

# Pathway 2:

# Join With Other Families



## Pathway 2:

Join with other families to ensure your child's school participation is supported by caring adults on a daily basis.

### This pathway is right for you if:

- You are looking to keep your child enrolled in their current school.
- You are interested in working with other families in your neighborhood to support your child's learning.
- The actions laid out in Pathway 1 are unlikely to fully address your unmet childcare needs and your child's unmet academic, social, or emotional needs.
- Your child's remote or hybrid learning would benefit from more frequent supervision.

My family is on this pathway because I want to work with other families to participate in a learning pod, so we can share efforts and pool resources to support our children. My learning pod is supervised by a family member to keep costs low, but other pods may be supervised by a childcare provider or licensed instructor.

I found a program run by my school district, while my friends joined programs run by community nonprofit and faith-based organizations. You may see these programs referred to as learning pods, but this guide will refer to them as learning hubs to avoid confusion.



## Pathway 2: Join with other families



### Set-up and Routines Checklist

These steps help you create a safe, consistent learning environment for your child. Use this checklist to identify what your family is doing 😊 and what new steps you may wish to take 🤔.

#### 😊 🤔 Getting Started

- Decide whether to join a learning pod or a learning hub.
- If creating a learning pod, select podmates.

#### 😊 🤔 Schedule

- Organize class schedules.
- Set up and share the calendar.
- Track progress throughout the day.
- Establish strong routines.
- Prepare for interruptions and mishaps.

#### 😊 🤔 Learning Space

- Prioritize safety.
- Manage risk.
- Consider rotating locations.
- Prepare the space.

#### 😊 🤔 Digital Access and Safety

- Select a location with stable Wi-Fi.
- Ensure devices are available and usable.
- Help children actively participate in digital learning.
- Talk with your child about digital safety.
- Use parental controls.
- Monitor your child's online activity.



## Pathway 2: Join with other families



### Learning and Growing Checklist

These steps help you engage your child in instruction and support your child's learning and growth. Use this checklist to identify what your family is already doing 😊 and what new steps you may wish to take 🤔.

#### 😊 🤔 Learning Materials

- Get a sense of what pod members are learning.
- Identify common learning gaps.
- Select learning materials as needed.

#### 😊 🤔 Learning Support

- Agree on learning objectives.
- Determine whether to hire a professional.
- If hiring a professional, do your research.
- If relying on families, share the responsibility.
- Talk to your pod facilitator about supporting your child.
- Communicate challenges.
- Use supports to meet varying learning styles.
- Build in screen-time breaks.

#### 😊 🤔 Enrichment Activities

- Identify common interests.
- Take advantage of families' skills.
- Visit parks and local cultural sites.
- Choose accessible activities.
- Take advantage of existing programming.



## Pathway 2: Join with other families



### Community and Connection Checklist

These steps help you and your child establish and support meaningful relationships with peers and adults. Use this checklist to identify what your family is already doing 😊 and what new steps you may wish to take 😊.

#### 😊 😊 Socialization

- Establish clear safety rules.
- Agree on an approach to discipline.
- Connect with students outside the pod.
- Have fun as a pod.
- Help your child make others feel welcome.
- Help your child participate in class.

#### 😊 😊 Support Systems

- Speak up about challenges.
- Lean on one another.
- Address and resolve conflicts with podmates.
- Plan for pod dissolution.
- Connect with pod support organizations.

#### 😊 😊 Mental and Emotional Health

- Make time for fun.
- Remember to celebrate.
- Look for downturns in your child's emotional health.
- Help your child identify strengths and manage frustration and anxiety.
- Incorporate mindfulness.



## Pathway 2: Join with other families



### **Set-up and Routines**

While you may never have set up a learning pod before, your family may have organized a multi-family celebration or group study session at some point. Following many of the same principles you have used in the past (together with the tips below) can help you build a structured and supportive learning environment for all children in your pod.



## Getting Started

### Decide Whether to Join a Learning Pod or Learning Hub.

Once you decide to collaborate closely with other families, the first decision is whether to join a learning hub or create or join a self-organized pod with neighborhood families.

If considering a learning hub:

### Understand Your Options.

Check out a publicly available [database](#) to find learning hubs in your state that meet your families' needs. It may also be helpful to speak with your child's teacher or school administrator and check social media groups for parents.

