

# Week 1 Reading Assignment

## *Overview of Infant-Toddler Movement and Music Group Time*



# Overview of Infant-Toddler Movement and Music Group Time

## Group Time

**What and Why.** Group times are caregiver-initiated parts of the day that include opportunities for older infants and toddlers to engage in active learning. *Caregiver-initiated* means the caregiver has an idea for the activity and plans what might happen based on mobile infants' and toddlers' interests and development. The purpose of group time is not to instruct children in some area of knowledge or have them practice a skill, nor is it intended to enforce social interaction. Rather, group time allows children who are interested to explore materials and actions, and if they choose, to observe, imitate, or play alongside others. A child's participation in group time is wholly voluntary. Group times generally focus on either exploring and using materials, or enjoying songs, nursery rhymes, and movement and music activities. During a typical group time, one or two caregivers gather with older



*Teacher and child play pat-a-cake*

infants and toddlers. The group is small — generally no more than four children per caregiver and no more than eight children altogether. The adult gets the activity started and encourages children to use materials or move their bodies in their own way.

## Overview of Infant-Toddler Movement and Music Group Time (continued)

Typically, smaller groups engage in exploring materials while larger groups join in a music or movement activity. However, there are no hard and fast rules to group times. There may even be as few as two children in a group, depending on how many choose to participate. This small group size makes it easier for even quiet or withdrawn children to join in, enables children to have close physical contact with their caregiver, and allows the caregiver to pay close attention to each child while monitoring the tenor of the group as a whole. It is a daily opportunity for children and caregivers to communicate in an intimate social setting as they share common materials or enjoy moving together to music.

Caregivers gather the group together and introduce the materials or activity for group time, but children are the doers and choice-makers, actively shaping

what happens as the group time unfolds. Children also determine the length of group time. Some children, for example, may squeeze dribble salt for 10 minutes, whereas others may spend several minutes watching the activity, then turn to play with other materials around the room. To suit the nature of older infants and toddlers, group times are fluid and dynamic, varying in length and content depending on the actions, ideas, and interests of the children involved.

Group times help children build a repertoire of shared experiences they can turn to in their play and build on their language skills to support communication at other times during the day. Caregivers will notice that, over time, children grow in their ability to communicate and interact with one another during group time; also, the time they remain together in common pursuits gradually increases.

## Overview of Infant-Toddler Movement and Music Group Time (continued)

Group times can also serve as an opportunity for children to check in for reassurance and support from adults after venturing out into the play space during choice time or outside time. For teachers, group time serves as a unique opportunity to offer children materials and challenges that reflect the key developmental indicators in order to observe the various ways different children think of using the materials, solving any problems they meet along the way.

**Where.** Group time need not occur at the same place every day but it is helpful as children learn to depend on the routine. Where the group gathers

depends on the materials called for and the nature of the activity. Group time may take place in the infants' play space, in the art area, in the toy area, or in the movement area. At other times, the group might gather for their activity in a tent, on the deck of the climber, around the sand and water table, on the steps, under the low-hanging branches of a pine tree, or in a garden. Children and their caregiver might sit on the floor, on the ground, or at a table — wherever the chosen activity dictates. Group times involving singing and movement generally take place in the movement area or outdoors, where there is plenty of space for children to move freely.