeing their children's educational and therapeutic programs at home often without the much-needed support of professionals.

The present study sought to examine the impact of COVID-19 in 77 ethnically, linguistically and socioeconomically diverse families with young children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) in California and Oregon, who were participating in larger intervention studies. Parents responded to five interview questions about the impact of the pandemic, services for their child, silver linings or positive aspects, coping and their concerns about the long-term impact of the pandemic.

Parents reported that their biggest challenge was being at home caring for their children with the loss of many essential services. Parents reported some positive aspects of the pandemic, especially being together as a family. Although there were positive aspects of the situation, many parents expressed concern about long-term impacts of the pandemic on their children's development, given the loss of services, education and social engagement opportunities.

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.*



Contributions to the Newsletter

Upcoming newsletter topics: **March: Early Childhood**
April: Autism Spectrum Disorders
May: Mental Health

To submit contributions of articles, events, or resources, you may use the attached word document. Send submissions to 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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