### Meet the Facilitator.

Once you identify an existing learning hub of interest, contact the organizer for information on the facilitator and the level of academic support provided.

- Several districts use substitute teachers, available staff, and newly hired childcare workers as facilitators. Nonprofit organizations may use both existing staff and volunteers.
- Not all facilitators are equipped to support all learners. If your child has special learning needs, talk to the organizer about facilitators' ability to support your child's needs and help them fully participate in learning.

### Check the Hours.

Check with the learning hub organizer to make sure the schedule works for your child's school and family. Some learning hubs may offer supervision after regular school hours as well.

### Evaluate the Cost.

Search for any free learning hubs in your area, and make sure the cost of joining your preferred hub is within your family's budget. Ask about need-based financial aid or sliding scale payment options.

If you join a learning hub, check out the guidance in Pathway 1 to help make remote and hybrid learning and transitions between in-person and remote school more manageable.

Joining an existing learning hub may **not** make sense for your family if:

- There is no learning hub within easy walking or driving distance of your home.
- The existing learning hubs are not accepting new students.
- You prefer a different type of facilitator from the ones offered via your local learning hubs.
- Your child requires more hours of supervision than is available.
- Financial considerations make a self-organized learning pod more practical.

If it doesn't make sense for you to join a learning hub, but you still want to work with other families to support your child's learning, you may want to consider a learning pod. Even though you've probably never set up a learning pod before, your family may have organized a multifamily celebration or a group study session. Follow many of the same principles you have used in the past (together with the tips below) to build a structured and supportive learning environment. Review the guidance below to get started.

This pathway assumes that your child will participate in a learning pod while remaining enrolled in their current school. If you plan to use a learning pod to replace school altogether (i.e., homeschool), review the guidance in Pathway 3.



## If Creating a Learning Pod, Select Podmates.

Once you decide to form a learning pod, identify potential podmates. Consider families you know through school, after-school activities, and the neighborhood. Try to determine if families will be [a good match](#).

When choosing podmates:

### Keep it Small.

Most learning pods include four to 10 children. Families may prefer the smaller end of that range to minimize risk and simplify decision-making.

### Choose Partners You Like and Trust.

Joining with other families means sharing risks and rewards. Identify families with the same general risk tolerance and people you trust to be careful and honest and exercise good judgment. Select other families that will have a positive impact on your child and your family's day-to-day experience. Both children and families should enjoy one another's company. Children should be able to participate in fun, engaging activities together.

### Consider Resource Constraints.

Use a sliding scale for shared expenses or other strategies to make your pod accessible to families with varying levels of resources.





## Schedule

To maintain a regular schedule and create stability while participating in a learning pod:

### Organize Class Schedules.

Your learning pod may include children in different grades, schools, or classes who meet during different time blocks. Districts generally cannot accommodate requests to place children in the same pod in the same class. With other families, put together a master calendar (using a free service like Google Calendar or a [paid service](#) with additional features) to determine a schedule that works for all families.

### Set Up and Share the Calendar.

In addition to class meeting times, you will also want to consider families' work obligations and childcare needs and the number of days students are taking part in in-person learning. Regardless of the schedule you choose, aim for consistency. Ensure your child understands when they will participate in the learning pod and has a chance to ask questions and suggest revisions.

### Track Progress Throughout the Day.

Help older children stay organized with a digital schedule that all pod members can access. For younger children, a paper schedule can allow them to see and track their progress using checkboxes, Post-its, or stickers.

- For children in your learning pod who are not reading or have special learning needs, consider alternatives to a written schedule. For example, you might create a schedule out of objects that represent each part of your child's day. Have children move objects from a To-Do box to a Done box as they complete tasks.

### Establish Strong Routines.

Routines can provide helpful structure to the day, helping everyone in the learning pod stay on the same page.

- Begin and end the learning pod with set activities. Use these times to create space for children to connect in a fun or relaxed way—for example, by playing a game or playing outside.
- Use transition routines to move learning pod members from one activity to the next and to help younger children take on more independence. These routines may include putting away materials, preparing for the next activity, noting any incomplete tasks, checking in with an adult, stretching, moving, and taking a break. The pod facilitator may want to set up signals (a five-minute warning alarm, for example) for when a transition is approaching.

