

## Proper seating in the classroom – why is it important?

### Why should we be concerned about a child's posture and how they are seated at a desk?

Posture is a foundational skill for developing and fostering fine motor skills specifically for handwriting. Poor posture when sitting can limit movement of the arms and hands, limit fine motor skills, cause back pain, and restrict breathing. Not to mention a child who cannot sit up and look at the teacher when instruction is being given may miss important details and directions.

Movement and refinement of skills develop from head to toe and from the middle of the body outward. In order to move fingers and control classroom tools, you must first have a stable core or center of the body. This comes not only from your muscles working but also how you are supported. When a student must focus on keeping their body in a correct sitting position, fine motor skills will be difficult to demonstrate and will not be a priority. Appropriate seating can make all the difference for participation and success with fine motor skills.

### What does appropriate seating look like?

Proper desk posture is when a student can sit in a 90-90-90 position. This position means that a student's hips, knees, and ankles are at 90 degrees angles. Remember this is important for fine motor skills and should not be forced all day long. A student's feet should always be flat on the floor and elbows should rest on the tabletop or desk. Hips should be bent with the child's weight on their bottom. The desk height should not be more than 1-2" above the bent elbows otherwise, the student will hunch over or scrunch their shoulders.

A quick way to determine if the student is sitting at a desk that is proper height for them is to ask them to put their elbows on the table and rest their chin in their hands. If the chin points down, the desk is too low. If the chin points up, the desk is too high. If the chin is straight then the desk is just right.

### Helpful hints:

A great way to remind students to place their feet on the floor, back straight, and ready to write is to use the verbal cue "**stack 'em up!**" It helps the students to think of their bodies as blocks that need to be stacked correctly so they do not fall down.

Please remember that at these ages students grow at different speeds – some fast and some slow. It may be necessary to look at positioning a few times over the course of the year. Desks can be adjusted and chairs can be swapped. A quick check and some adjustments may be all a child needs to continue to succeed.