

Daily Routine Overview

Group Times

Week 3 Learning Unit

Group Times



Week 3 Learning Unit Topics

This week you will explore:

- The reasons for gathering together in groups.
- The basics of small- and large-group times.
- The role of active learning in small- and large-group time experiences.
- The format for group times.
- The importance of sharing control with young children during group time experiences.



HighScope Group Times

Consider Your Own Interactions in Group Settings

What are some of the reasons you gather in groups with other people?

What are some ways in which groups form?

Do you share common interests with everyone in the group, some of the people in the group, or no one in the group?

Does the activity or experience change based on the size of the group?

What role do you play as a group member?

Have you ever had a group problem solving situation? If so, how did this play out?

Have you ever taken on a leadership role in a group? If so, what support did you need from your fellow group members in order to be successful as a leader?

HighScope Group Times (continued)

Group Setting Interactions

Likely, your answers included some of the following ideas:

- We join in groups for socialization, enjoyment, and interaction;
- For shared common experiences and interests;
- To feel a sense of belonging and/or community;
- To have opportunities for new experiences, and to learn to use new materials;
- To experience various group sizes (e.g., small and intimate, or large and boisterous).
- And to occasionally take on leadership roles that may vary from simple to complex.

For preschool children, engagement in group activities provides the same shared purposes.



HighScope Group Times (continued)

Group Setting Interactions for Young Children

In a preschool classroom, small- and large-group times are:

- An opportunity for shared, common experiences in a social setting.
 - A time to build relationships and community.
 - An opportunity for children to feel a sense of belonging.
- A way for children to grow and expand their way of thinking as they learn from the ideas and actions of others.
 - An opportunity to practice regulating emotions and actions while engaged in cooperative learning experiences.
 - A chance for children to take on small leadership roles while being supported by adults.

As you think about group time activities, be aware of each child's cultural background, their diverse experiences and perspectives so these can be incorporated into the group time experience for all children.

HighScope Group Times (continued)

Defining HighScope Group Times

Group times in HighScope preschool classrooms:

- Are intentionally planned based on curriculum content, children's interests, and individual levels of development.
- Are experiences initiated by adults in which children are provided opportunities to explore materials in their own way.
- Are a chance for children to share the excitement of their discoveries with both their peers and adults.
- Include all five ingredients of active participatory learning.



Group times provide many opportunities to scaffold children's learning in every curriculum content area, but also include active learning.

HighScope Group Times (continued)

Active Learning During Group Times

Materials: Children use their own set of materials. During large-group time, a child's voice and/or body can be considered a material.

Manipulation: Children experiment with materials, using them in ways that make sense to them. This may be different than the idea the adult originally had in mind.

Choice: Children choose where to sit, how to participate, and what to do with the materials based on their personal interests and ability levels.

Child language and thought: Children express their thoughts, ideas, and discoveries through actions and words.

Adult scaffolding: Each child is supported by the teacher at their own individualized level of development.

HighScope Group Times (continued)

Planning HighScope Group Times

When planning for small- or large-group times, teachers use a broad range of information to create lesson plans and experiences for their children.

Sources for planning group times are:

- Curriculum content such as the Key Developmental Indicators and COR Advantage items.
- Children's interests and developmental levels.
- New and unexplored materials and/or actions.
- Meaningful events for children and local traditions.



The Basics of Small-Group Times



Importance of Small-Group Time

Builds upon children's strengths:

- Small-group time activities and experiences are meaningful and relevant; lessons are planned around children's interests and differing abilities.
- Adults support children's current levels of development and extend their learning.
- As children gain confidence in their abilities, they begin to take on new and different challenges.

Provides new experiences:

- Small-group times are an opportunity to introduce children to new or unexplored materials, ideas, and actions.
- Adults intentionally plan small-group time activities and experiences to support content learning.



