



LEAD – PLAY – LEARN TOGETHER SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN THE TIME OF PANDEMIC

Returning to school and/or daycare in the midst of the Covid19 pandemic, where children and staff alike are expected to maintain a distance of two metres from each other can seem a daunting task indeed. It is not natural for children or the adults who care for them to maintain this kind of distance. We are all asking ourselves, “How will this be possible?”

We actually do not know how this will all play out. But we do know that we must give it our best effort all the while maintaining a positive relationship with the children.

Everyone is in a state of alarm. It is a difficult state to tolerate, even for adults, and can lead to significant anxiety and also much frustration. This state is even more difficult for our children as their system is less mature. These emotions are being felt intensely by our children thus causing distress especially if they are not helped to express them. And living in these emotional times their overall development is also hindered. When we are in distress, development slows down.

The challenge we are facing is how to enforce the social distancing and hygiene measures required by the Ministries of Health and Education, while providing a safe and caring environment for the children in our care.

Here are some ideas that can help us all as we endeavor to set up our schools and daycares to welcome our children.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

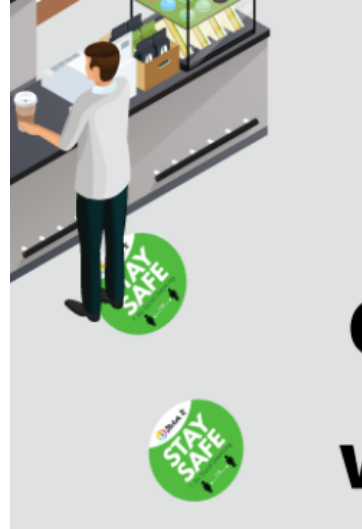
These guiding principles and suggestions are meant to help the adults maintain their ability to keep children safe in such a way as to assure children that they will be there to care for them. The key is to find a way to be firm but still kind and caring.

- 1. SET UP YOUR ENVIRONMENT IN ORDER TO HELP GUIDE ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR**
- 2. USE PLAY AND PLAYFUL ACTIVITIES TO GUIDE AND CHANGE BEHAVIOUR**
- 3. MAKE REPETITIVE ACTIVITIES FUN USING SONGS AND CHANTS**
- 4. ESTABLISH AND PRACTICE ROUTINES**
- 5. PUT ACADEMICS INTO PERSPECTIVE**
- 6. MAXIMIZE ATTACHMENT**
- 7. HAVE A PLAN FOR CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS**
- 8. ENCOURAGE EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION THAT IS SAFE FOR ALL**

SET UP YOUR ENVIRONMENT IN ORDER TO HELP GUIDE ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

LINING UP:

1. Masking tape/ floor signs
2. At arm's length
3. Hula hoops



WALKING IN LINE:

1. At arm's length
2. Hula hoops
3. Using a rope



SEATING:

1. Desks spaced out
2. Masking tape on floor



CIRCLE TIME:

1. Masking tape
2. Chairs
3. Hula hoops



USE PLAY AND PLAYFUL ACTIVITIES TO GUIDE AND CHANGE BEHAVIOUR

DISTANCING:

1. Balloon hats
2. Become airplanes
3. Use hula hoops
4. Do the arm waving dance
5. Simon says
6. Jumping jacks
7. Yoga poses



WALKING IN LINE

1. Take giant steps
2. Animal steps
3. Walking on the squares

PLAYING GAMES

1. Danish shadow tag <https://tinyurl.com/y79tga7z>
2. Chalk drawing
3. Skipping games

MAKE REPETITIVE ACTIVITIES FUN USING SONGS AND CHANTS

WASHING HANDS:

1. Find as many songs as you can to help with hand washing for 20 seconds
 - Choose songs that you and the children like.
 - Rotate through these songs.
 - Or use popsicle sticks to “choose” the song at random
 - Create a little rhyme to go with it

TRANSITIONS:

1. Getting the children’s attention without raising your voice
 - Have the children do something that is incompatible with other behaviours like talking to their friends
 - The alternate behaviour should be fun
 - Songs
 - Chants
 - Silly gestures
2. This action should put the attention on to the teacher – and allow for silence – smile – a time to provide directions.
3. GUIDE THE BEHAVIOUR WITH THE ACTION: e.g. Hop like a bunny, be quiet as a mouse, big steps like a giant.

