

OFFICE OF THE
STUDENT
ADVOCATE

PODing 101:

Building a Safe Learning Pod



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Creating Your Own Learning Pod: A Step by Step Guide

Create your own learning pod.



What are **learning pods**?

Learning pods are small groups of students who work in group settings outside of classroom instruction under the supervision of a trusted adult.

Who are **learning pods** best for?

- Parents / Guardians who need help facilitating distance learning.
- Parents / Guardians who need help with technology.
- Parents / Guardians who are looking for safe opportunities for their children to socialize.
- Parents / Guardians who need safe opportunities to socialize for themselves.
- Students who need more in-person support.

Who can **organize & lead** a learning pod?

- Community based organizations, schools, and tutoring companies have organized learning hubs that are led by teachers, tutors, parents, or volunteers.
- Parents/Guardians and other families also have successfully created their own learning pods. These families usually supervise their children while they receive instruction from a teacher or tutor.

Are learning pods **safe**?

Yes, if students and adults follow the health and safety guidelines mandated by the Center for Disease Control (CDC):

- Everyone is required to wear a mask.
- Students remain 6 feet apart from each other.
- Sanitation / Wash areas are accessible.
- Proper cleaning protocols are in place.

For more information about COVID-19, please visit:

- DC Health: <https://dchealth.dc.gov> or <https://coronavirus.dc.gov>
- Center for Disease Control (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

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Creating Your Own Learning Pod: A Step by Step Guide



Create your own learning pod.

Recommendations:

- Smaller student group sizes will reduce the risk for possible COVID-19 infections.
- Smaller student groups are easier to assist.
- Coordinate the learning pod with your child's school if you need instructional support.

- For the safety of everyone involved, we recommend having 2 or more adults always present.
- If you have more than 3 trusted adults, consider creating a schedule for adults to rotate responsibilities or subject areas.
- When working with multiple groups of students, make sure the same adults rotate with their schedules.

- Where do you have space to seat students 6+ feet apart from one another?
- Consider outdoor spaces when possible, especially if helping larger groups of students.
- Require masks to be worn regardless of the location.

- If students are receiving instruction from the same place, consider connecting 1 computer to a TV for all students.
- Make sure you have a strong internet connection if you plan to connect a group of students (multiple computers streaming live video can slow your internet connection down).

1

How many children will you support?

- 1 - 2 Children
- 3 - 5 Children
- 6 - 9 Children
- 10+ Children

2

How many trusted adults will be able to supervise student learning?

- 1 Adult
- 2 Adults
- 3 Adults
- 4 + Adults

3

What available space do you have access to?

- Residential Location
- Library / Recreation Center / Church
- Outdoor Location
- Other (Please Explain): _____

4

What technology do you have access to?

Check all that apply.

- Tablets
- Chromebooks / Laptops
- Internet Access
- Television

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Step 1: Establish Your Groups



1



Create Your Group: Make a Class Roster

Keep roster sizes as small as possible.

Try to group by grade level.

Having students from the same school will make your job easier.

Student Information:

- How many total students will you support? _____
- What age range are the students? _____
- What grade band are the students? _____
- Do all students attend the same school? Yes / No
- How many schools do the students attend? _____

Class Roster:

List the students you plan to support in your learning pod below. Include their ages, grades, and schools to help you plan.

Student Name:	Age:	Grade:	School:
1)			
2)			
3)			
4)			
5)			
6)			
7)			
8)			

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2



Create Clear Expectations: Establish Community Agreement

These contracts should outline:

- The days & times students are expected to participate.
- The roles & responsibilities of the trusted adults.
- Establish sanitation procedures.
- A commitment that participating families will limit their contact with people outside of this learning pod.

Establishing a Community Agreement

To reduce the risk of being exposed to COVID-19, it is recommended that all parties involved in this learning pod reduce their interactions with people outside of this pod. To ensure the safety of all participants involved, and their families at home, create a mutually agreed upon set of rules for all children and adults to follow. Use the following template to create a set list of norms for your pod (*This is not a legally binding document*).

1.) _____

2.) _____

3.) _____

4.) _____

5.) _____

If you all agree to the agreement stated above, please sign your name in the available space below:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



Creating your own learning pod: A Step by Step Guide

Step 2: Communicate with their school(s)



General Support:



- The Registrar or Secretary will often be your point of contact for attendance related issues.
- The school's principal, assistant principals, or deans may be able to provide you with more resources for your learning pod.

Find Your Schools' Contact Information:

Before you can plan a schedule, you should get the contact information for your students' school(s). From attendance related issues to academic support, it is helpful to have the contact information for the following positions:

- Registrar
- Secretary
- Principal
- Assistant Principal / Dean

Provide the contact information for each point of contact at your school in the space below:

School Name:	Contact Name / Position:	Phone:	Email:

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Step 2: Communicate with their school(s)



Academic Support:



- You can work with the teachers to provide extra materials or support that is aligned with virtual instruction.
- If your student has an IEP, or a 504 Plan, coordinating with the school's special education coordinator would be helpful.

Teacher Contact Information:

Get the contact information for all of your students' teachers. Insert the contact information for all teachers below.

Name:	Subject:	Email:	Phone:

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Step 2: Communicate with their school(s)



Behavioral / Emotional Support:



- Coordinating with your students' counselors will provide them important mental health supports.
- Your students' social workers would be an important resource to provide your group the additional support they need.

Counselor / Social Worker Contact Information:

Insert the contact information for all your students' counselors or social workers. It is important to have mental health supports for your students in addition to academic support.

