

Learning and teaching practicalities: COVID-19



This table has been developed to help you in your thinking about ways of working with young children. We know that social distancing and young children is really difficult, particularly when they are keen to show you how much they want to be around you and really enjoy being close with their friends. It might be easier to think about physically distancing whilst being sociable with children at a distance. We are hoping that the following ideas will help you in decision making about what happens in your day.

Area	Practicalities nursery	Practicalities toddlers	Practicalities 3-5 years
<p>Environments general – indoors & outdoors</p> <p>Environments are constructed so they support learning but also consider social distancing – physical distances within the environment to allow educators to be support children’s social development</p>	<p>Key educator groups are important for keeping group sizes small and for connections with families.</p> <p>Floating indoor/outdoor programs are halted to reduce large numbers of children in areas. The centre works together to stagger usage of outdoor environment for different rooms at different times. Educators adapt opportunities to be included indoors throughout the day, for example, obstacle courses.</p> <p>Rooms that do not share an outdoor environment (often this is the case with nurseries) work in key educator groups to allow time inside and outside.</p> <p>Push two tables together for table top experiences and have children sit around these (limit the numbers as much as possible).</p> <p>Set the environment with expectations for numbers of children in areas for learning considering how it supports parallel play rather than cooperative play.</p>		
<p>Environments general – room-based considerations</p>	<p>Awareness of babies who are rolling – they are placed so that touching of others is minimised when rolling.</p> <p>Carefully consider placement of nursery furniture in the room so that mobile children are slowed down in moving between spaces and connecting with each other.</p>	<p>Limit numbers of children in experiences. Use chairs, shape markings on the floor to show distance for sitting.</p>	<p>Use chairs for children to sit on during small group times. Mark out distances on the floor with tape spots and place chairs on these. Alternatively use mats, cut into different shapes, or of different colours, spaced out on the floor for children to sit on.</p> <p>Chairs are placed at learning experiences to define how many children the area for learning has been defined for.</p> <p>Add a numeral card/pictorial representation to reinforce number of children per learning area.</p>

<p>Resources – general</p>	<p>Reduce opportunities for sharing where possible.</p> <p>If there is limited equipment, either refrain from putting it out or place in a space and supervise children using.</p> <p>Please consider the indoor and outdoor environments when resourcing. Ensure they are plentiful for groups of children in both.</p> <p>Do not offer water play. Discontinue use of playdough (try clay) and any other play that involves use of food regardless of whether it is in date or expired, cooked or uncooked (pasta, rice, seeds, legumes of any kind).</p>		
<p>Resources – room based considerations</p>	<p>For those mobile in the nursery, reduce sharing wherever possible. For example, in construction/ manipulative areas place small bucket, baskets of the same resources for children so they don't need to share.</p>	<p>Reduce sharing wherever possible. For example, in construction/ manipulative areas place bucket, baskets of the same resources for children so they don't need to share.</p>	<p>Provide resources for each child at their reach. For example, mark making. Ensure each allocated space has its own set of resources.</p> <p>Divide large collections (e.g. Lego or Mobilo) into numerous smaller baskets/ trays for individual use.</p>
<p>Routines and transitions - this includes all meal times, transitions from and into small groups, indoor to outdoor and back inside</p>	<p>Avoid large groups of children gathering in spaces. Ensure you use key educator groups to move children around. Avoid 'gatherings' or lining up. For example, on verandahs before coming inside, going to the bathroom, applying sunscreen. Be prepared or seek alternate ways to reduce herding children.</p> <p>Teach explicit handwashing, nose blowing and coughing etiquette. Model with children and ensure you have increased the specific times through the day for this to happen.</p> <p>Children are not to set tables for lunch or serve themselves at this time. For example, create a daily menu (words and photos/ pictures) to discuss with children and have children point to what they might like to have served on their plate.</p> <p>Have children come individually for sun cream application. Complete all children before moving outside.</p>		
<p>Routines and transitions – room-based considerations</p>	<p>Sing with children during hand washing activities for (20 sec) to engage in correct hand washing procedures.</p> <p>Small groups for meals. Have space between children.</p>	<p>Ensure the environment children are transitioning into is set up and ready to avoid waiting in groups.</p>	<p>Work with children in small groups to identify clear, consistent guidelines about the room. For example, expectations for resources, use and putting back, creating a dance or particular sequence of movements to greet and depart, sneezing and coughing etiquette.</p> <p>Use transition count down type songs to ensure children are moving through the routine in an organised way that avoids queues in the bathroom etc.</p> <p>Build handwashing songs into each routine transition to ensure it happens in the bathroom but also between activities. Sing songs and the alphabet to ensure handwashing lasts 20 seconds (or count to 20!)</p>

