

Large-Group Times

for Active Learners

Week 1 Learning Unit

Shared Control and Active Learning at Large-Group Time



Large-Group Time

Large-group time (LGT) is the part of the daily routine when all children and adults participate in an activity together (sometimes referred to as “circle time”).

LGT contributes to a sense of community in the classroom. Everyone comes together to participate in music and movement activities, storytelling, fingerplays, or participating in cooperative games.

Importance of Large-Group Time

- Gives all children a repertoire of common experiences
- Builds a sense of community in the classroom
- Encourages children to be a member of the group, and occasionally take on child-sized leadership roles



Large-Group Time (continued)

Characteristics of Large-Group Time

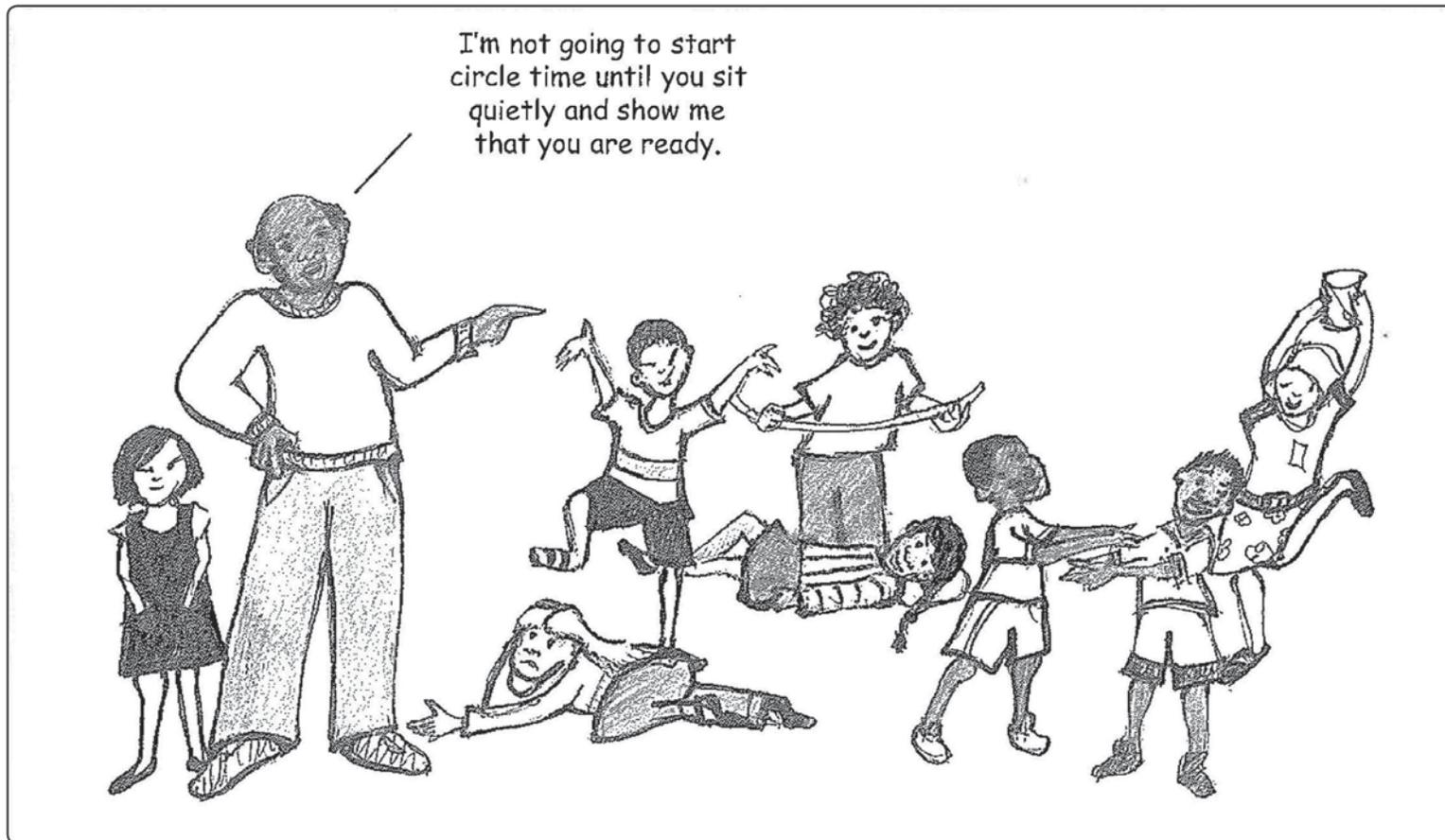
- Active learning in a whole-group setting
- All children and all adults participate together
- About 10–15 minutes long
- **Enjoyable, shared experiences for everyone!**

So... why is large-group time often reported to be the **most challenging** part of the day?