Name:	Position:	Email:	Phone:

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Step 3: Create a Schedule



For Students:



- Create a schedule that follows their school's schedule.
- Creating a consistent routine is important for children.
- Use breaks and free-time to promote physical activities.

Create a Daily Schedule: Plan for Each Day

If all student participants attend the same school, simply copy their schedule in the space below. If they attend different schools, or are in different grades, determine a time schedule accordingly.

Include planned breaks into your schedule. This should include breaks for: physical activity, bathroom, nap, and lunch/snack.

Block / Period:	Times:	Minutes:	Subject / Activity


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Step 3: Create a Schedule



Create a Monthly Schedule: Plan Ahead

Use the blank calendars to plan what days the learning pod will be open and closed. Use this to plan for adequate coverage on days your school is closed.

DC Public Schools (DCPS) follow a separate calendar than public charter schools. Visit your school's calendar to fill in the calendars as accurately as possible.

MONTH _____						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

MONTH _____						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

MONTH _____						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

MONTH _____						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

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Step 3: Create a Schedule



For Parents / Guardians:



- Create schedules that rotates responsibilities throughout the day.
- Assign specific subjects to parents.

Tip: Providing academic support is important, your mental health matters too.

Creating an Adult Schedule:

It is important to establish a routine schedule for adults. This will help create a consistent routine students need in class to excel.

Assign coverage duties to what adults are most comfortable with.

Block / Period:	Times:	Subject / Activity:	Adult Coverage:

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Step 4: Create your learning space



Creating a Safe Learning Space:



- Set up a space specifically for learning at a desk or table.
- Minimize distractions: avoid highly populated areas.
- Create separate spaces for physical activity, quiet time, and eating.

AVAILABLE SPACE: Provide a number in each available space below.

- How many rooms are available for student learning? _____
- Will you be using public space at all (*Please circle*)? **Yes / No**
- Do you have space outside to use (*Please circle*)? **Yes / No**
- Is there a kitchen available to prepare food (*Please circle*)? **Yes / No**
- Have you removed distractions from the area (*Example: pet crates, video games*)? **Yes / No**

Technology Considerations:



- Using a Chromebook / laptop may be easier to navigate between the platforms your school uses (*even if your student was given a tablet*).
- If you have a TV with HDMI connectivity, consider connecting your devices so your students can have more distance from the screen.

AVAILABLE TECHNOLOGY: Provide a number in each available space below.

- How many Chromebooks / laptops are available? _____
- How many tablets are available? _____
- Do you have an HDMI compatible TV (*Please circle*)? **Yes / No**

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Step 4: Create your learning space



CREATE YOUR BLUE PRINT:

Use the space below to make a blueprint of your learning space. Draw a diagram of available rooms.



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Health and Safety Guidance:



Even though you and your group will agree to limit direct contact with others outside of your learning pod bubble, you still should follow guidance from the Center for Disease Control and the DC Department of Health:

Daily Health Screenings	Check everyone's temperature each day. Continuously monitor for symptoms of COVID-19. (See Symptoms of Coronavirus link below)
Social Distancing	Practice social distancing in public settings (6+ feet space apart). - Include visible signage promoting social distancing.
Wear a Mask	Wear masks in public. If families cannot limit their contact with others outside of your bubble, encourage wearing masks within your learning pod. - Include visible signage requiring mask wearing.
Disinfect Highly Used Surfaces	Disinfect Surfaces after every session: - Desks / tables / Chairs - Keyboards / Computer Mouse - Chairs - Doorknobs
Wash Your Hands	Establish consistent hand washing practices. -Wash hands with soap and water for 20-seconds. -Include visible signage about proper hand washing practices.
Establish Clear Communication	Communicate clearly with all participants when someone does show any symptoms associated with COVID-19, or any illness. It is the responsibility of all families and participants to prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

For more information about Health and Safety Guidance, please visit:

- Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) :
https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/OSSE%20Health%20and%20Safety%20Guidance%20for%20Child%20Care%20Providers%2012.21.20.pdf

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- Symptoms of Coronavirus: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

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Food Resources: Breakfast & Lunch



All DC youth ages 18 and younger may receive free grab-and go meals at DCPS and DPR meal site locations through June 30th, 2021. DC youth are not required to be enrolled DC Public Schools students to receive meals. Youth and or parents/guardians on their behalf may receive up to 3 breakfast and 3 lunch meals daily.

Comprehensive Meal Sites for DC Youth:

- https://coronavirus.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/coronavirus/page_content/attachments/Meal%20Sites%20Revised%201.4.21r.pdf

If you need transportation to receive food from the meal locations, here is a list of the Metrobus Routes Serving DC Schools Meal Locations:

- <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/coronavirus/publication/attachments/Metrobus%20School%20Meal%20Locations%203-26-20.pdf>

Community Based Organizations in DC are distributing fresh and non-perishable groceries to District residents. Fresh fruits, vegetables and other food items are available for families who need them.

Grocery Distribution Sites:

- https://coronavirus.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/coronavirus/page_content/attachments/Grocery-Distribution-Sites-12-7-2020.pdf

To learn more about the food resources available in DC, please visit:

- <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/food>

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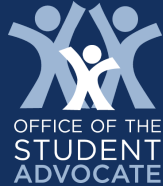
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Contact Us:

For additional information, or for any questions related to the Safe Passage of our students traveling to and from school, please contact us using any form of communication listed below:

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