

Small-Group Times

for Active Learners

Week 3 Learning Unit

Planning Appropriate Small-Group-Time Activities



Planning Small-Group Times

Last week, you learned about using the Small-Group-Time Planning Form.

This week, we will look closer at the sources of ideas for planning small-group times.

Sources of Ideas

A concern expressed by many who are learning about SGTs is:

“Where do you get your ideas when planning small-group times?”

Here are four sources that you can use:

- Content areas
- Children’s interests
- New and unexplored materials
- Local traditions

Sources for Small-Group-Time Planning

Content Areas
(KIDs & COR)

Children’s
Interests

New and
Unexplored
Materials

Local
Traditions

Planning Small-Group Times (continued)

Content Areas

- We always want to think about content areas that would be supported by this particular small-group time.
- Content areas would include the key developmental indicators (KDIs) and your assessment items (in our case, COR items).
 - You might plan around content areas that are emerging in children.
 - You might plan around content areas that you have not yet seen to give you more information about where children are developmentally.



Planning Small-Group Times (continued)

Content Areas Example

At work time, the teacher noticed how Carlee arranged some unit blocks.

When he asked Carlee to describe what she created, Carlee said, “It’s the mall me and my mommy go to!” However, she didn’t acknowledge there was a pattern. The teacher scaffolded Carlee’s learning by pointing out that what she had created was called a pattern, and described the pattern to her.

This made the teacher want to support what Carlee was doing at work time.

It also made him curious about what other children might do with patterns.



Planning Small-Group Times (continued)

SGT Idea: Tell a little story about frogs hopping on paths and give the paths patterns (red, blue, red, blue, etc.). Give children baskets with several frogs and small paper squares (red, blue, and yellow) and encourage them to make their own pattern paths for their frogs to hop down.

Remember...

Even though this SGT was planned around patterning, it's important to accept the individual ways that children respond to the materials; some children might sort the paper squares, some children might make designs with them, and some children might make stories about their frogs. This is okay!

Children's Interests

- Think about what children like to do, the materials they like to use, and how they interact and play with each other then use this in your small-group time planning.
- Planning SGTs around children's interests can be a child's motivation for initially getting engaged with the materials.
- Interests should always be layered on to the content area you wish to focus on.

Planning Small-Group Times (continued)

Content Areas + Children's Interests

Example

One child is interested in using conventional tools and measuring items in the classroom at work time.

Another child stacks the Unifix cubes as tall as himself, and the teacher says, "You're measuring how tall you are!"

Here's her idea about how to layer the interest of conventional tools with the content area of measuring.



Planning Small-Group Times (continued)

SGT Idea: When children come in at greeting time, trace the children's bodies so that when small-group time comes, the materials for the activity are prepped in advance.

The opening statement connected the activity to what she saw at work time. The children then proceeded to measure their bodies with conventional and unconventional materials (e.g., rulers, Unifix cubes, measuring tape, etc.). The teacher modeled measurement vocabulary in conversation with each child.



Remember...

Even though this SGT was planned around measuring, no matter how the children respond to the materials, a supportive teacher will scaffold their ideas at their levels of development!

Planning Small-Group Times (continued)

New and Unexplored Materials

- Introduce materials new to the classroom during SGT.
 - This gives children the chance to try out the materials and to help decide where they are going to be stored.
 - This encourages a supportive climate of shared control as the teachers and children make changes in the environment together.
- Observing materials children do not use is another source of ideas for SGT.
 - Reintroducing these materials at SGT may reawaken their interest in them.
 - You could also consider combining familiar materials in new ways (e.g., adding teddy bear counters to blocks).

Hint:

If you find you aren't seeing any children doing something in a particular content area (KDI or COR item), you may find that your classroom lacks the materials that lend themselves to children's learning in that area.

Think about the content focus as you plan SGTs around new and unexplored materials.

Planning Small-Group Times (continued)

New and Unexplored Materials + **Content Areas**
+ **Children's Interests**

During their team planning session, the teachers discussed that children seemed to have lost interest in the people manipulatives in the toy area.

They also discussed that they weren't seeing a lot of the KDI, 46. Classifying, from any of the children.

