

# Group Times With Materials

*For Infants and Toddlers*

# Week 2 Learning Unit

*Building Choice and Identifying Learning in Group Times*



# Week 2 Learning Unit Topics

## Building Choice and Identifying Learning in Group Times

- Building choice into group times with materials
- Identifying children's learning during group times with materials
- Viewpoint for when children wander
- Optimizing spontaneous group times



# Remember:

## Group Times = Planned Teacher-Initiated Experiences

- The caregiver plans activities based on children's interests and the HighScope key developmental indicators.
- The caregiver starts the group time and encourages the children to use materials in their own way.
- Group times can occur anywhere, be spontaneous, and occur throughout the day.
- Children's actions determine the length of group times.
- Group times are a come-and-go activity.



# Keep *Choice* in Mind as an Ingredient of Active Learning

**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.

Reflect on how you are incorporating individualized choices into group times for every child.



# Building Choice Into Group Times With Materials

## Strategies for building choice into group times with materials:

- Choose open-ended materials that allow children to use them in a variety of ways.
- Choose materials that can be used by children at varying developmental levels.
- Provide enough materials for each child to make choices about what and how many of each material they would like to use.
- Give children space and time to explore at their own pace and developmental levels.
- Accept the direction that children take the play.
- Provide backup materials to extend or re-engage children with the materials.
- Observe the types of learning children are experiencing (as opposed to solely watching for what you have planned to happen).

## Building Choice Into Group Times With Materials (continued)

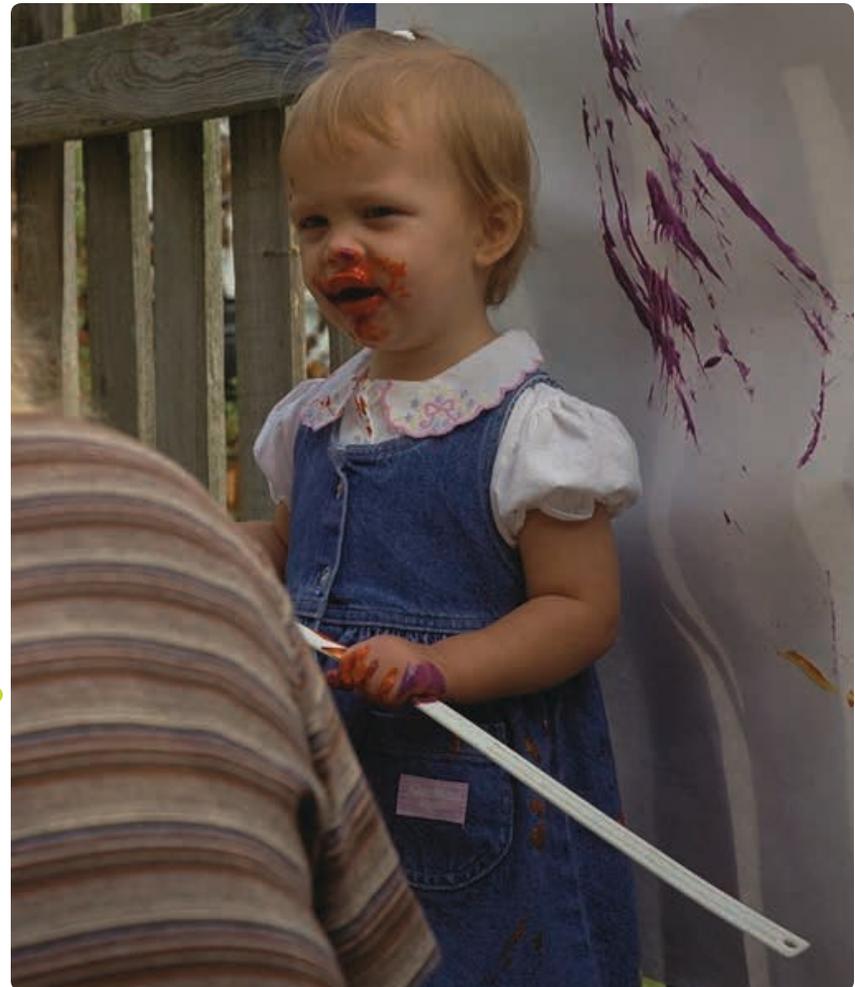
### Example:

During group time with materials, the caregiver Darla provides children with paper, trays of paint, and fly swatters.

- One-year-old Naila picks up the fly swatter and pats the paper repeatedly without dipping into the paint.
- 18-month-old Stephen dips both hands into the paint and squishes the paint between his fingers.
- 30-month-old Media dips her fly swatter into two different trays of paint, swats her paper, and says, “Look at mine!”

### *Take a moment to consider:*

How else might you see a toddler engage with these materials?



## Building Choice Into Group Times With Materials (continued)

### Example:

During group time with materials, children explore cans with lids, wooden circles, and tubes with rings and hair ties.

