

Group Times With Materials

For Infants and Toddlers

Week 1 Learning Unit

Group Times With Materials for Infants and Toddlers

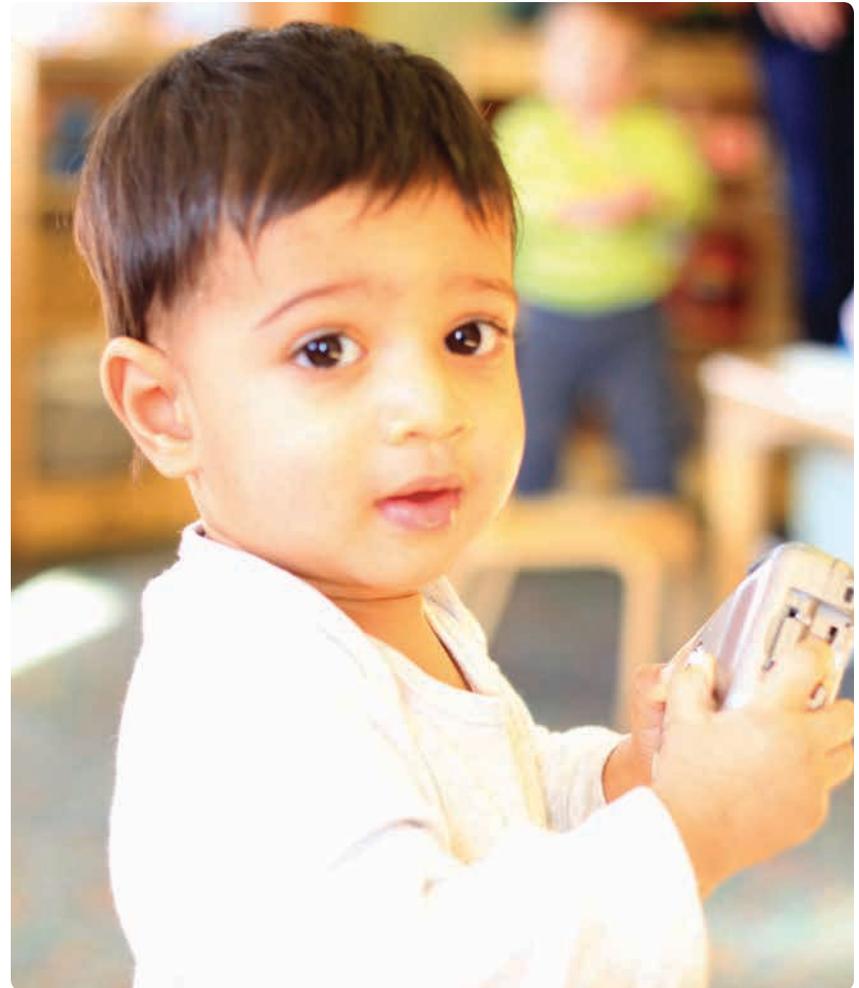


Children's cultures are foundational to their identity. Each family's culture should be respected and integrated into children's everyday experiences in programs. It is important to use a REDI lens as you interact and plan for group time experiences with materials for all children.

Week 1 Learning Unit Topics

Introduction to Group Times With Materials

- What are group times and types?
- Why are group times with materials important?
- Applying active learning to group times with materials.
- Incorporating home cultures and traditions in group times.
- How caregivers support children during group times.
- Ways to make group times more flexible and responsive.



What Are Group Times?

Group Times = Planned Teacher-Initiated Experiences

- The caregiver plans activities based on children's interests and the HighScope Key Developmental Indicators (KDIs).
- The caregiver starts group time and encourages the children to use materials or move their bodies in their own way.
- Group times can be spontaneous, occur anywhere, and occur throughout the day.
- Children's actions determine the length of group times.
- Group times are a come-and-go activity.



Infant and Toddler Group Time Experiences

Two Types of Group Times

Movement and Music

- Songs, fingerplays, nursery rhymes, movement and music.

Materials

- Exploring and using materials.



About Group Times

In this online course, we are going to focus specifically on group times with materials.

1. Toddler Group Times With Materials — Small-Group Times

- Small-group times are primarily for toddlers, but older infants can also benefit from these experiences.
- In group times with young infants, adults interact with one or two children at once when possible.
- Infants explore treasure baskets with adult support.

2. Movement and Music Group Times

- Large-group times include both infants and toddlers.
- Adults consider space and engagement opportunities for mobile and nonmobile children.

What do mobile infants and toddlers do during group times with materials?