Importance of Small-Group Time (continued)

Provides regular peer interactions:

- Small-group time experiences provide children with the opportunity to form stable, consistent relationships with peers and adults.
- Children learn from one another and begin to appreciate the unique qualities and strengths of their peers.
- Children develop confidence from continued interactions with the same peer group.

Provides deeper connections and support:

- Adults have a daily opportunity to observe and interact with the same small group of children, learning more about their abilities and interests through authentic assessment.
- Adults implement a variety of adult-child interaction strategies to build relationships and support, extend, and differentiate learning.

As you plan around each individual child, focus on their capability levels and unique abilities as well as their cultural backgrounds.

Creating Small Groups of Adults and Children

Consistent, small groups of children meet with the same adult each day.

Group sizes are determined by the adult to child ratio in each classroom:

- In a classroom with two adults and 16 children, each small group would consist of one adult and eight children.
- In a classroom with three adults and 21 children, each small group would consist of one adult and seven children.

Small groups should be balanced by gender, age, and temperament.

Small groups of children and adults should remain together for at least two to three months, but more time is recommended to establish strong relationships.

As you plan out your small groups, keep a REDI lens in mind to ensure all children are being represented and included.

Establishing Consistency in Small-Group Time Routines

All small groups meet at the same time in the HighScope daily routine.

- This segment of the day is referred to as *small-group time* on the daily schedule.
- Small-group times are approximately 15–20 minutes in length.

Each small group should meet at a consistent location each day.

- If a small-group time activity requires a larger or different space, the group should first meet in their consistent location and then move together as a group to the other location.

Adults post a list of group members' names and their associated letter link symbols nearby the group's meeting location for children to reference.



Before Small-Group Time

Review your lesson plan.

Gather a set of materials for each child AND each adult ahead of time.

- Sets of materials should be sorted into individual containers, such as small baskets, boxes, bags, or bins.

Store materials near the small-group time location, allowing for easy access and distribution at the beginning of small-group time.

- Backup materials should also be gathered and stored nearby so the adult can access them as needed during small-group time.
 - Backup materials are extra supplies used to extend the activity or experience. These can be additional materials of the same type (such



as art supplies) or different materials that may pose a challenge, extend children's play, or encourage divergent thinking.

Small-Group Time: The Beginning

The beginning of small-group time is short and engaging:

- Use an opening statement to briefly introduce the activity or materials to the children.
- Distribute the materials to children and let them begin working immediately.



Small-Group Time: The Middle

Children explore, handle, examine, combine, and transform their set of materials.

As children make their own choices, adults support learning by providing developmentally appropriate scaffolding support. During the middle of small-group time, adults move around the table to provide this individualized support.

As adults move from child to child with their own materials in hand, they:

- Observe how children are using the materials and listen to what children are saying as they engage with the materials.
- Use their own set of materials to imitate or copy children's actions.

- Converse with children, narrating or labeling their actions and asking open-ended questions about what children are doing.
- Extend children's thinking by offering new concepts or ideas, asking the child to explain their thinking, or posing a challenge.
- Refer children to one another for ideas and assistance.
- Bring out backup materials as needed.

How are you observing, listening to, and engaging with each child during each small-group time?

Small-Group Time: The End

Announce the end of small-group time with a brief statement. For example, you could say, “In two minutes, it will be time to put our materials back in the baskets.”

Provide concrete suggestions about where children can put materials as you engage with them in the cleanup process.

Remind children where they can find the materials if they want to use them again at work time or the next day.

Plan a way for children to transition to the next part of the daily routine.



The Basics of Large-Group Times



Importance of Large-Group Time

- Builds classroom community as children and adults learn and grow together through shared common experiences
- Helps children understand what it means to be a member of a group as they:
 - Listen to and imitate the actions of others.
 - Take on leadership roles and communicate their own ideas.
- Develops executive function and self-regulation skills (e.g., paying attention, waiting for a turn, expressing emotions appropriately, and stopping, thinking, and then acting on ideas).