- 14-month-old Shyla pulls objects out of the containers and stacks them.
- 20-month-old Thomas puts all the red ties around the plastic tube.
- 30-month-old Jojo lines up the wooden circles and then slides them into the slots in the containers.

### *Take a moment to consider:*

How else might you see a toddler engage with these materials?



## Building Choice Into Group Times With Materials (continued)

**Example:**



***Take a moment to consider:***

What do you see the child doing with the materials?

How might you see another toddler engage with these materials in a different way?

**Example:**



***Take a moment to consider:***

What do you see the child doing with the materials?

How might you see another toddler engage with these materials in a different way?

## Building Choice Into Group Times With Materials *(continued)*

**Using careful observation and consideration, as practiced in the previous slides, helps caregivers to:**

- Initiate experiences in which children are eager to participate.
- Allow learning to emerge naturally.
- Focus on what children can do.
- Scaffold children's learning based on their interests.
- Be intentional in choosing materials that focus on children's interests and challenge their thinking and learning.
- Plan future meaningful experiences based on what we understand about children's learning and ability.



Reflect on how you are observing and supporting each of your children in an unbiased way.

# Focus on Children's Learning

## Key Developmental Indicators

### Infant-Toddler Key Developmental Indicators (KDIs):

- HighScope's curriculum content areas for the development of infants and toddlers.
- A framework for interpreting child development based on child observations, developmental theory, and research.
- A series of statements describing the social, cognitive, and physical development of infants and toddlers — areas essential to their construction of knowledge.
- Describe the kinds of discoveries young children make as they strive through their own actions and interests to make sense of their world.
- Naturally occur when infants and toddlers are actively engaged.

### Key Developmental Indicators

- Key developmental indicators (KDIs) help us understand and interpret children's actions and learning experiences.
- Plan to focus on one to two KDIs in each group time.
- Anticipate and observe other KDIs that might emerge as children engage in the experience.

Review the key developmental indicator list in your reading assignments. You'll need it for the next slide!

## Focus on Children's Learning

### Key Developmental Indicators (continued)

#### Key Developmental Indicators

Which KDI stands out to you at first glance? This might be the planned KDI learning experience — what do you anticipate will happen.

Now, take a closer look. What other types of learning could be occurring?



## Focus on Children's Learning

### Key Developmental Indicators (continued)

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## Focus on Children's Learning

### Key Developmental Indicators (continued)

#### Key Developmental Indicators

Which KDI stands out to you at first glance? This might be the planned KDI learning experience — what do you anticipate will happen.

Now, take a closer look. What other types of learning could be occurring?



## Focus on Children's Learning Key Developmental Indicators (continued)

### Key Developmental Indicators

Recognizing all the learning that occurs helps us:

- Pay close attention to children's abilities
- Understand what interests children.
- Plan future experiences that will challenge and engage children.
- Articulate to parents what their children are learning during group times with materials.



# Remember:

## Keep group times flexible!

- Children may wander in and out of group times.
- Allow children to try out new ideas that may be different than what you planned.
- Bring out backup materials as needed.
- Follow children's lead and allow group times to end when children's attention span begins to wane.
- Group times may occur spontaneously in children's play throughout the day.



# When Children Aimlessly Wander

Some reasons children may struggle to engage in group times:

- The child might need to attend to their own personal needs.
- The child might not be interested in the materials used in the group time.
- The child may be uncomfortable in a group.
- The group time might be too long for the child.
- The child might be distracted.

See this week's reading assignment to find strategies for responding to children wandering in and out of group

Group times are a come-and-go situation and children should not be forced to stay during group time. However, as children get older, they will engage with materials in more than an exploratory way, causing them to be more likely to stay with the materials and group times for longer periods of time.

# Spontaneous Group Times

Although group times with materials are planned experiences for certain times of the day, ensuring children have time to eat and rest, there are times when group times may occur more spontaneously.

## Examples:

- During choice time, you and another child are pouring water in and out of cups at the water table. A few other children join you. Toddlers fill and dump water using the cups.
- While early nappers are sleeping, you begin reading a story to one child and then are joined by several other children.
- During outside time, you and another child are chasing each other around the playground. A couple of other children join you, spontaneously creating an activity in which you are chasing the toddlers around the playground making monster growls.

Because of children's tendency to wander in and out of group times or become distracted easily, here are some other times to offer the planned group time experience:

- At dropoff while children are trickling in
- Before naptime while early nappers have already fallen asleep
- After naptime while late nappers are still sleeping
- At pickup while children stagger leaving at different times

Keep in mind that the social element of shared experiences also occurs naturally when children use similar materials together or side by side during choice time and outside time.

# A Peek Ahead

## Next week you will explore:

- Tips for planning group times with materials
- Format of group times with materials
- Sources of ideas for group times with materials