Attention Please!	
Teacher	Student
1. Scooby Dooby Doo	1. Where are you?
2. Oh me!	2. Oh my!
3. Ready set	3. You bet!
4. Hocus pocus	4. Everybody focus!
5. Holy moly	5. Guacamole!
6. Macaroni and Cheese	6. Everybody freeze!
7. 1, 2, 3 eyes on me	7. 1, 2, 3 eyes on you!
8. To infinity	8. And beyond!
9. Zip, zip, zap	9. We're all that!
10. Ready to rock	10. Ready to roll!
11. All set	11. You bet!
12. Peanut butter	12. Jelly!
13. Flat tire	13. Shhhh!
14. Hot fudge	14. Sundae!
15. Eeny Meeny	15. Miny mo!
16. Zip it, lock it	16. Put it in your pocket!
17. Are you focused?	17. Yes, I am!
18. Hands on top	18. That means stop!
19. Chicka, chicka	19. Boom, boom!
20. Ding-dong	20. Hello!
21. Red Robin	21. Yuummmm!
22. Tootsie roll, lollipop	22. We've been talking now let's stop!

By: Tibro Israel

NOTE

In this time of “high alarm” a raised voice will add to the alarm in the child’s system and more alarm can actually make it harder for us to get through to the child.

It is for this reason we are recommending as many ways as possible to get a child’s attention, “**eyes, nod and a smile**” so that we can activate their attachment instincts.

When children are attached to us it is easier for them to follow our directives.

ESTABLISH AND PRACTICE ROUTINES

ROUTINES

Because the students will need to learn new routines, remember how you did this in September

- Decide the new routines that you will need to teach
- Practice practice and more practice
- Provide visual reminders – signs on wall etc.

ROUTINES PROVIDE SECURITY AND HELP TO CALM THE BRAIN

INDIVIDUAL BINS OR BASKETS

To avoid “cross-contamination” provide students with their own bins or baskets in which they can keep their work and play items

- ❖ SENSORY and TOY bins – younger children
- ❖ Individual WORK bins – older children
- ❖ Individual PROJECT bins – older children

PREVENT FRUSTRATIONS BY ORCHESTRATING THE PHYSICAL SET-UP OF YOUR CLASSROOM

- **Cover areas** that children will not be able to touch and use. Ex. cover shelves with toys/games with a light colored plastic table cloth.
 - Use a light blue or green as these colours help to provide a sense of calmness. Try to avoid bright and primary colors.
- **Store away** any items that students will not be permitted to touch
 - "OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND"
- **Remove** any desks, tables and chairs that will not be used.
 - This will increase physical space in the room.
 - It will also remove 'restrictions' which are frustrating
 - It will reduce the sense of 'missing and sadness' as students are used to having peers in close proximity.
 - If you're not able to remove all desks, remove as many as possible.

PUT ACADEMICS INTO PERSPECTIVE

These next 6 weeks will not be about completing the curriculum or introducing much new learning.

And yet, children thrive on the familiar, so doing “academics” will provide a sense of security and continuity.

USE ACADEMICS TO PROVIDE STRUCTURE AND SECURITY

- ❖ Provide work that is “easy”
- ❖ Have a variety of work options
- ❖ Provide a variety of levels of “work” available to each student in their Work bin
- ❖ Plan shorter work periods and easily completed tasks
- ❖ Include individual projects of building and creating – the focus is on the process, working through options, trying things out – in their Project bin
- ❖ Add “READING TO” even for older students. Hearing the teacher’s voice can be calming and it might be easier for some students to pay attention.
 - Read stories and novels of interest
 - Read content information as well – science and social studies
 - Stop often to interact with students by asking questions, getting their responses and answering their questions

MAXIMIZE ATTACHMENT

CREATING AND MAINTAINING ATTACHMENT FROM A DISTANCE

Connection can still be made despite social distancing rules

- ❖ Warmth in eyes
- ❖ Warmth in voice
- ❖ Having fun
- ❖ Laughing

PRIORITIZE ATTACHMENT

- ❖ Make attachment UNCONDITIONAL
- ❖ Provide more attachment when behaviour is at its worst.

MAKE IT SAFE AND EASY TO DEPEND

- ❖ Take the lead in the relationship and in taking care of the child. PROVIDE MORE THAN IS PURSUED
- ❖ Inspire the trust and confidence of the child – that you are for them and can be depended upon.
- ❖ Remember that children are paying attention to how you are responding and interacting with the other children.
- ❖ Avoid having students earn or lose privileges. Children are doing the best they can, but they cannot help their immaturity and impulsiveness, especially in these times. Try instead to find ways to change behaviour WITHOUT giving a consequence.

