

Small-Group Times

for Active Learners

Week 1 Learning Unit

Small-Group Times for Active Learners



Small-Group Time

Small-group times (SGTs) are adult-initiated activities during which children explore materials in their own way with the adult sharing the excitement of their discoveries.

So, what makes it a HighScope small-group time?



The HighScope Climate For Learning

In all classrooms, the climate for learning falls somewhere on this continuum, ranging from **laissez-faire** to **supportive** to **directive**.

Let's take a closer look at each of these climates...



The HighScope Climate For Learning (continued)

Laissez-Faire: Permissive Climate

Laissez-faire means “hands off” in French.

Teachers let children play by themselves and are often uninvolved.

Teachers act as “safety monitors,” providing supervision if a problem arises.

During work time, laissez-faire teachers do paperwork, or passively observe children’s play.



The HighScope Climate For Learning (continued)

Directive: Controlling Climate

Teachers control the activities and play.

Teachers instruct and talk. Children listen and follow directions.

Teachers act as classroom directors, over-controlling all aspects of the child's day.

During work time, directive teachers set out activities for children to do and make sure each child completes them correctly.



The HighScope Climate For Learning (continued)

Supportive: Partnership Climate

Teachers and children are partners in play and learning.

Teachers make adult-sized decisions, while children make child-sized choices.

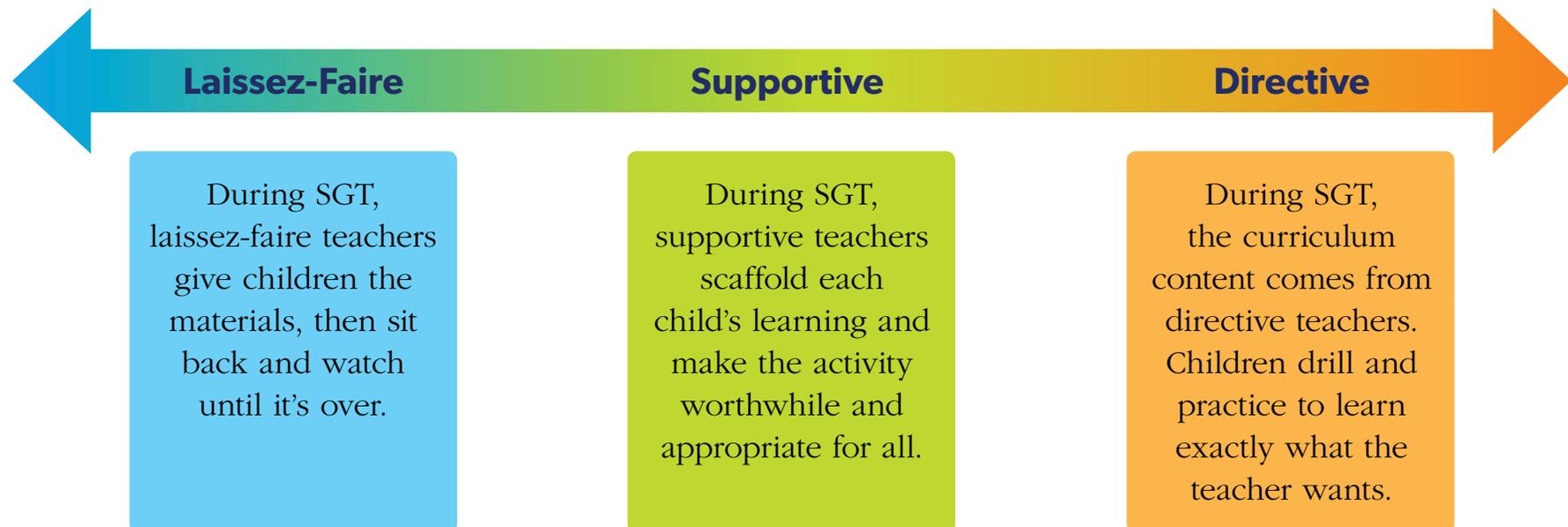
Teachers value children's active learning, consciously building in opportunities to share control.

During work time, supportive teachers enter into children's play, following their interests and scaffolding their learning.



The HighScope Climate For Learning (continued)

Small-Group Time Climates for Learning



HighScope SGTs are conducted in a **supportive climate**.

HighScope SGTs include all the ingredients of **active learning**.

That's exciting — tell me more!

HighScope Small-Group Times

Small-group times are **adult-initiated**. That is, the teacher plans the materials and the learning experience based on content, children's interests, and levels of development.

But wait... isn't that being directive?

