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HighScope: Large Group Time

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Shared Control and Large Group Time

The thing that stands out to me the most in the example in “Large Group Time from Jace’s Viewpoint” is that at no point during Large Group did either of the teachers stop and ask Jace to “follow directions,” “stay on task,” or engage in any behavior other than the ones in which he decided to engage. The adults in this example empowered Jace to have control over his learning experience, which gave him the opportunity to make connections to something he seems very interested in: Giants. In addition, Jace shared control with the adults in this example when, at the end of the “Boing Boing” activity he stated “Let’s do it again” and his teachers responded by turning the activity into a transition. Teachers who are willing to share control with their students are responsive educators. They utilize feedback and student engagement to drive their instructional choices. Beth may have had a different transition planned from Large Group to the cubbies; however, she adjusted to meet the needs and interests of her students (shared control) when Jace made his exclamation.

When I am in classrooms supporting teachers and providing music instruction during Large Group time, I try to engage students much in the same way the adults in this example engage their students. I start by leading the activity and then provide opportunities for students to share ideas and actions. I emphasize with classroom teachers that it is okay if children choose not to participate, or engage in a way that works best for the child. Sometimes this is effective, other times it is not. This becomes particularly challenging when we are engaging in activities with props. I have found that sometimes, especially with props like the parachute, children become so excited by the prop that it results in unsafe movement ideas. At this point I often find myself moving more toward teacher-centered instruction, rather than shared control.

One thing that I would like to try in an effort to improve shared control during my visits to classrooms is provide more scaffolded opportunities for students to engage with challenging props that would allow them to have shared control without risking unsafe behaviors. A second thing I really need to work toward is providing music and movement instruction with children who want/need to sit in my lap or in my personal space. I coach teachers to allow children to participate in the way they need, yet, I do not allow them to sit on me while I model lessons.