Choose

Make choices about how to explore and use materials.

Communicate

Communicate in their own way.

Explore

Make choices about how to explore and use materials in their own unique way.

Participate

Participate at their own pace.

How can understanding children's home cultures help teachers more appropriately support their choices, communication, interest in materials, and participation in these types of group times?

The Importance of Group Times

Group Times:

- Allow caregivers to introduce children to new materials, actions, and experiences.
- Allow caregivers to focus on and support important concepts and learning.
- Allow caregivers to scaffold children's interests and individual needs.
- Provides a daily opportunity for shared experiences.
- Allow mobile infants and toddlers to communicate in an intimate social setting.
- Allow families to share aspects of their culture and home materials that are familiar to their children.



Five Ingredients of Active Learning

Materials

Manipulation

Choice

**Child
Communication,
Language, and
Thought**

**Adult
Scaffolding**

Five Ingredients of Active Learning (continued)

Materials

1. There are abundant, age-appropriate materials all infants and toddlers can use in a variety of ways.

- Children explore and play with materials rich in sensory appeal.
- Materials reflect children's home cultures and families' traditions and interests.
- Children have a safe place to explore and play with materials.
- Children have time to explore and play with materials.

Five Ingredients of Active Learning (continued)

Manipulation

2. All infants and toddlers use their whole bodies and all of their senses to manipulate materials freely.

- Children explore materials freely with their senses.
- Children experiment with materials to find out what they do and repeat satisfying actions.
- Children use their whole bodies to reach, grasp, roll, sit, crawl, walk, climb, and carry.

How does culture play a role in the way children experience materials? For example, children are exposed to certain types of materials from their home culture (i.e., the types of designs and textures children see and feel when manipulating or laying on fabric that represents their culture. As caregivers, we can plan for cultural experiences that will benefit all children's learning.

Five Ingredients of Active Learning (continued)

Choice

3. All infants and toddlers choose what to do.

- Children make choices and decisions.
- Children express preferences.
- Children follow their own intentions and initiatives.
- Children decide how to explore and what to do with materials.
- Children use materials to do things for themselves.

How are all children given opportunities to make choices during group times with materials?

Five Ingredients of Active Learning (continued)

Child Communication, Language, and Thought

4. All infants and toddlers communicate and use language to convey their needs, discover, learn, and do.

- Children communicate their needs, feelings, discoveries, and ideas in their own individual ways and at their own pace.
- Children initiate contact with caregivers.
- Children string together sounds, gestures, and words in a fashion that makes sense to them.

In addition to supporting infant and toddler's language and communication development, how is each child's home language valued, supported, and reflected in the classroom?

Five Ingredients of Active Learning (continued)

Adult Scaffolding

5. All infants and toddlers learn within the context of trusting relationships.

In their interactions with children, care-givers:

- Take interest in the child's play.
- Enjoy the child's actions and explorations.
- Communicate with warmth and respect.
- Acknowledge the child's feelings.
- Provide positive physical contact.
- Give the child their full attention and respond readily.
- Talk with children and tell them what will happen next.

As you reflect on your interactions with children, how are you respecting their culture, home language, and abilities during group times?

Active Learning Example

Materials:



Manipulation:



Active Learning Example (continued)

Choice:



Even the youngest children can choose what to explore.

Child Communication:



Active Learning Example (continued)

Adult Scaffolding:



Strategies for Incorporating Children's Home Cultures Into Group Times With Materials

- Survey families' home cultures, linguistic backgrounds, and family traditions.
- Use this information to engage families and incorporate them into group times with materials (e.g., a parent who enjoys cooking shares a play dough recipe that teachers make for children to explore, families save recyclable food boxes, a family who lives on a farm brings in leftover kernels).



How Caregivers Support Children During Group Times

- Plan ahead and provide active group experiences.
- Gather materials and offer them to children.
- Respect children's choices and ideas about using materials.
- Comment briefly and specifically on what children are doing.
- Interpret children's actions and communications for other children.
- Let children's actions signal when group time should end.



Ways to Make Group Times More Flexible and Responsive

- Keeps group size small — primary caregiving groups of four.
- Stop or change the activity if no children are participating.
- Attend to children's cues, leads, and communications.
- Interpret children's communications with one another.
- Include choices for children.
- Schedule group times when children may be most inclined to do something.
- Anticipate that children will come and go during group times.



A Peek Ahead

Next week you will explore:

- Building choice into group times with materials.
- Identifying children's learning during group times with materials.
- Optimizing spontaneous group times.