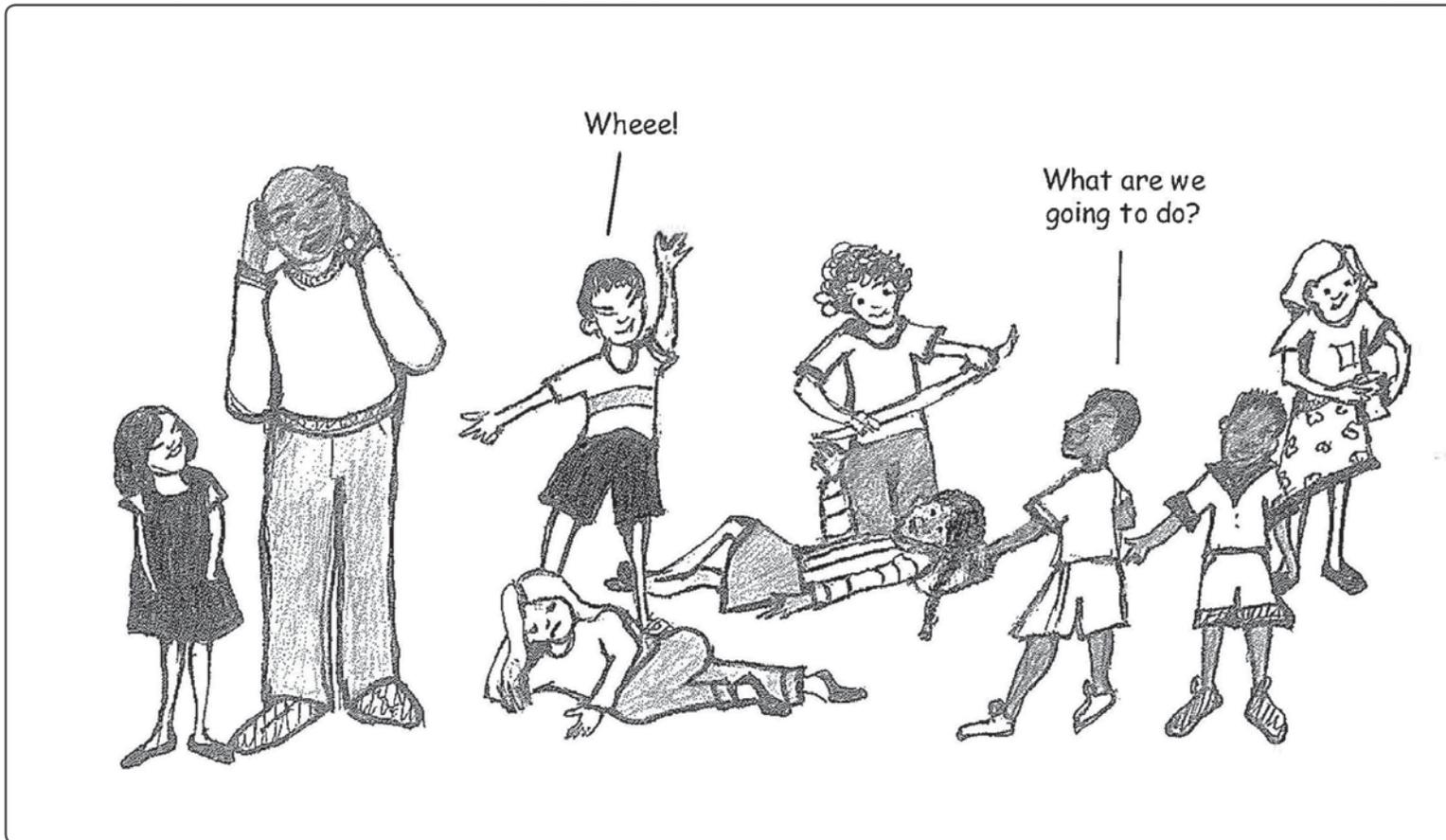
Large-Group Time (continued)

Does this look familiar?