### Prepare for Interruptions and Mishaps.

At some point, the link for remote learning or the Wi-Fi won't work. By talking about these and other challenges that might occur and having a backup plan (like an activity from [Wide Open School](#)), pod members can manage hiccups and interruptions.



## Learning Space

Bringing together multiple children in a single location raises questions about creating a physical space that works well for remote learning.

### Prioritize Safety.

Follow [guidance](#) from local and national health officials. Use outdoor space where feasible. When gathering inside is necessary, choose a well-ventilated area, preferably with open windows or doors.

- Talk to other families about cleaning protocols and responsibilities.

### Manage Risk.

If you are hosting a learning pod at your home, [take steps](#) to reduce potential liability. [Contact your homeowner insurance provider](#) to understand coverage scope. What if an instructor falls over a vacuum? Or a child gets bitten by your dog? In some states, a learning pod may be classified as a home-based business, which may necessitate professional liability coverage.

- If purchasing additional insurance, consider splitting that cost among families.
- The hosting family may want to require other families to sign a liability waiver acknowledging the uncertainties and inherent risks of participating in a learning pod.

### Consider Rotating Locations.

Some families may find it helpful to rotate the learning pod location among two or more homes. If using this option, agree to a schedule in advance.

- Use your judgment as to whether your children would find this disruptive.

### Prepare the Space.

Encourage your child and other pod members to decorate the learning space and add personal touches so that it feels comfortable and fun. Consider creating simple name tags to help pod members feel ownership over their space. If certain rooms (such as the bedroom) are off-limits, consider hanging simple signs to avoid confusion.

- Gather books and supplies, including stress relievers (like a fidget spinner). Include notebooks for pod members to write down questions as they come up. Provide a materials box (made from an old box you have) to prevent the children's materials from taking over your or a podmate's home.
- If your child has special learning needs, contact the school to understand what special accommodations were provided in the school building and how best to ensure similar supports are provided in your learning pod.



## Digital Access and Safety

To connect to remote learning, children in your learning pod need (1) a stable and strong Internet connection, (2) a personal device (a laptop or other device), and (3) an understanding of how to access remote-learning programming and actively participate.

### Select a Location with Stable WiFi.

Digital learning requires a reliable high-speed Internet connection. Before agreeing on a learning pod location, discuss Internet speed and reliability.

- [Everyoneon](#) helps families find low-cost Internet options.
- Websites such as [Speedtest.net](#) let you check your Wi-Fi speed. Run the speed test in multiple rooms and choose the location where the signal is strongest.
  - » If you prefer a room with a poor signal, consider investing in a Wi-Fi extender. Simple models start at \$50, and the cost can be shared among families. The [National Parents Union](#) offers grants in amounts starting at \$100 to help families with at-home learning expenses. Check with teachers or administrators to find out about other grant programs that may be available.

### Ensure Devices Are Available and Usable.

Many schools and districts provide devices for home use. Schools and districts also provide technology support if children have questions or a device malfunctions. [Contact your school's tech-support staff](#) to ask about options.

- Most rooms in your home won't have enough power outlets for multiple students to charge their devices. Consider purchasing a power strip. Basic models start at \$10.
- If children in your pod share devices, create a schedule to make it clear who is using each device at what time.

### Help Children Actively Participate in Digital Learning.

Talk to your facilitator about the level of support your child needs to actively participate in class discussions and [navigate learning platforms](#). See tips below for guidance on selecting a facilitator system that works for your pod.

### Talk with Your Child about Digital Safety.

- Use age-appropriate [online games and videos](#) to help your child understand digital safety terms (cyberbullying, virus protection).
- Remind your child not to give out their personal information—including name, address, and phone number—to anyone via e-mail or social media.

### Use Parental Controls.

These [controls](#) can filter and block harmful content and prevent your child from sharing personal information online and via e-mail.

### Monitor Your Child's Online Activity.

Look at the learning and [social media](#) platforms your child is using to see what is communicated on them. Pay particular attention to [signs of cyberbullying](#). Speak with your child about how to make responsible decisions about online communication, including the consequences of posting content that is unkind or mean.