Shannon suggested reintroducing the people manipulatives by combining them with other materials in new ways. At work time, the children were using the circle builders to create various structures. Knowing that they also wanted to encourage classifying, she thought of combining the materials for an activity. She was thinking children might classify by color or other various attributes.



Planning Small-Group Times (continued)

SGT idea: Tell a short story about people who are traveling to a new land. When they arrive, the people need to build homes for their families. Some people wanted to live in blue houses and some people wanted to live in yellow houses. Give each child a basket with their own materials and say you are interested in seeing what type of homes they'll build for their families.

Local Traditions

- Occasionally, SGTs can stem from local traditions and community events. These could include local festivals, holidays, or seasonal activities that are a part of children's lives, such as:
 - Collecting fall leaves
 - Decorating pumpkins
 - Sprucing up the playground

This **does not** give teachers permission to do craft projects where all children make the same thing.

You have to have **all 5 ingredients of active learning** to be an appropriate SGT.

SGTs **are not** about making products — they are about supporting individual children's learning!

Planning Small-Group Times (continued)

Local Traditions + Content Areas

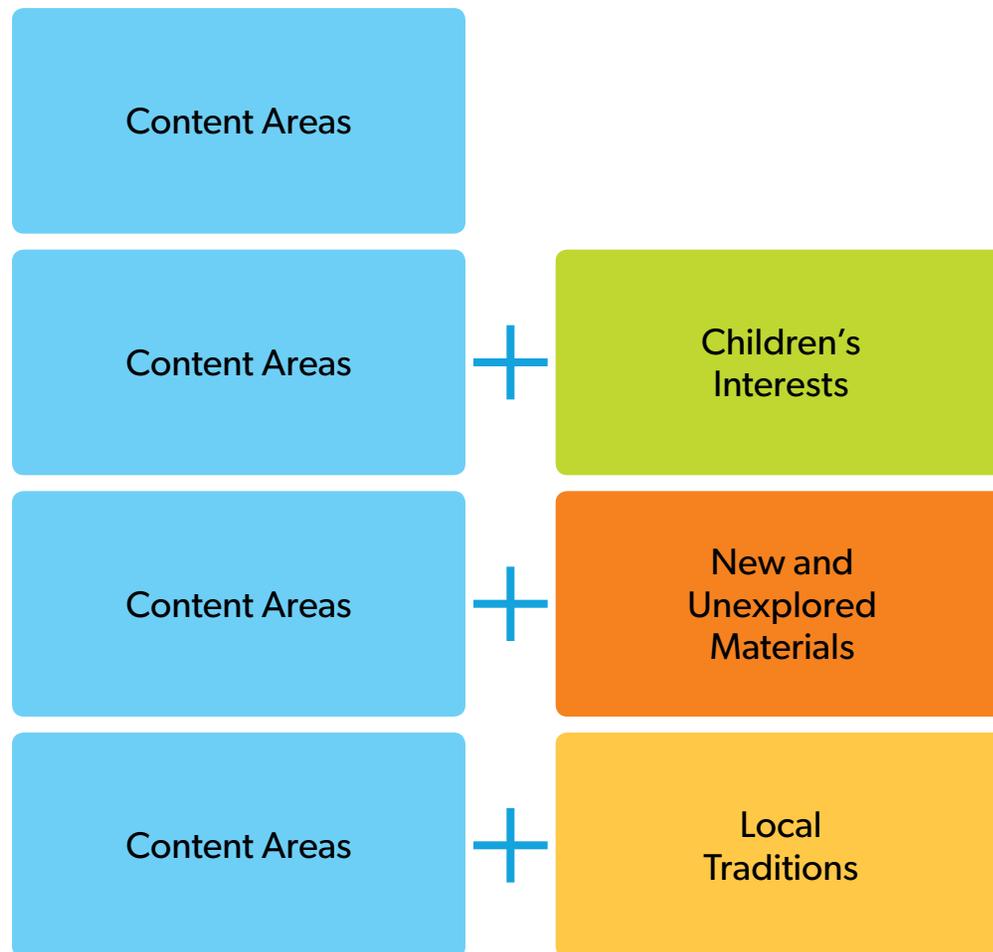
As summer turned into fall, children were noticing the changes in nature. The teachers and children went on a field trip to visit a pumpkin farm.