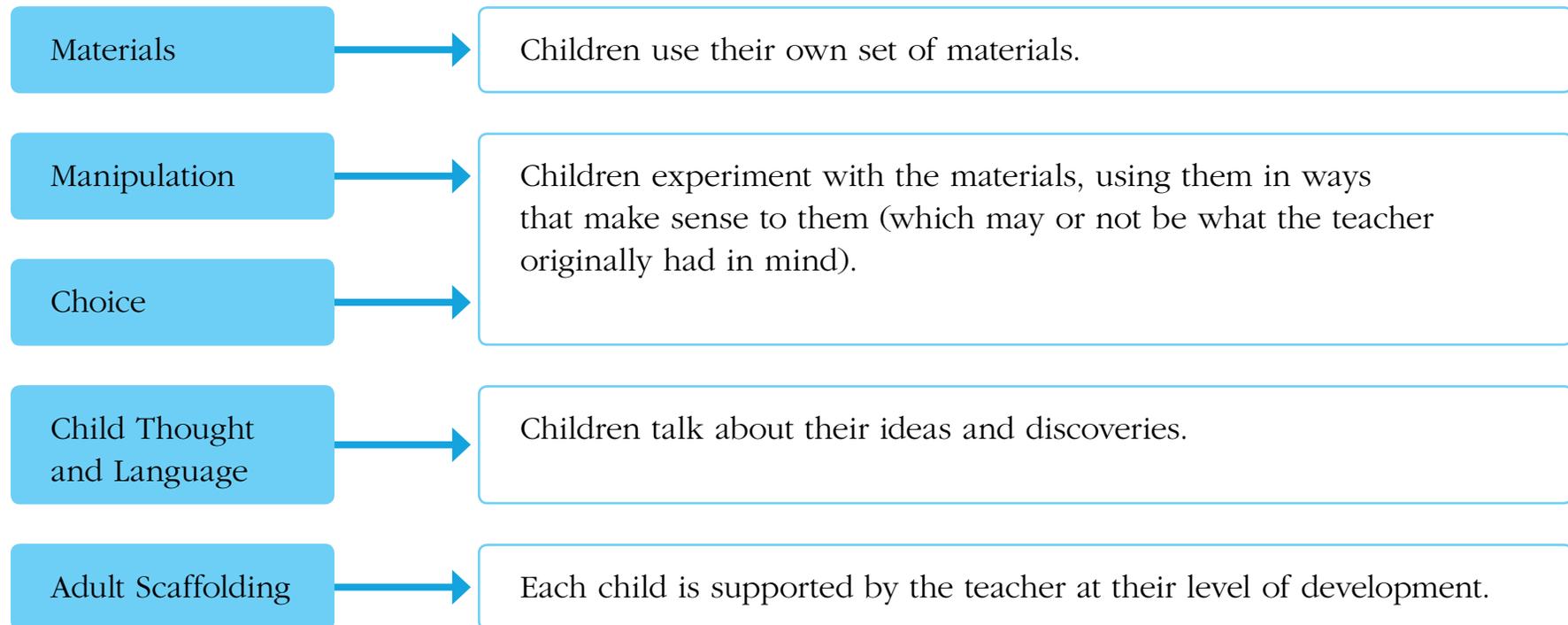


HighScope Small-Group Times (continued)

Active Learning at Small-Group Time

5 Ingredients of Active Learning

What Children Do at HighScope Small-Group Times



HighScope Small-Group Times (continued)

HighScope teachers plan the SGT activity, and during the activity, children still engage in all the ingredients of active learning!



Importance of Small-Group Time

Small-group time builds on children's strengths.

- SGTs are planned around children's emerging abilities.
- Adults scaffold and extend each child's learning.
- As children gain confidence in their abilities, they are willing to take on new challenges.



Sarah has the ability to complete an A-B pattern. Observing this strength would inform her teacher to offer a gentle extension to create a more complex pattern.

Importance of Small-Group Time (continued)

Small-group time provides children with new experiences.

- SGTs can introduce children to materials and experiences they might otherwise miss.
- Teachers can use SGTs to appropriately build in content experiences.

Do you have a child who always plays in the same area? SGTs help to provide a well-rounded classroom experience.



Kevin is mixing colors and painting, something he wouldn't normally choose to do at work time.

Importance of Small-Group Time (continued)

Small-group time provides children with regular peer interactions.

- SGTs provide children with the opportunity to form stable relationships.
- Children begin to appreciate the qualities and strengths of others in their group.
- Children can develop confidence speaking to this smaller group of peers.
- HighScope recommends children stay in the same groups for two to three months for this reason.



Talking about their experiences with babies as they wash dolls helps this group of children see their similarities and grow together as friends.

Importance of Small-Group Time (continued)

Teachers know their group.

- SGT also gives the teacher the opportunity to observe and interact daily with the same children, learning their abilities and interests.

Teachers use support strategies.

- We all need opportunities to practice and refine our skills. SGT gives teachers the opportunity to practice their adult-child interaction strategies in a stable setting.



Amari's teacher observes with interest as he counts with 1:1 correspondence the Unifix cubes he stacked together.



Katie's teacher encourages her to describe what she's building with the marshmallows and toothpicks.

More on HighScope Small Groups

- SGTs meet daily, each adult meeting with their same group of children.
 - This group stays together for about two to three months before switching members.
- SGTs meet together in a consistent place.
 - If you need to hold your group in a different place (e.g., on the floor of the block area or around the water table), meet in your usual spot first, then move together to the unique location.
- SGTs last for about 10–15 minutes.



A Peek Ahead

This week you will

- Focus on the concepts of a supportive climate and active learning at SGT.

Next week you will

- Look specifically at the format of SGT and how to scaffold each child's learning within the SGT activity.