- Alert the pod facilitator if you have concerns about programs your child is accessing on the Internet.



### Reflection Questions

What is one thing that my family is already doing to create a safe, consistent learning environment for my child?

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What is one new thing I can try in the coming weeks with my child?

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## Pathway 2: Join with other families



### **Learning and Growing**

Working with other families in a pod can help you effectively support your child's learning. By sharing responsibilities across families and maintaining communication with your pod facilitator, you can help your child stay engaged in both academic and enrichment programming.



## Learning Materials

The majority of families participating in learning pods use them to supplement, rather than replace, school-provided instruction. This means most learning pods will continue to use learning materials provided by children’s schools, but they may access additional resources to fill in gaps.

### Get a Sense of What Pod Members are Learning.

Before choosing additional learning programs and materials, take time to understand what your child and other pod members are learning through school and how they are doing.

- Use family guides (grades [K–12](#)) to learn more about the learning standards and foundational skills your child is expected to master. State guides (for example, [Connecticut Parent Guides](#)) can give you a sense of the content and skills your child is expected to learn.

### Identify Common Learning Gaps.

Talk to other families about the gaps in their children’s current learning, then focus your learning pod on the areas of overlap.

- Make sure the school’s curriculum for core subjects (English, math, and science) meets your state’s [learning standards](#).
  - » To know if a school is using a high-quality core curriculum, see how the learning materials are rated on [EdReports](#). In addition, see if the content helps children move from simpler to more complex skills, instead of in a pick-and-choose format.
- [Talk with your child’s teachers](#) about how they are teaching the standards and how your child is doing. [Ask grade-specific questions](#) to identify skills to target with your child.
- Follow your child’s progress using online tools, including [Learning Heroes Readiness Check](#) (K–8, reading and math).

### Select Learning Materials as Needed

Use the table below to find strong learning materials. Discuss families’ preferences and concerns, and agree on how you will resolve differences. Some learning pods use a simple majority vote; others assign families different roles.



## Some supplemental programs you may consider include:

Multiple Subjects			
<a href="#">UNBOXED by Prepared Parents</a>	4-9	Free	UNBOXED by Prepared Parents (available in English and Spanish) provides a monthly toolkit for families that supports academic learning and helps children develop habits and skills for lifelong success.
<a href="#">Khan Academy</a>	K-12	Free	Khan Academy offers practice exercises, instructional videos, and a personalized learning dashboard that empower learners to study at their own pace in and outside the classroom. Subjects include math, science, computing, history, art history, and economics, plus K-14 and test preparation (SAT, Praxis, LSAT) content.
<a href="#">Wide Open School</a>	PK-12	Free	Wide Open School provides free learning activities for all grades.
<a href="#">Outschool</a>	PK-12	Costs vary by class (financial support available)	Outschool offers live, small-group video classes taught by educators, artists, scientists, and others. Courses range from beginning reading to AP physics to video game design to piano.
Math			
<a href="#">Teach to One Roadmaps Home</a>	4-8, Algebra 1	\$9.95 per month	Roadmaps Home uses diagnostic assessments to generate a personalized road map for your child. It identifies grade-level math skills to master and links to lessons to develop those skills.
<a href="#">DreamBox</a>	K-8	\$12.95 per month	DreamBox is a digital math program with interactive lessons that your child can use at home. (Available in English and Spanish.)
<a href="#">Prodigy</a>	K-8	Free	Prodigy provides math games that your child can use to practice math at home.
<a href="#">XtraMath</a>	K-6	Free	XtraMath helps students develop quick recall and fluency with basic math.
English Language Arts			
<a href="#">CommonLit</a>	3-12	Free	With a <a href="#">guardian account</a> , caregivers can choose reading lessons from any literary or nonfiction genre and track their child's progress on reading and writing skills.
<a href="#">Story Mentors</a>	PK-2	Free	StoryMentors supports reading with access to resources like children's books and guides.
<a href="#">Springboard Collaborative</a>	K-2	Free	Springboard Collaborative features a four-week learn-at-home plan, including a reading strategy of the week (by video), tip sheets in English and Spanish, daily lessons, and corresponding e-books.
<a href="#">Reading A-Z</a>	K-6	\$115.45 per year	Reading A-Z provides a library of downloadable books, lessons, units, and assessments.
<a href="#">Epic</a>	K-6	\$7.99 per year (1 month free)	Epic includes a library of digital books personalized to your child's age and reading level, and it provides information about your child's reading habits.



