

Small-Group Times

for Active Learners

Week 2 Learning Unit

The Components of Small-Group Time



Creating Your Small Groups

- All small groups meet at the same time, each group of children with their same classroom adult.
- To determine group size, divide the number of classroom adults by the number of children.
 - 2 adults (1 teacher, 1 assistant teacher) and 18 children — each group has 9 children
 - 3 adults (1 teacher and 2 aides) and 21 children — each group has 7 children
- Balance groups by sex (boys and girls), age, and temperament.
- Place children who play together in the same group.



TIP: You should keep the same groups for planning, recall, SGT, and meals.

Creating Your Small Groups (continued)

Keep Groups Consistent

- Groups (children and the teacher) should stay together for two to three months.
- Always meet in the same place.
 - If you are holding small group in a different place (e.g., the block area), meet in your normal spot first, and then move as a group.
- Post a list of the group's names and letter-linked symbols by your meeting place.



Creating Your Small Groups (continued)

Prepare Materials Ahead of Time

- Gather a set of materials for each child and for yourself.
 - For example, scissors, glue stick, and paper scraps should be in each basket for an art-focused SGT.
 - Having individual sets of materials cuts down on behavior issues.
- Have back-up materials ready. Back-up materials are extra materials that you place in the center of the table for anyone in the group to use as needed.
 - For example, there could be more paper scraps, yarn, and feathers available for the above SGT.
- Place materials within easy access of your small group meeting place.



Less wait time = Smoother SGTs for all!

Creating Your Small Groups (continued)

Use small baskets, yogurt containers, trays, lunch bags, shoe boxes, etc. to hold a set of materials for each child and for yourself.



Tubs



Trays



Cups



Baskets

Overview of the Components

Beginning

- Introduce the activity with an opening statement.

Middle

- Support children's active learning. Look for opportunities to scaffold each child's developmental level.

End

- Bring the activity to a close and transition to the next part of your routine.



Overview of the Components (continued)



Beginning: Getting the Activity Started

- Have materials and back-up materials ready ahead of time.
- Use an **opening statement** to introduce the activity or materials to the children.
- Give children their own set of materials and let them begin working immediately.

Overview of the Components (continued)