Home corner – general considerations	<p>Identify resources that can be easily and readily cleaned. Food stuff, cups, cutlery etc that children are more likely to mouth should not be available at this time.</p> <p>Ensure this space is uncluttered with furniture and offer only two chairs at a large table.</p> <p>Offer less materials in the space and rotate regularly to keep interest high.</p> <p>Offer dual sets of materials in separate baskets if possible to discourage sharing.</p> <p>Use big books for small group reading so children can be socially distanced but also able to see pictures.</p>		
Home corner – room based considerations	<p>Use large kitchen items that are less likely to be mouthed. For example, saucepans, dinner size plates (plastic). Consider the number of chairs the environment is set up for and offer only that many at the ‘dining room table’.</p>	<p>Consider what is being offered to children. Try to avoid settings that automatically bring children into close contact with each other. For example, hairdressers, hospitals/ doctor’s surgeries. Alternatives - vets (stuffed toys to ‘heal’), library, café, supermarket (use large, real packages to reduce mouthing).</p>	
Book area – general considerations	<p>The area is extended so children have more space to sit with books. There are an adequate number of books that sends a message of reading independently. With one or two children, have them sit beside you rather than facing you.</p> <p>Selections of books are placed in boxes or baskets, so children can browse individually.</p> <p>For children who are able to hold themselves whilst sitting, use chairs for children to sit on during small group times. Mark out distances on the floor with tape spots and place chairs on these.</p> <p>Alternatively, fix markers on the floor and where age appropriate, speak with children about where to sit in book area.</p>		
Book area – room considerations	<p>Sit with children either side facing out when reading with one or two children.</p>	<p>Take some time to explain to children where they are to sit before beginning the story. Remind them throughout how well they are doing. Ensure that all children are seeing the pictures as you read.</p>	<p>Consider alternative texts to books as well including catalogues, maps, brochures from favourite places (to keep interest high). Rotate these regularly as well.</p>
Small world – general considerations	<p>If you have children in the room who are prone to mouthing small items, it would be advisable to discontinue offering small world experiences at this time.</p>		
Small world – room considerations	<p>Not for this age group.</p>	<p>Prepare a number of small world scenarios that are the same to prevent children from sharing. Explain that this is a one child at a time activity. Could be placed on the table with a chair.</p>	<p>Create individual boxes of small worlds. Using a shoe box or similar add themed items (e.g. small dinosaurs, small rocks and shells, small pieces of coloured fabric, small leaves and pieces of bark or strips of black card, small cars and other vehicles, small trees, small boxes for buildings etc.)</p>

STEM	<p>Dependent on your resources in the centre, consider how children are gathered around items. For example, Prowise boards – set as table tops and have one child at each end of the board. BeeBots, BlueBots and iPads – if these are available in your centre they can be used on tabletops, so children can be limited by chairs.</p> <p>The educator should always be present as children could well gravitate to these tables.</p> <p>Where possible have children use individual styluses with iPads and the Prowise.</p>		
STEM	Not for this age group	<p>Provide a small group of children with a provocation and individual resources so they can work alongside each other. For example, for toddlers, can you build a bridge from recycled materials; add to this for 3-5 year olds, that will support a matchbox car. Or divide up the marble run equipment into a few baskets and ask children to individually create a run and note similarities and differences with others.</p> <p>Create baskets/boxes of exploratory materials that are duplicated so no sharing required. A basket might contain a magnifying glass, a magnet, magnetic/nonmagnetic items to test, a small tape measure, clip board and pen and paper, a small torch, design materials (straws, pop sticks, sticky tape, paper strips, small sticks, rubber bands, pipe cleaners, paper clips and staplers).</p> <p>Add books/posters/pictures to this space that invite investigation and stimulate thought (pictures of bridges, tall buildings, insects, animals etc.)</p>	
<p>Music includes singing, listening, moving, playing instruments and composing</p> <p>Drama includes assuming roles, enacting, improvising, miming, story-building, using props</p>	<p>Do not use any instruments that require children to blow into them, for example, harmonica, recorders, kazoos, tin whistles.</p> <p>Ensure there are enough instruments for each child to have one.</p> <p>Allow space for children to participate in drama experience so children don't crowd each other.</p> <p>Avoid songs that encourage children to touch, hold hands or hug, or replace with alternate actions.</p>		
Music/ Drama – room considerations	Create separate baskets of materials for individual children.	Musical statues where tempo is varied, and children dance accordingly. Provide a large space, talk to children about special awareness, such as hold out your arms and see if you are close to someone. Assist children to move to empty spaces.	<p>Create separate baskets of materials for individual children.</p> <p>A basket might include musical instruments with pictures to match, small fabric cloths or scarves, materials to make an instrument (For example, a tiny box and rubber bands, a small container with lid, funnel and beads or buttons etc.)</p> <p>Encourage children to close eyes, listen to the other child's instrument and guess what they are playing etc. Still interacting but at a distance.</p>

			Provide opportunities for story building with children. Sitting on chairs in a circle, provide a stem sentence to start the story. Dependent on the children and your context, you may explore what is currently happening in your community regarding COVID-19.
Art/ Craft/ Mark making – general considerations	Provide individual resources for children to use on table tops (see above about distancing and tables). Create individual collage trays using divided boxes – consider creating a range of different trays each morning to keep interest high when children revisit this learning area. Offer sets of primary coloured paint in jars/tubs at several places across the table for individual children and children mix their own colours. Set up easels with individual paper and paints on one side.		

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