“Since ancient times peoples of all cultures have gathered around fires, on hilltops, in clearings, or along the shore to sing, dance, tell stories, and exchange information. In similar spirit, children and adults in a HighScope preschool program gather together at large-group times.” (HighScope Preschool Curriculum, p. 353)

Logistics of Large-Group Time

Large-group time is a 10–15 minute segment of the HighScope preschool daily routine during which children and adults are engaged together in active participatory learning.

- There are materials for children to manipulate (e.g., props for storytelling, scarves for dancing, bodies for jumping, voices for singing).
- Children make choices about how to use the materials or move their bodies.
- Children talk and think about their ideas and actions.
- Adults scaffold learning by building upon children's ideas, interests, and actions.

Children and adults come together daily in a consistent space that is large enough for children to engage in big body movements and motions.

Planned activities are enjoyable, shared experiences for everyone; this time includes music and movement activities, oral storytelling, and/or other gross motor experiences.

How are you engaging all of your children at their differing ability levels at large-group time? How are you representing their cultures?

Before Large-Group Time

- Review your lesson
- Have the following ready, if applicable:
 - Materials for each child and adult
 - Music cued up
 - Song book
 - Props



Large-Group Time: The Beginning

Draw children to the group with a simple, easy-to-join activity that:

- Has few or no directions
- Is active
- Includes frequent opportunities for children to add their own ideas

Begin facilitating large-group time immediately with the children who have gathered, even if others are still transitioning from the previous part of the daily routine.

Preparing for Large-Group Time:

- Review your plan
- Practice ahead of time
- Have the materials ready
- Gather props for each child and adult
- Have backup materials ready
- Place materials within easy reach

This will cut down waiting time and ensure each child will have what they need.

Large-Group Time: The Middle

After all children have gathered, give a brief opening statement designed to catch children's attention and let them know what to expect.

“I'm going to play some music. Listen to the music and move your body based on the way it sounds.”

Retain children's interest by turning the materials or props over to them as quickly as possible.

Materials may include streamers, scarves, wind ribbons, bells, shakers, tambourines, bean bags, hula hoops, etc.

Participate with children. Watch what they do. Listen to them. Try out their ideas and the ways they interpret the activity.

Participate on children's physical level.

“Kayleigh says to slither like a snake on the floor, so I am going to move like her.”

Depending on the activity length, you may plan one longer activity or two shorter activities for the middle of large-group time. For example:

- Just play “Red Light, Green Light,” or
- Sing one song from the song book and move streamers to the beat of another song.

Large-Group Time: The End

As you finish your last activity, include a planned transition to the next part of the daily routine.

“I am going to play the “popcorn” song one more time. This time, pop like popcorn to your cubbies and put on your coats for outside time.”

Have children put away any props as part of the transition activity.

“Put your scarf back in the box as you float to your small-group time table.”



The Secret to Success: Shared Control at Large-Group Time

Shared control is the mutual give-and-take between children and adults.

Both children and adults take turns being the leader and the follower; the speaker and the listener, and the teacher and the learner.

Adults plan activities designed to elicit children's input, choices, and ideas.

- Teachers make adult-sized decisions:
 - For example, planning to move to music with children.
- Children make child-sized choices.
 - For example, how to move their bodies to that music.

Strategies for Sharing Control

Plan ways to build in choices for children.

Children are more likely to be interested and engaged when they can contribute ideas.

Ask for children's ideas and clarify their actions.

Let children be leaders or followers.

Take cues from children and copy/imitate their actions. Following children's lead gives them opportunities to express their own ideas.

Participate with children as partners. As partners, adults can share in children's interests, delights, and creativity.



A peek ahead

Next week, you'll explore:

- The segments of a HighScope greeting time.
- The benefits of sharing written information with children each morning using a message board.
- The HighScope approach to interactive read alouds during the preschool daily routine.
- Focused strategies for building comprehension while reading aloud with young children.