Opening Statements

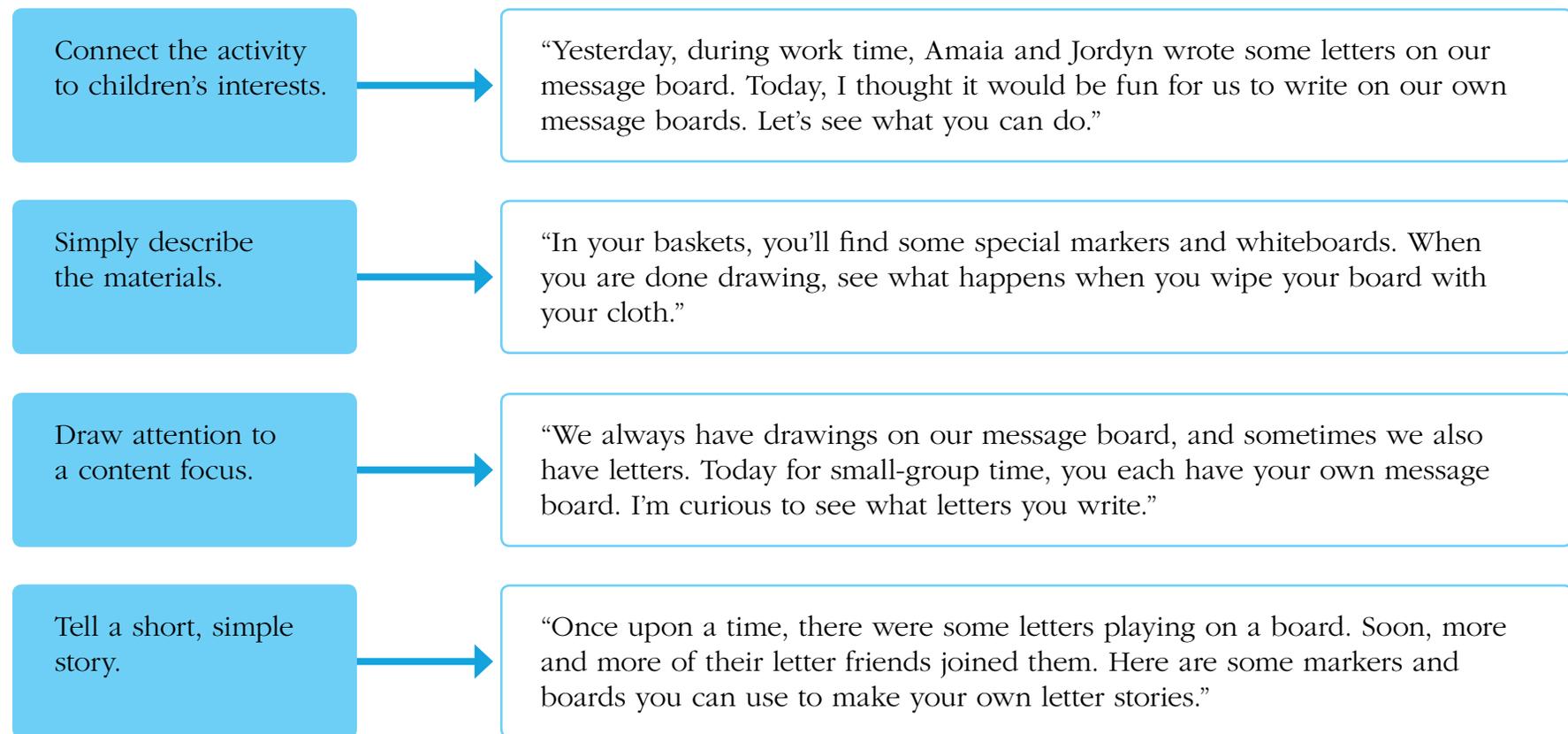
- Opening statements serve to introduce the activity to the children.
- Opening statements capture children's attention to help them get interested and engaged with the materials.
- There are four types of opening statements typically used at small-group time:
 - Connecting to children's interests
 - Describing new and unexplored materials
 - Focusing on a key developmental indicator (KDI), content area, or COR item
 - Telling a short, simple, open-ended story about the materials



Holly opens the small-group activity by engaging the children's prior knowledge of straws and how they work.

Overview of the Components (continued)

Here, the four types of opening statements are used to illustrate the same SGT — writing with markers on whiteboards.



Overview of the Components (continued)



Middle: Active Learning at It's Best

- Once you give the children their own set of materials, support the active learning that happens!
 - Carefully observe how children respond to the materials.
 - Listen to what they say, watch what they do.
 - Try using the materials yourself, imitating the children's actions.
 - Be ready for children to use materials in ways you don't expect. This is fine!

Overview of the Components (continued)

- Move from child to child to provide individual support.
- Connect children together in conversation.
- Refer children to each other for problem solving.
- Use all your adult-child interaction strategies (like you use at work time) to support children's individual levels of development.

You will learn more about scaffolding techniques later in this learning unit.



Overview of the Components (continued)

Examples of Strategies Used in the Middle

Observe what children do with the materials.

Use materials yourself.

Imitate children's actions.



Overview of the Components (continued)

Move from child to child to give individual support.

Listen to what children say.

Engage in conversations.



Overview of the Components (continued)

Move from child to child.

Support children's ideas.

Listen to what children say.

Connect children together in conversations.



Overview of the Components (continued)

Move from child to child.

Be ready for children to use materials in unexpected ways.

Converse with children, using a variety of interaction strategies.



Overview of the Components (continued)

Listen to what children say about their ideas and work.

Converse with children.