READ THE NEED AND TAKE THE LEAD

STAY IN CHARGE EVEN IF YOU CAN'T BE IN CONTROL

“I have decided that you may...” (if you can let the child do it)

“Let’s all” (change the task for all and start something fun and engaging.)

- Focus on telling children what you WANT them TO DO, rather than telling them what they shouldn't be doing.

- It is better to use your energy to DO something to manage the situation than to keep EXPLAINING the reason.

MAXIMIZE ATTACHMENT

BRIDGE WHAT COULD DIVIDE

- Bridge all physical separations by focusing on the next point of connection
 - Encourage parents who drop off their children to create a good-bye ritual
 - Parent provides a token (something for the child to hold on to).
 - Parent says “good-bye” with a focus on their return.



- Bridge all problem behaviour, preferably before the child leaves
 - Let children know that you will be there for them even if they have had a “bad” day

MATCH-MAKE WITH “SUBSTITUTES”

- **Introduce** children to those who will be caring for them using “sameness” and existing attachments “my friend”. Pass on their attachment to you to this new person.

REDUCE THE SEPARATION THE CHILD IS FACING

Allow the child to hold on to their parent using

- Photo – in their lunch box
- A token that reminds the child of the parent
- A comfort item (washable) that fits into the lunch box

AVOID USING THE AGENDA TO MANAGE BEHAVIOUR

- Children are doing the best they can under difficult circumstances, as are we the adults. They will make mistakes, as will we.
- When arriving home, they will need lots of reassurance that their mistakes will not affect their parents’ love and approval. Disapproval represents attachment separation and much of the alarm we are all experiencing is due to all the kinds of separation we facing.
- It is very difficult for a child to be bringing home a message that highlights what they have done wrong. Alarm will go up and cause more problems for all including increased frustration and tantrums
- If you are concerned about a child’s behaviour communicate with the parent in another way (e.g. through email).
- Work with the school team to find alternative ways of getting through the day with the child who is having a hard time with all the new restrictions.

HAVE A PLAN FOR CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS

CHANGE THE CIRCUMSTANCES RATHER THAN CONTROLLING THE CHILD

- **RECESS:**
 - With extra supervision

ANTICIPATE & PREVENT

- **HALLWAYS:**
 - Away from other students

- **BATHROOMS:**
 - Under supervision

- **LUNCHROOM:**
 - In a quieter space

- **SUBSTITUTE TEACHER:**
 - Make introductions

BE a TRAFFIC DIRECTOR
(who directs away from trouble) rather than the
POLICE (who gives a consequence for troubling behaviour)

USE TIME-AWAY instead of TIME-OUT

If you are starting to “reach your limit” with a child
OR
if a child needs to be away from the other children

1. Send the child **TO SOMEONE** with a “task”
 - ☐ a book
 - ☐ an envelope
 - ☐ “You’ve Got Mail” folder
2. Send the child to a safe place
 - ☐ The “safe zone”
 - ☐ Nurturing Support Centre
3. Always go to the student and let them know that the relationship is still intact.
4. It is always up to the adult to restore and maintain the relationship with a child.

SAFE ZONE



HAVE A PLAN FOR CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS

REGRESSION IN BEHAVIOUR AND ABILITY TO MANAGE SELF

Due to the high level of alarm the children are facing and the changes they will have to adapt to certain behaviours are likely to occur that haven't happened in a while.

- INCREASE IN NEED FOR SELF-SOOTHING ACTIVITIES
 - thumb-sucking, chewing, nail biting
 - rocking, pacing twirling hair, rubbing genitals
 - seeking comfort through contact with transitional objects
 - Permit these behaviours unless they are causing the child to be “noticed”. Offer a substitute such as a “fidget item” in their individual bin.
- WETTING AND/OR SOILING
 - Make sure to be very empathetic with the fact that an “accident” happened
 - Minimize shame as much as possible
 - Ask parents of younger children to send an extra set of clothing
- DEPENDENCY - WANTING HELP WITH PREVIOUSLY MASTERED TASKS
 - Even if you can't physically help – offer support and alternatives
 - Lots of smiling and warmth and empathy
- LOTS OF TALK ABOUT MONSTERS
 - Accept their existence

Children are not alarmed because there are monsters under the bed. There are monsters under the bed because children are alarmed. Gordon Neufeld

- EXPECT MORE TANTRUMS
 - Normalize and accept their presence as an expression of the frustration being experienced by the child
 - Help the child to find a safe place for the tantrum – then help them to find their tears
- EXPECT MORE TEARS
 - Normalize and accept their presence as they are needed so that adaptation can happen

In a young child, TEARS are the best indicator of an emotional system that is functioning well. Deborah MacNamara

ENCOURAGE EMOTION-BASED PLAY

Play is like a release valve – the emotion can move through.