## Using and Adapting Core Curriculum

Some families support learning by choosing a strong school-based curriculum to adapt and use at home. If your learning pod takes this approach, look for curriculums that cover all state learning standards and are ordered to help your child move from simpler to more challenging skills.

Some curriculum providers have made highly rated and standards-aligned teacher and student materials available online.

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### Math

Strong math curriculum options include:

#### **Zearn**

(Kindergarten through 5th grade)

#### **Illustrative Mathematics**

(6-8, Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2)

#### **SchoolKit**

provides additional key lessons to support learning major work for grades 6-8.

### English

Strong English curriculum options include:

#### **EL Education**

(K-2)

#### **CKLA**

(K-5)

#### **Odell High School Literacy Program**

(9-12)

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### Science

**NextGenScience** has identified quality science lessons and units that teachers can implement in a classroom. If you have the time and interest, you could adapt these for use in the home.

Consider using **Learning in Places's** family resources to apply science principles at home.

The **Council of State Science Supervisors** has prepared a list of science home learning activities.





## Learning Support

Forming a learning pod ensures that your child is supervised by a caring adult for a significant portion of the school day.

### Agree on Learning Objectives.

Be honest with other families about your priorities. Some families are eager to turn up the dial on academic programming, while others are interested in learning pods primarily for socializing.

- Consider drafting a learning pod mission statement.

### Determine Whether to Hire a Professional.

Depending on families' professional and personal commitments, it may be necessary to hire a professional tutor or childcare provider. Before making this decision, consider the financial investment you can make, families' ability to balance pod facilitation with work schedules, whether learning would benefit from a trained supervisor, and the potential facilitator's ability to support all learners (including those with special learning needs).

### If Hiring a Professional, Do Your Research.

[Search online](#) for tutors or get recommendations from local schools. Ask for references. Confirm any hidden costs (prep time, materials, transportation) beyond the teacher's hourly rate.

### If Relying on Families, Share the Responsibility.

Consider using a rotating facilitator system in which families take turns leading the pod.

- Remember that no two families face identical challenges. If one family cannot adjust its work schedule to help facilitate, there may be other ways to contribute, such as setting up materials or cleaning up at the end of the day.

### Talk to Your Pod Facilitator About Supporting Your Child.

Each district has a different approach to coordinating with pod facilitators. Some have office hours specifically for facilitators. Others have [released guidance](#) that significantly limits pod facilitators' ability to work directly with district teachers and staff. Find out which category your child's school falls in by reviewing public guidance or contacting an administrator.

### Communicate Challenges.

Tell the facilitator about your child's learning challenges and common sources of distraction so that they can be attentive to these needs.

### Use Supports to Meet Varying Learning Styles.

Determine whether children in the learning pod prefer more solitary learning time or if they are most engaged when working in teams. Provide support and activities based on these preferences.

### Build in Screen-Time Breaks.

Staring at a screen all day is hard. Reading a physical book, taking handwritten notes, or writing a draft of an essay on paper may help your child feel more engaged. Talk to your pod facilitator about opportunities for your child to get fresh air at least once in the morning and once in the afternoon.



## Enrichment Activities

With the switch to remote and hybrid learning, children may not have the same opportunities to participate in enrichment activities like athletics, science experiments, and art projects. Re-creating some of these opportunities in your learning pod can provide an enjoyable break from sedentary screen time.

### Identify Common Interests.

When you are creating a learning pod, survey students to identify activities that match their interests.

### Take Advantage of Families' Skills.

One family member in the learning pod may love to make crafts, while another played varsity baseball in high school. Encourage families to lead activities that match their skills and interests.

### Visit Parks and Local Cultural Sites.

Ask museums, arts councils, and recreation departments about virtual group tours. Check out parent social media pages to learn about events in your neighborhood.

### Choose Accessible Activities.

Consider the abilities of all children in the learning pod when planning enrichment programming. Include alternative activities as needed so that all children can meaningfully participate.