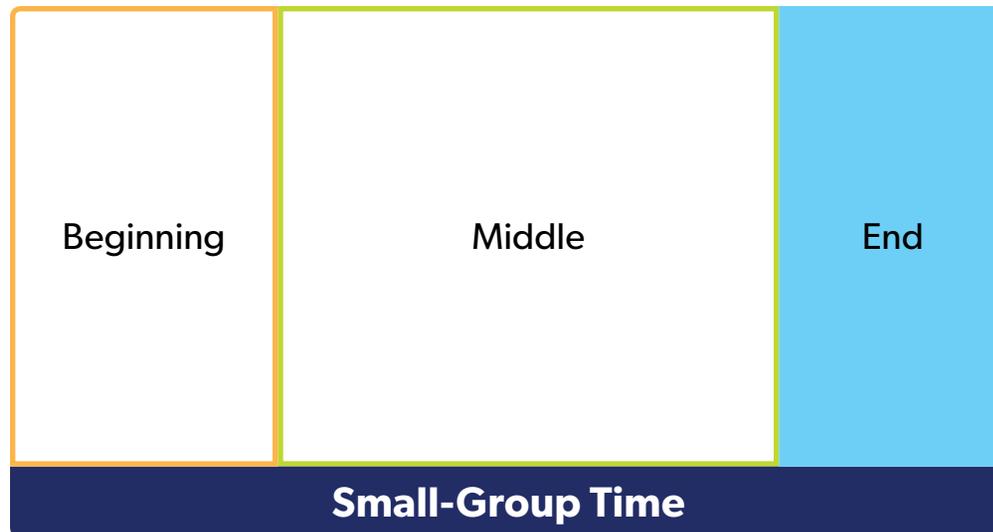
Refer children to each other for problem solving.

Provide back-up materials to support children's engagement for the length of the small-group time.



Notice the basket of back-up materials in the center of the table (e.g., funnels, coffee stirrers, clear tubing, etc.). These materials will extend on the exploration of bubbles.

Overview of the Components (continued)



End: Bringing SGT to a Close

- Give children a three-minute warning before ending the activity.
- Encourage children to help you clean up the materials.
 - Give children concrete suggestions about where to put materials and/or what they can do.
- Remind children where they can find the materials if they want to use them again at work time.
- Plan a way for children to transition to the next part of your daily routine.

Overview of the Components (continued)

Phrases Heard During the End of SGTs

- “In three more minutes it will be time to put the blocks away.
- “We’ll put the play dough tub right here on the art shelf. If you want to make a plan to use it tomorrow at work time, this is where you can find it.
- “It’s almost time to go outside. You can put the magnets in this basket and the paper clips go here.
- “After you put your frogs in this basket, hop to your cubbies and put your coats on.

The Components of SGT



Scaffolding Children's Learning

What is Scaffolding?

In the HighScope curriculum, scaffolding means to **both** support children's individual levels of development (or where they currently are) **and** provide extensions as they move to the next developmental stage.



This teacher is supporting this child's current developmental understanding of calling the block a rectangle and scaffolds by using new vocabulary to describe a three-dimensional shape.

Scaffolding Children's Learning (continued)

SGT Expectations in a Supportive Climate

In a supportive climate, it's important to think about the developmental range of all the children in your group.

- How are children at earlier stages of development likely to respond to the materials?
- Children at middle stages of development?
- Later stages of development?

Remember, in supportive climates, we expect children to use the materials in their own ways. We do not have narrow expectations or a set product in mind.

SGT Scaffolding

After you have considered your children's developmental range, plan how you will support children's learning at each stage, including

- Supporting children at their current level.
- Offering gentle extensions.

As teachers, we primarily support where children are, and occasionally offer gentle extensions.

It's important to carefully observe how children respond to your extensions — if they ignore or reject your idea, go right back to supporting at their current level.

Scaffolding Children's Learning (continued)

Earlier Development Example — SGT: Working with Cars and Boards

Things children might say or do at this stage: Drive the car around the floor. Yell, “Rrrr, zooooom,” while making a car go back and forth on the floor. Line the cars up on a board.

To support children's current level, you might:

Use your own materials like the child (e.g., explore how the vehicles move on the floor; line up your cars on a board).

Imitate the sounds that the child makes.

Label the child's actions (e.g., “You are rolling the car on the floor. You made it go really fast!”).

To offer extensions, you might:

Pose a challenge (e.g., “I see your race car is going fast. I wonder what you could do to make it go faster”).

Draw attention to other children's actions (e.g., “Yuri is using his boards like a road. He has made a path with them”).

Scaffolding Children's Learning (continued)

Middle Development Example — SGT: Working with Cars and Boards

Things children might say or do at this stage: Say “The cars work best on the boards, they don't like the carpet.” Place their board on a block to make a ramp and send their car rolling down it. Say to another child, “Let's have a race.”

To support children's current level, you might:

Imitate the child's actions (e.g., roll your car on the carpet and then on the board; try racing your car).

