

# Large-Group Times

*for Active Learners*

# Week 2 Learning Unit

## *Large-Group-Time Activities*



# Large-Group-Time Activities

There are five general types of large-group-time activities that you will learn about this week:

- Easy-to-join activities for starting large-group times
- Singing songs, doing fingerplays, saying chants and poems
- Storytelling and reenacting stories and nursery rhymes
- Movement activities with or without music or objects
- Cooperative games or projects

## Easy-to-Join Activities for Starting Large-Group Times

- These simple activities are used to invite children into the LGT as they transition from other parts of the daily routine.
- HighScope recommends starting LGT, right away, with whatever children have gathered, rather than waiting for all children to show you they are “ready.”
- The activity itself should be inviting, active, and simple to do.
- The activity should also include lots of movement and build in many opportunities for children to share their ideas!
  - *Who else has an idea about how to move our arms?*
  - *What’s another type of animal that we could move like?*

## Large-Group-Time Activities (continued)

### Examples and Ideas for Easy-to-Join Activities

Sing “Everybody Do This Just Like Me” using children’s ideas on how to move.



Try a Fitness Routine (pp. 98–99), doing simple movements to the beat of lively, instrumental music, like Yankee Doodle.

To the tune of “Rock Around the Clock”, sing  
*We’re going to  
Run, run, run,  
Run, run run,  
Run, run, run  
until we stop...*

Use children’s ideas on how to move next.

## Large-Group-Time Activities (continued)

### Singing Songs, Doing Fingerplays, Saying Chants and Poems

- Songs, fingerplays, chants and poems are a staple of early childhood LGTs.
- Remember to slow down your tempo, carefully observing children to make sure they are all with you and not falling behind.
- Keep hand motions simple (a good rule of thumb is about 4 motions per song).
- Build in choices (e.g., children’s ideas of hand motions, song verses, etc.) whenever possible.
- Be sure to read Appendix A (pp. 134–135) and Appendix B (p. 136) in *50 Large-Group Activities for Active Learners* for more information about singing songs and using a song book.

### Examples

Our kids love to say and act out the poem, “The Sitter,” from Shel Silverstein’s *A Light in the Attic*.

Learn the words to call-and-response chants yourself first, and then use them with the children (and don’t use the recording!).

*Did You Feed My Cow* is an example of this.

Once children know *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*, you might try rowing in 2s, or even 3s.

And of course, include all the old favorites, such as *Old McDonald*, *The Eensy, Weensy Spider*, and *Wheels on the Bus*!

## Large-Group-Time Activities (continued)

### Storytelling and Reenacting Stories and Nursery Rhymes

- Children love to listen to and reenact simple stories and nursery rhymes at LGT.
- It's best to make up a simple story based on children's current interests, rather than trying to keep all children engaged while reading a book.
  - In fact, literacy experts agree that the best way to read to children is in a small intimate setting (you with several children).
- Keep it simple — be sure to have only a few roles or one role that all the children can reenact.



## Large-Group-Time Activities (continued)

### Examples



Our children's favorite story is a simple one that the teacher made up of little kittens who wake up, lick their paws, drink their milk, go out to play, come in when their mother meows for them, and take a nap. All the children pretend to be the kittens doing the various things described in the story.

Simple props like a pillow, bowl, and spoon help to bring Little Miss Muffet to life as children take turns being Miss Muffet and the spider (pp. 76–77).

## Large-Group-Time Activities (continued)

### Movement Activities With or Without Music or Objects

- These experiences give children the opportunity to move their bodies, developing coordination skills.
- Keep it simple — try out exploring moving with objects first, then layer on the music.
- Sometimes, it's okay to be specific when asking children for their ideas:
  - *How else can we move our arms?*
  - *What other ways can we march?*
- Always use instrumental music so children can hear the beat and aren't distracted by the words.



## Large-Group-Time Activities (continued)

### Examples



Try just exploring action words. Here, children are exploring “swing.” One child suggested swinging their arms forward and backward. All the children are now trying it out.

Tie lengths of ribbon onto plastic bracelets to create ribbon wands that are easy to hold.

Added bonus — no poking each other!

Carpet squares work well to define “personal space” as children are learning about LGT at the beginning of the school year.

## Large-Group-Time Activities (continued)

### Cooperative Games or Projects

- Cooperative games have no winners or losers — the fun is in playing the game!
- Projects can give the class a sense of purpose as they work together towards a common goal.
- Remember to be reasonable in your expectations:
  - Children will respond to these activities developmentally.
  - Be flexible — games with few or no rules work the best.
- Remember, even with games or projects, always build in choices for children!

### Examples

Painting the old shelving units with nontoxic paint

Using a parachute and sponge balls

Following leprechaun clues to a classroom pot of “treasures”

Washing the bikes outside

Playing musical chairs (and not removing any chairs)

# Presenting Large-Group-Time Activities to Young Children

When presenting LGT activities to your children, try using these three strategies to help make the activity active and child-centered:

- Separate
- Simplify
- Facilitate

## Separate

- Separate the motions from the description of the motions.
- This simply means, say or do.
  - Show the motions or describe the motions, but don't do both talking and showing at the same time.
- When introducing a song or fingerplay, introduce the motions first, then layer on the song.
- Practice this strategy with your teaching team until it's second nature!

## Hint:

If this is hard for you, try keeping your hands in your pockets!

# Presenting Large-Group-Time Activities to Young Children (continued)

## Simplify

Simplify the **words** and/or **actions** so they make sense to children.

- If the song or activity involves a movement sequence, present each motion individually before putting the sequence together.
- Use words that children understand.
  - Use “one hand” and then “the other hand” rather than right or left.
- Use actions that children can do.
  - Snapping your fingers is a very complicated movement that takes a lot of fine-motor strength. Preschool children can pat on their knees or wiggle their fingers instead.

## Facilitate

Support children’s choices, actions and language.

- Comment on what you see children doing.
- Imitate children’s actions and use their words.

# A Peek Ahead

## This week you will

- Try out activities from each section of the book.
- Share what you did on a forum, and provide feedback to what other participants did.

## Next week you will

- Learn about the components of a LGT.
- Be introduced to the LGT planning form.
- Plan your own LGT — the HighScope way!