Large-Group Time (continued)

Does it end up like this?



Shared Control: The Secret to Success

The Secret to Success

- **Shared control** is the mutual give-and-take between teachers and children.
- Both children and teachers take turns being the leader and follower, speaker, and listener.
- Teachers plan activities that allow for children's input, choices, and ideas.

Teachers and Children Together

- Teachers make **adult-sized decisions** (e.g., at LGT, planning to move to music with the children).
- Children make **child-sized decisions** (e.g., how to move their arms to that music).

Shared Control: The Secret to Success (continued)

Strategies for Sharing Control At Large-Group Time

Plan ways to build in choices for children. Children are more likely to become interested and engaged in the activity when they can contribute ideas.



When planning, this means you should consciously think through each activity, asking yourself, “How can I build in opportunities for choices?”

Take cues from children. Following children’s cues gives them opportunities to express their own ideas.



Children might suggest motions to songs, ideas for verses, ways to move to music — and we shouldn’t expect them to all do the same thing!

Participate with children as partners. As partners, adults can share in children’s interests, delights, and creative urges.



This means that sometimes you will copy what children are doing, trying out their ideas for yourself.

Shared Control: The Secret to Success (continued)

With shared control, there is another way...

(singing to "Mulberry Bush")
Everybody clap your hands, clap your hands, clap your hands,
Everybody clap your hands, just like me.



Shared Control: The Secret to Success (continued)

... With better results!

Now let's move like Zoe.
Hug and twist!
(singing)
Everybody hug and twist,
hug and twist,
hug and twist,
Everybody hug and twist,
just like Zoe.



Shared Control: The Secret to Success (continued)

Watching Shared Control at Large-Group Time

Watch the elements of shared control as demonstrated in a LGT:

- View clip number 1, *Shakers*. Watch for these elements of shared control:
 - **Plan for choices**
 - **Take cues from children**
 - **Participate as a partner**
- After viewing, read on to see these three elements explained.

Plan for Choices

In planning this LGT activity, both adults anticipated the unique ways children might move with the shakers to this music.

Discussing what children might do ahead of time allowed the adults to be comfortable with some children moving vigorously to the “fast music,” and others needing a place of security.

Additionally, if children ventured into other parts of the room, the adults were prepared to ask them to return to the large-group rug (e.g., setting a limit for a behavior they weren’t comfortable with).

Shared Control: The Secret to Success (continued)

Take Cues from Children

Both adults carefully observed how children responded to the activity.

Midway through, the adult in the striped shirt noticed that several of the children seemed to need a safe place in the midst of the boisterous activity. She was available for them to come and sit by her.

- This allowed those children to be secure enough to continue with the activity.

Participate as a Partner

The adults' faces reflected the excitement expressed by the children.

- This nonverbal support lets children know that the adults are playful partners.

Both adults copied the various ways the children used the shakers.

- Their actions let children know that their ideas were valued and accepted.

Active Learning: A Must at Large-Group Time

Along with shared control, the 5 ingredients of active learning must be present at your large-group time.

- Materials
- Manipulation
- Choice
- Child language and thought
- Adult scaffolding



5 Ingredients of Active Learning at Large-Group Times

Materials: At LGT, these may be props, but can also include the child's body or voice!

Manipulation: Using their bodies, voices, or props in ways that make sense to them

Choice: How to move, what to sing, when to participate, or offer ideas

Child language and thought: Expressing their choices, sharing ideas, figuring out how to respond to music or movement suggestions

Adult scaffolding: Nonverbal and verbal support of children's intentions

Active Learning: A Must at Large-Group Time (continued)

Can you identify the 5 ingredients of active learning in this photo?



Active Learning: A Must at Large-Group Time (continued)

Kobe has his own balloon (**material**) and has **choices** about how to **manipulate** it in ways that make sense to him (i.e., by looking through the balloons as opposed to tossing it up). He can share his ideas (**child language and thought**) about what he's doing, and sees his teacher supporting his ideas (**adult scaffolding**).

When active learning and shared control are present, children become enthusiastically engaged — eliminating most behavior problems!



A Peek Ahead

This week

- The activities will continue to focus on the concepts of shared control and active learning during LGT.

Next week

- We will look specifically at common LGT activities.

