Supporting Young Students in Social Distancing

**Supporting** students in learning about and practicing social distancing includes teaching lessons, providing visuals throughout the room, and providing them with alternate ways to greet and interact with peers and adults.

**Room Arrangement** is a major factor in supporting students with understanding social distancing. It is one of the first things they will notice when they enter the room to begin school. It is important to have the furniture arranged and the room labeled in order to help them begin to understand the expectations for distancing.

Arrange furniture to provide natural definitions to play and activity areas.

**Hints and Reminders**

When arranging furniture to accommodate distinct areas, there might be one or two students out of the immediate vision of adults so careful monitoring and intentional interactions are needed.

Make the most of wall space by posting reminders and schedules.

Assign each student an individual mat or work boundary of some kind. Color-code or mark these in some way (photo, name, symbols) to help students distinguish their own.

Make toy and activity bins easily available by putting them on top of the cabinets, in front of the play area, by handing them out before beginning center time so that students do not crowd together to choose their toys.

**Activities that Build Relationships**

Working on a class project together while remaining distanced is a good way to help students stay connected with peers.

It’s not always possible to use furniture to designate an area. This example shows the use of floor tape to mark an area. Using colored mats in a taped area (2 students), one cabinet, an easel (2 students), and table and chairs (2 students) allows six students to engage in play and activities and stay separated. If classroom space is too small, it might be necessary to reduce the number of students in each of these areas.
Online Resources to Support Lessons - Explaining Social Distancing

Books and Songs:
- Grover from Sesame Street Explains Social Distancing
- Rosie Practices Social Distancing – re-along book
- What is Social Distancing from Cincinnati Children’s Network
- Social Distancing Song for Kids (Youtube – short catchy tune)
- Calm Body Calm Mind song and video

Social Narratives and Tips for Lessons:
- Social Story - Autism Little Learners
- Riding the Bus will be Different
- Social Story - "I Can Help" by Carol Gray
- What Does Social Distancing Look Like? - Conscious Discipline
- Early Childhood Guide to Social Distancing

Physical Reminders and Ideas for Encouraging Distancing

Mark areas in pleasant and colorful ways to remind students in a positive way about remaining in areas. Use mats that are individualized with names, symbols, photos, colors to help students remember the assigned places in the room.

Example: Stop and Wait signs in a “waiting room” area for students getting ready to enter a center.

Above: Make use of horizontal spaces. It provides a good area for distancing and builds upper body coordination.

Large area spaces with different colored rugs or designated with tape can serve to provide reminders for students to remain distanced while giving them an opportunity to see, talk with, and show peers their play schemes or products.
Greetings
Provide ideas to students about ways they can greet friends from a distance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greeting My Friends from a Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Handed Wave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart Shape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thumbs Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Thumbs Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air High Five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Hug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Card</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using Classroom Books to Help Students Get to Know Each Other

Many familiar children’s books lend themselves to making classroom books that students enjoy. Use actual photos of the students when possible. Laminate the pages to make the books easier to clean. Some examples follow:

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom!
Examples: a book for photos, a book for names, and a bulletin board for letters and names.

Young students enjoy Pete the Cat. Examples above show a book with photos of shoes. Extend the fun by adding photos beside the names. After reading about Pete’s Groovy Buttons, let the students complete a classroom graph by choosing their favorite colors.

It is especially important to help students become familiar with each other during social distancing. Note: Include photos of classroom staff and therapists in books.

Links to songs and videos
youtube Grover and Social Distancing
youtube Jack Hartmann - Greet From 6 Feet
youtube Pinkfong Kids Social Distance Song

Posters and Stories for Greetings
Greetings Choices (Pyramid)
Greetings Social Story from Autism Little Learners

Ideas for Using Distance Greetings
Teach students various alternate greetings that can be used while maintaining distance.

Model the motions and encourage their use.

Make the use of “distance greetings” interesting by varying their use.

• Classroom job helper – Choose the Greeting
• Have students close eyes and select a smaller card and then do that greeting.
• Let a student name a greeting for the adults to do each day
• Expand the list of greetings to give students input into other greetings they would like to do
• Take photos of students performing the greeting. Add these to the greeting chart.
Additional photos for Greeting Choices.
My Story about Social Distancing – A Few Things to Remember

At school, we have a rule called “Social Distancing.” Distancing means that we keep some space between us when we walk, sit, and play.

Sometimes I forget but my teachers help me by reminding me. Our classroom has tape of the floor and we have colored mats and bins. Those are to help us remember about distancing.

Social Distancing is new to me. It is new to most of my friends. My teachers and family like it when I practice social distancing because it helps keep me healthy.

Social Distancing during Center Time

First – go to my center
Stay in the area to play
Put toys in bin
Play in next center
Put toys in bin

Sometimes my teachers clean the toys and shelves and tables that we have been using. That means I need to wait to go to a new area to play. It’s hard to wait but I can try to remember.

While I wait I can play with the things in my fidget box. I can sit in my area with toys on my tray or I can look at a book.