Charonda wanted to follow up on the field trip by providing her small group with the opportunity to investigate various aspects of a pumpkin, and support children's development in the content area of science and technology.

SGT idea: Start the SGT by showing children some photos taken from a previous field trip. Tell them that for this SGT, they can be scientists and investigate their pumpkin. Give each child a pumpkin, spoons, and a bowl. Have tweezers and other utensils as back-up materials.



Planning Small-Group Times (continued)



As you can see from the examples, no matter which source you plan your SGT from, you should also **always** think about the content area you are likely to see.

This helps you think about the scaffolding strategies you could use for each child in your group.

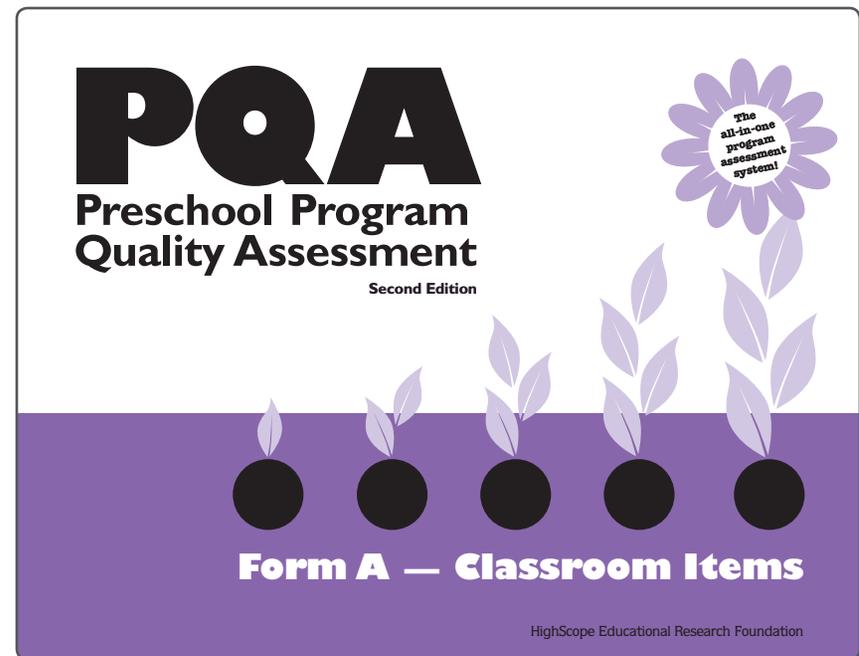
One caution — **always** expect the unexpected when working with preschool children!

Evaluating Your SGT

HighScope has an assessment tool called the Program Quality Assessment (PQA).

The PQA can help you assess the quality of the SGT experiences you are providing your children.

PQA scores range from 1 (low quality) to 5 (high quality).



Evaluating Your SGT (continued)

PQA Form A

There are two PQA items that deal with SGT:

- Item II-G: The program has a time each day for small-group activities that reflect and extend children’s interests and development.
- Item III-H, Row 1: Adults support and extend children’s ideas and learning during group times.

II. DAILY ROUTINE Circle one indicator level for this item based on the scoring rules on page 4.

II-G. The program has a time each day for small-group activities that reflect and extend children’s interests and development. **1 2 3 4 5**

Check here if not observed or reported.

[Note: If time for small-group activities is set aside but not observed, score at level 1.]

Level 1 Indicators	Level 3 Indicators	Level 5 Indicators	Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
<input type="checkbox"/> There is no time set aside for small-group activities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes there is time set aside for small-group activities.	<input type="checkbox"/> There is a daily time set aside for small-group activities.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Adults direct small-group times so that children do not contribute their own ideas or participate at their own developmental levels (e.g., children are expected to use materials in the same way, follow directions, answer questions or make the same product).	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes children contribute their own ideas or participate at their own developmental levels at small-group times (e.g., children are asked to classify the nature materials, but can group them in their own ways).	<input type="checkbox"/> Throughout small-group time, children contribute their own ideas and participate at their own developmental levels (e.g., explore and materials in	
<input type="checkbox"/> The children and adult(s) in each small group change each time.	<input type="checkbox"/> Children and adult(s) stay with the same small group for 1–2 months.	<input type="checkbox"/> Children stay with the same small group for at least 2 months.	