Talk about how fast the cars are going by using words like fast, rapidly, speedy, quick, slower, sluggish, etc.

Layer on language to describe the child's actions (e.g., “You're right, Carly, the carpet is rougher and it's difficult to roll the car on it”).

To offer extensions, you might:

Use ordinal number words to describe the race (e.g., “The red car came in *first* and the yellow car was *second*”).

Ask the child to explain their thinking (e.g., “Why do you think the cars work better on the board? Why do you think your car goes further on the ramp?”).

Scaffolding Children's Learning (continued)

Later Development Example — SGT: Working with Cars and Boards

Things children might say or do at this stage: Experiment with making bridges by adding blocks to both sides and put a long plank across. Make a ramp several blocks tall and say “When it’s high like this, the cars goes far — almost to Joey’s foot!”

To support children’s current level, you might:

Imitate the child’s actions (e.g., make a ramp like the child did; roll your car down the high ramp).

Ask the child to describe what they did (e.g., “Ella I would like to make a bridge like yours. Can you tell me how you made it?”).

To offer extensions, you might:

Pose a new challenge (e.g., “I wonder how high the ramp would have to get before the cars stopped racing and just fell off?”).

Gently introduce a new idea (e.g., ask the child if they want to measure how far their car went or how high their ramp is).

Scaffolding Children’s Learning (continued)

Scaffolding During Planning Time

Thinking about your scaffolding strategies as you plan your SGT times helps you

- Meet the developmental range of the children in your group.
- Prepare for the variety of ways children might respond to the materials.
- Implement active learning and a supportive climate at your small-group times.

The HighScope Small-Group Time Planning Form

- The SGT planning form helps you to have a carefully developed and thoughtful SGT.
- It helps you think through all the components of your SGT: beginning — middle — end.

Preschool Week 2

Small-Group-Time Planning Form

Name			
Originating Idea			
Materials			
Curriculum Content			
Beginning <i>Opening statement</i>			
Middle With content and materials in mind, <i>What will children do?</i>	Earlier Developmental Level	Middle Developmental Level	Later Developmental Level
With content and materials in mind, <i>How will you scaffold their learning?</i>	Strategies:	Strategies:	Strategies:
End Warning and transition to next part of routine			
Follow-up Ideas			

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Scaffolding Children’s Learning (continued)

What is the source of your idea for this SGT? (We will talk more about this next week.)

Record your materials here. Remember to include your back-up materials!

List the content areas (KDIs or COR item) you are likely to see during this SGT.

HINT: It’s more useful to list two or three main content areas, rather an extensive list of every possible thing.

Preschool Week 2

Small-Group-Time Planning Form

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Originating Idea			
Materials			
Curriculum Content			
Beginning <i>Opening statement</i>			
Middle With content and materials in mind, <i>What will children do?</i>	Earlier Developmental Level	Middle Developmental Level	Later Developmental Level
With content and materials in mind, <i>How will you scaffold their learning?</i>	Strategies:	Strategies:	Strategies:
End Warning and transition to next part of routine			
Follow-up Ideas			

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Scaffolding Children’s Learning (continued)

Record your plans for all the components of SGT: **Beginning** with opening statement, **Middle** with scaffolding strategies, and **End** with your transition idea.

This is filled out after you’ve done this plan. Record any ideas that you have to follow up on (e.g., what emerged from this SGT; children’s ideas or children’s actions).

HINT: Your follow-up ideas aren’t limited to SGTs. They could be ideas for other parts of your daily routine or materials to add to your learning environment (inside or outside).

Preschool Week 2

Small-Group-Time Planning Form

Name			
Originating Idea			
Materials			
Curriculum Content			
Beginning <i>Opening statement</i>			
Middle With content and materials in mind, <i>What will children do?</i>	Earlier Developmental Level	Middle Developmental Level	Later Developmental Level
With content and materials in mind, <i>How will you scaffold their learning?</i>	Strategies:	Strategies:	Strategies:
End Warning and transition to next part of routine			
Follow-up Ideas			


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A Peek Ahead

This week you will

- Practice generating opening statements.
- Try doing another SGT.
- Create and use your own SGT plan.

Next week you will

- Look more closely at planning SGTs.
- Discover the sources of ideas.
- Cover the PQA SGT items.