### Take Advantage of Existing Programming.

- Help your child safely participate in school-based extracurriculars. Talk to your child's teachers and coaches to learn about how your child can continue to participate remotely or safely attend in-person activities.
- Reach out to other families through family networks (the PTA, Facebook groups) to find out about opportunities for students to safely have fun and explore outside (in a hiking group, for example).
- [Outschool](#) provides low-cost online classes and clubs led by trained instructors across many interest areas, including art, music, health and wellness, technology, games, and other student interests. Families may also apply for a need-based [\\$300 credit](#) to apply to classes.



**Reflection Questions**

What is one thing that my family is already doing to support my child’s learning and growth?

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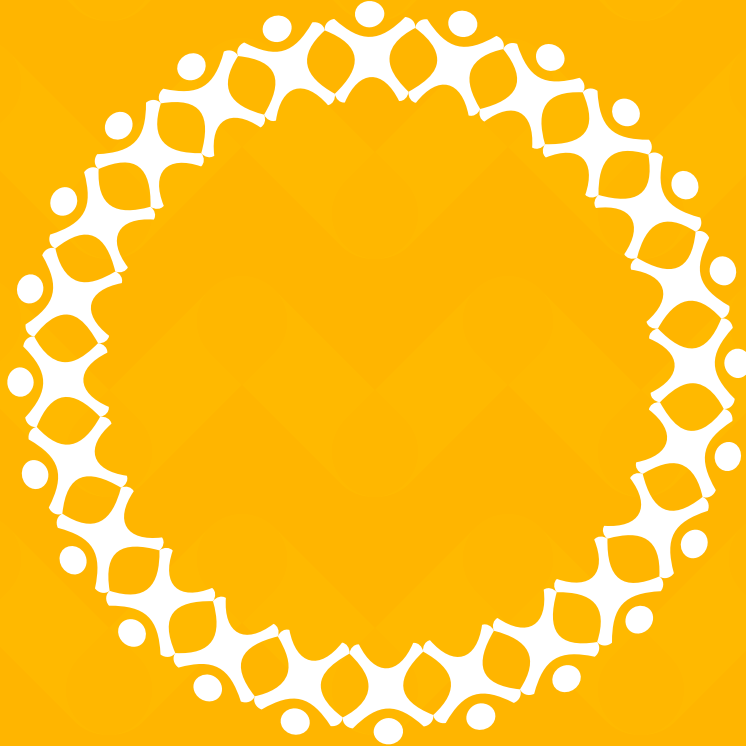
What is one new thing I can try in the coming weeks with my child?

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## Pathway 2: Join with other families



### **Community and Connection**

One of the most important benefits of forming a learning pod is the chance to socialize and support others. Your child can spend time with friends, and you can learn from other families navigating remote and hybrid learning.



## Socialization

Simple steps can help families ensure meaningful and safe socialization within the learning pod and with the broader school community.

### Establish Clear Safety Rules.

Be honest about your and your child's comfort with various safety precautions, and consider [recommended safety precautions](#).

- Is the learning pod going to carry out daily symptom checks? What is the plan if a child or an adult becomes sick? Will children be expected to wear masks? Does the physical space allow for social distancing? How will the pod handle lunchtime and snacks?
- Discuss in-person socialization outside the pod. Talk to other families about their comfort before expanding your social circle. Are all playdates with families outside the pod off-limits, or are outside get-togethers acceptable?

### Agree on an Approach to Discipline.

Conflicts among children in a learning pod are inevitable. Talk to other families at the start about how you want to handle disruptions and who will be responsible for taking follow-up action.

### Connect with Students Outside the Pod.

Children in the learning pod will likely have synchronous (real-time) classes with other children who are not part of their pod. It is easy to accidentally talk about your pod in a way that makes nonmembers feel unwelcome. Help your child maintain relationships with other classmates through virtual meetups focused on work or play.

### Have Fun as a Pod.

Play games, watch movies, create art, go on walks, cook, eat, read—take time to turn off devices and connect as podmates.

### Help Your Child Make Others Feel Welcome.

Help your child to learn, work, and play with peers who have different backgrounds and interests. [Teach your child to connect with people who are different](#) from them.