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III. ADULT-CHILD INTERACTION Circle one indicator level for this item based on the scoring rules on page 4.

III-H. Adults support and extend children’s ideas and learning during group times. **1 2 3 4 5**

Check here if not observed or reported.

Level 1 Indicators	Level 3 Indicators	Level 5 Indicators	Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
<input type="checkbox"/> Adults do not support or extend children’s small-group activities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Adults use some strategies to support or extend children’s small-group activities (e.g., after materials are given to children, adults help when needed).	<input type="checkbox"/> Adults use many strategies to support and extend children’s small-group activities (e.g., they observe what children do, move from child to child, comment on what children are doing and saying, imitate and add to children’s actions, use the materials themselves).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Adults do not support or extend children’s large-group ideas and actions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Adults sometimes use some strategies to support children’s large-group ideas and actions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Adults use many strategies to support and extend children’s large-group ideas and actions, e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch and listen to children. • Imitate children’s actions. • Use children’s words. • Assume children’s physical level. • Let children be leaders. • Follow up children’s suggestions and modifications. 	

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Evaluating Your SGT (continued)

Item and description of what is included in the item.



II. DAILY ROUTINE

II-G. The program has a time each day for small-group activities that reflect and extend children's interests and development.

[Note: If time for small-group activities is set aside but not observed, score at level 1.]

Circle **one** indicator level for this item based on the scoring rules on page 4.

1 2 3 4 5

Check here if not observed or reported.

Level 1 Indicators

There is no time set aside for small-group activities.

Adults direct small-group times so that children do not contribute their own ideas or participate at their own developmental levels (e.g., children are expected to use materials in the same way, follow directions, answer questions or make the same product).

The children and adult(s) in each small group change each time.

Level 3 Indicators

Sometimes there is time set aside for small-group activities.

Sometimes children contribute their own ideas or participate at their own developmental levels at small-group times (e.g., children are asked to classify the nature materials, but can group them in their own ways).

Children and adult(s) stay with the same small group for 1–2 months.

Level 5 Indicators

There is a daily time set aside for small-group activities.

Throughout small-group time, children contribute their own ideas and participate at their own developmental levels (e.g., individual children explore and use the same set of materials in their own ways).

Children and adult(s) always stay with the same small group for at least 2 months or more.

Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes

Evaluating Your SGT (continued)

For PQA Item III-H, only Row 1 deals directly with SGT.

Row 2 refers to large-group time. For the purposes of this class, you do not have to complete this row.

III. ADULT-CHILD INTERACTION <i>Circle one indicator level for this item based on the scoring rules on page 4.</i>			
III-H. Adults support and extend children's ideas and learning during group times. 1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> Check here if not observed or reported. 			
Level 1 Indicators	Level 3 Indicators	Level 5 Indicators	Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
<input type="checkbox"/> Adults do not support or extend children's small-group activities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Adults use some strategies to support or extend children's small-group activities (e.g., after materials are given to children, adults help when needed).	<input type="checkbox"/> Adults use many strategies to support and extend children's small-group activities (e.g., they observe what children do, move from child to child, comment on what children are doing and saying, imitate and add to children's actions, use the materials themselves).	
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Evaluating Your SGT (continued)

Step 1: Collect and Record Evidence

Observe the small-group time and record what you see using the following:

- Anecdotes: A briefer version of what children and/or staff do or say
- Quotes: What children and/or staff say

Write the evidence you collect in the corresponding row. Every row must have evidence — do not anything blank.

III. ADULT-CHILD INTERACTION Circle one indicator level for this item based on the scoring rules on page 4.

III-H. Adults support and extend children’s ideas and learning during group times. 1 2 3 4 5

Check here if not observed or reported.

Level 1 Indicators	Level 3 Indicators	Level 5 Indicators	Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
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<input type="checkbox"/> Adults do not support or extend children’s large-group ideas and actions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Adults sometimes use some strategies to support children’s large-group ideas and actions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Adults use many strategies to support and extend children’s large-group ideas and actions, e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch and listen to children. • Imitate children’s actions. • Use children’s words. • Assume children’s physical level. • Let children be leaders. • Follow up children’s suggestions and modifications. 	

