

Forward Facing Instruction – Early Years

Forward facing instruction implies that children will be seated at desks with faces all in the same direction to receive instruction usually by an educator. This proves difficult in early years' classrooms as best practice suggests optimal learning in early learning settings does not occur this way.

The principles of early learning that guide instructional practices include play-based learning. Children learn holistically: socio-emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual. Many processes that occur in early years' classrooms happen in small groups rather than large group instruction. This provides opportunity for children to build oral language skills, interact with other children and explore their world.

The following are considerations for early years to comply with public health guidelines while maintaining the principles of early learning:

Cohorts/Pods

Although a classroom is a cohort, small group instruction practice is valued in early years' classrooms. Small groups can be a cohort or pod within a classroom.

Educators are encouraged to track groups of children to enable contact tracing. This includes documenting with a date when the groups change and who is in each small group. Children may maintain the same small group for a number of days. The small group sit together at a table.

Classroom Zones

Materials should be available to children individually to avoid cross-contamination. In instances where materials may be shared such as blocks, paint easels etc. – these play activities should be grouped together in the same 'zone' of the classroom with a clearly defined boundary. A small group of children may enter this 'zone'. Upon entry, children wash their hands, play with materials, clean up the materials and wash their hands prior to exiting the 'zone'.

Can tables continue to be part of the classroom environment?

Yes, tables can be used in the early years' environment if:

- Children sit with the same group of children for a period of time;
- Children maintain the same spot at the table – a photo of the child and their first name labelled may be needed;
- A placemat style visual is offered – helps children to understand their personal space;
- Continue cleaning of tables occurs throughout the day;
- Supplies to individual children are offered in a bin, box, container – labelled with the child's photo and name; and,
- Hygiene practices including handwashing and sanitizing throughout the day.



Example of a placemat style boundary at a table

When required, it is recommended that you contact your local public health office for advice.