ALARM at play

- ❖ playing with monsters
- ❖ being the monster
- ❖ scary stories (one step removed)
- ❖ pretending to be scared
- ❖ playing “disaster”
- ❖ playing hospital/being sick
- ❖ playing isolation
- ❖ using puppets (self-made) to play out alarm



FACING SEPARATION in play

- ❖ playing dead
- ❖ playing the orphan
- ❖ hide and seek games
- ❖ playing tag and chasing games
- ❖ fairy tales where children are lost or face separation
- ❖ using puppets (self-made) to play out separation

Play is a place to process their internal world

It is through play that children get to imagine how they will survive in the face of adversity. Hannah Beach

ENCOURAGE EMOTION-BASED PLAY

Taking **FRUSTRATION** into play

Playing out the impulses to make things work

- *constructing and crafts*
- *building – Lego, blocks etc.*
- *making things perfect – puzzles*
- *organizing & orchestrating*
- *making puppets*

Taking **FRUSTRATION** into play

Playing out the impulses to ATTACK or DESTROY

- *destroying and demolishing*
- *hitting and throwing*
- *kicking & screaming*
- *war games, attacking games*
- using puppets (self-made) to play out frustration

reduces levels of frustration

decreases aggression and violence in real life

PROVIDE OUTLETS FOR REDUCING ANXIETY



FIDGET ITEMS – IN INDIVIDUAL BINS



SEATS FOR ROCKING

PROVIDE OUTLETS FOR REDUCING ATTACKING ENERGY



**BUBBLE WRAP FOR
STOMPING**



**POOL NODDLES FOR
HITTING**



**EXERCISE BALL FOR
HITTING**

FOR BOTH



**LOTS OF OUTDOOR
PLAY and EXERCISE**

PROVIDE OUTLETS FOR REDUCING EMOTIONAL ENERGY

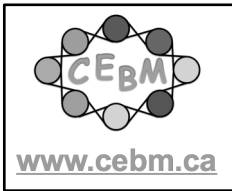
Grooving and jamming together!
Emotional Expression through music and movement



FREQUENT BRAIN BREAKS

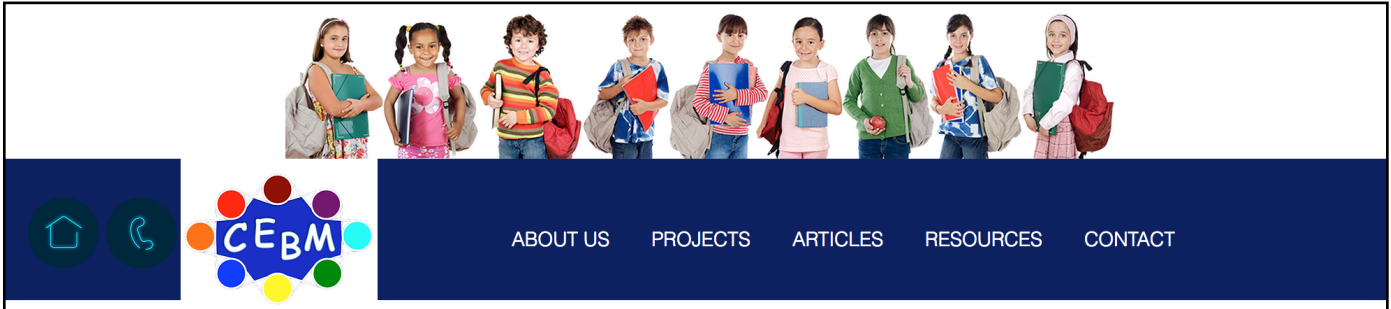


GO NOODLE: <https://www.gonoodle.com/>



FOR MORE IDEAS VISIT

www.cebmm.ca



A website that helps schools to use a developmental approach with children.

**Eva de Gosztonyi, Martine Demers, Catherine Korah
Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management**

**PLEASE SEND ALL YOUR IDEAS THAT WOULD BE OF HELP TO OTHER
SCHOOLS TO EVA SO THEY CAN BE SHARED:**

edegosztanyi@rsb.qc.ca