36
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Evaluating Your SGT (continued)

Step 1 Example

III. ADULT-CHILD INTERACTION Circle one indicator level for this item based on the scoring rules on page 4.

III-H. Adults support and extend children's ideas and learning during group times. 1 2 3 4 5

Check here if not observed or reported.

Level 1 Indicators	Level 3 Indicators	Level 5 Indicators	Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
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<input type="checkbox"/> Adults do not support or extend children's large-group ideas and actions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Adults sometimes use some strategies to support children's large-group ideas and actions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Adults use many strategies to support and extend children's large-group ideas and actions, e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch and listen to children. • Imitate children's actions. • Use children's words. • Assume children's physical level. • Let children be leaders. • Follow up children's suggestions and modifications. 	<p><i>LGT – T sat in adult-sized chair to read a book, ch on the floor. T did "Everybody Do This" song, asking ch for their ideas. She joined in when ch did arm movements but just sang when ch chose to jump & crawl & wiggle.</i></p>

36
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Evaluating Your SGT (continued)

Step 2: Check One Box Per Row

Read through the descriptors and check one row per box.

- For each row, read through the descriptors and select the one that most closely matches your evidence.
- Pay close attention to words like **some**, **most**, and **always**.

If the descriptor has a bulleted list, you **MUST** have all of the bulleted indicators present to score a 5.

III. ADULT-CHILD INTERACTION Circle one indicator level for this item based on the scoring rules on page 4.

III-H. Adults support and extend children's ideas and learning during group times. 1 2 3 4 5

Check here if not observed or reported.

Level 1 Indicators	Level 3 Indicators	Level 5 Indicators	Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
<input type="checkbox"/> Adults do not support or extend children's small-group activities.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adults use some strategies to support or extend children's small-group activities (e.g., after materials are given to children, adults help when needed).	<input type="checkbox"/> Adults use many strategies to support and extend children's small-group activities (e.g., they observe what children do, move from child to child, comment on what children are doing and saying, imitate and add to children's actions, use the materials themselves).	<p>SGT - T passed out materials & then watched what ch did. She said things like "That's pretty" and "You used a lot of sticks" and "Five more minutes"</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Adults do not support or extend children's large-group ideas and actions.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adults sometimes use some strategies to support children's large-group ideas and actions.	<div style="border: 2px solid blue; padding: 5px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Adults use many strategies to support and extend children's large-group ideas and actions, e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch and listen to children. Imitate children's actions. Use children's words. Assume children's physical level. Let children be leaders. Follow up children's suggestions and modifications. </div>	<p>LGT - T sat in adult-sized chair to read a book, ch on the floor. T did "Everybody Do This" song, asking ch for their ideas. She joined in when ch did arm movements but just sang when ch chose to jump & crawl & wiggle.</p>

36
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Evaluating Your SGT (continued)

Step 3: Circle the Correct Level

Follow the scoring directions in the front of the PQA booklet.

Circle the correct level, based on the Level 1, 3, or 5 boxes that were checked.

This is your PQA score for this item (i.e., Score 3).

III. ADULT-CHILD INTERACTION

III-H. Adults support and extend children's ideas and learning during group times.

Circle one indicator level for this item based on the scoring rules on page 4.

1 2 **3** 4 5

Check here if not observed or reported.

Level 1 Indicators	Level 3 Indicators	Level 5 Indicators	Supporting Evidence/Anecdotes
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<input type="checkbox"/> Adults do not support or extend children's large-group ideas and actions.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adults sometimes use some strategies to support children's large-group ideas and actions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Adults use many strategies to support and extend children's large-group ideas and actions, e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch and listen to children. • Imitate children's actions. • Use children's words. • Assume children's physical level. • Let children be leaders. • Follow up children's suggestions and modifications. 	

36
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A Peek Ahead

This week you will

- Plan and do a content-focused small-group time.
- Plan another small-group time around another source.
- Complete the two small-group-time PQA items for your classroom and reflect on what you found out.
- Return to your SGT issue from registration week with a strategy you learned from this course that will help you address it.