- If you are seeking guidance navigating conversations with your child about race and racial justice, there are [resources to help you engage your child in meaningful discussion](#) regardless of their age. PBS KIDS also offers [age-appropriate tips and resources](#) that can help families use books, art, and other media to teach children about race, racism, and being anti-racist.

### Help Your Child Participate in Class.

Synchronous and group learning times provide an opportunity for your child to engage with teachers and peers. Ask your child's teacher how students are expected to participate (by sharing or presenting a piece of work, reading aloud, demonstrating how to solve a problem). Practice presenting over video with pod members. The pod facilitator can also provide [sentence stems](#) for your child to look at off-screen to help them participate in academic conversations.



## Support Systems

Joining a learning pod opens direct communication channels with other families seeking to support their children's learning.

### Speak up About Challenges.

No one has it all figured out. Don't be afraid to speak up about your challenges and seek honest advice. Chances are, other families are struggling with similar challenges.

### Lean on One Another.

Maybe you need to care for an ill family member. Or your schedule changes and you need to work the morning rather than afternoon shift. When unexpected obligations arise, it can be helpful to have other families to safely turn to for help. That help could include switching facilitation days or offering to supervise another family's child for a couple of additional hours.

### Address and Resolve Conflicts with Podmates.

Disagreements among families are inevitable, but there are [strategies](#) to help you work through recurring challenges.

- Have important conversations at the start, be proactive about problem-solving, consider other families' perspectives, and make time for your own relationships through adults-only activities with other families.

### Plan for Pod Dissolution.

Learning pods are not intended to last forever. Make a plan for how families can leave the pod. Think about whether it makes sense to ask other families to provide a couple of weeks' advance notice before exiting the pod so other families can plan accordingly.

- If you are hiring an instructor, consider whether it is necessary to collect advance security deposits.

### Connect with Pod Support Organizations.

Reach out to organizations like the National Parents Union that support families in creating pods. The National Parents Union has partnered with EdNavigator to launch the [We GotchU Pod Navigator](#) to help traditionally underserved families create pods. Look to the National Parents Union to apply for grants to fund pods and to participate in community discussions about how to run pods and participate in distance learning. Find additional support through the National Parents Union [Facebook group](#).



## Mental and Emotional Health

Joining a learning pod—by creating a familiar routine and opportunities for socialization with other children—can help promote both children’s and families’ mental and emotional health. It can also be a great way for families to support one another in big and little ways.

### Make Time for Fun.

Make time to do things you and your child enjoy as a family and with other members of your pod. Exercise and get outdoors. Look for ways to help your child recognize how they are progressing, including by exhibiting greater independence and working effectively with other pod members.

### Remember to Celebrate.

It is not safe to gather in large groups, but families do not need to skip celebrations for birthdays or exciting accomplishments. Consider celebrating milestones that are typically celebrated in school (such as the 100th day of the year) in your learning pod.

- Use technology to celebrate with other classmates outside your pod.

### Look for Downturns in Your Child’s Emotional Health.

Some [indications that your child may be struggling emotionally](#) include seeming bored, becoming upset, participating less in class discussions, frequently feeling unwell, and not completing assignments. Encourage the pod facilitator to let you know if your child is displaying any of these signs.

- Contact [mental and emotional health specialists](#), including your child’s [school counselors and psychologists](#), if you suspect that your child may be in distress.

### Help Your Child Identify Their Strengths and Manage Frustration and Anxiety.

Help your child identify their [character strengths](#). Support your child with unproductive frustration. [Limit the type and amount of media your child consumes](#), and [help your child have accurate information about COVID-19](#).

### Incorporate Mindfulness.

Mindfulness education centers on techniques to calm the mind and body. Emerging research has shown that it can decrease the negative effects of external stress and increase children’s ability to stay engaged in learning.

- Download a [toolkit](#) to incorporate mindfulness exercises into your learning pod and access easy-to-follow facilitator guides.



**Reflection Questions**

What is one thing that my family is already doing to help my child have meaningful relationships with peers and adults?

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What is one new thing I can try in the coming weeks with my child?

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If you have questions or feedback on this Family Guide, contact CPRL at [cprl@law.columbia.edu](mailto:cprl@law.columbia.edu) or CPRL Executive Director Elizabeth Chu at [emc2170@tc.columbia.edu](mailto:emc2170@tc.columbia.edu).