

# Group Times With Materials

*For Infants and Toddlers*

# Week 3 Learning Unit

## *Planning Group Times With Materials*



# Week 3 Learning Unit Topics

## Planning Group Times With Materials

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



# Remember:

## Group Times = Planned Teacher-Initiated Experiences

- The caregiver plans activities based on children's interests and 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 can be spontaneous and occur throughout the day.



# Tips for Planning Group Times With Materials

**Think about your children's interests and abilities.**

- Plan a group experience around:
  - New materials or actions
  - Favorite materials or actions
  - Key developmental indicators.
- Anticipate key developmental indicators you might observe.
- Follow the format for developing a plan for group times with materials.

Keep in mind each child's family culture and traditions as you plan for their individual learning.



# Group Times With Materials Format

**Before the Group Time**

**Beginning — Opening Statement**

**Middle — Supporting  
Children's Learning**

**End — Follow Children's  
Cues To Transition**



## Group Times With Materials Format (continued)

### Before the Group Time

- Use the group time planning form to plan what you will do for group time ahead of time.
- Identify the originating idea, possible key developmental indicators/COR items, and materials and backup materials needed.
- Plan for the beginning, middle, and end of the experience.
- Gather your materials.



## Group Times With Materials Format (continued)

### Toddler Group Times With Materials Planning Form

<b>Originating Idea</b> (KDI; COR)			
<b>Materials</b> <i>Back-up Materials</i>			
<b>Beginning</b> <i>Opening statement</i>			
<b>Middle</b> <i>What children will do according to their development?</i>	Earlier	Middle	Later
<i>How will you scaffold children at different developmental levels?</i>			
<b>End</b> (Warning and transition to next part of the routine)			
<b>Follow-up Ideas</b>			

## Group Times With Materials Format (continued)

### Beginning — Opening Statement

Begin with an opening statement that simply describes the materials or gives the children an open-ended idea to get started. (Choose only one way to begin):

- Describe the materials
- Connect the materials to the children's previous play
- Tell a short, open-ended story connected to the materials
- Focus on a content area (KDI/COR)



## Group Times With Materials Format (continued)

### Examples of Opening Statements

- Describe materials
  - “In your baskets, you will find some materials that come from outside. What do you think you will do with them?”
- Connect the materials to the children’s previous play
  - “Yesterday, Delano and Jayden were racing cars down the ramps. Today we are going to the block area to use cars and ramps.”
- Tell a short, open-ended story connected to the materials
  - “Once there were these lonely rocks sitting outside with no one to play with. One day there was a child who came along and picked them up and started to play with them. In your tub are some rocks that are hiding from you. See if you can find them and help them not be lonely anymore.”
- Focus on a content area (KDI/COR)
  - Tap on your pot with a wooden spoon and then with a whisk. “What did you hear? In your box are some materials that you can make sounds with. I wonder what sounds you will make with your materials?”

## Group Times With Materials Format (continued)

### Middle — Supporting Children's Learning

#### Interaction strategies:

- Participate at the children's level.
- Allow children to use materials in their own way.
- Watch what individual children do with the materials.
- Use materials in the same way children are using them.
- Bring out backup materials as needed.

#### Interaction Strategies That Support Active Learning:

- Respect children's choices and ideas.
- Give children time to observe and interact.
- Watch and listen to children's cues and language.
- Interpret children's actions and language.
- Talk with children about what they are doing.
- Scaffold children's learning.

#### More on Scaffolding Children's Learning in Week 4!

Reflect on your own interaction with each child. How are you supporting their culture, language, and family traditions?

## Group Times With Materials Format (continued)

### End — Follow Children's Cues To Transition

- Let children's actions guide you as you bring group time to an end.
- Give toddlers a warning that the transition is coming.
- Have a simple planned way of cleaning up so children can help put materials away while moving on to the next activity.
- Plan an active way to transition children gradually at their pace.



### Example transition statements:

- “Try one more idea with your blocks and then we’re going to get ready for snack.”
- “Place your materials back in basket then head to the sink to wash our hands.”

# Four Sources of Ideas for Planning Group Times With Materials

- Children's interest and abilities
- Introduce new materials or favorite materials
- Incorporate the Key Developmental Indicators (KDIs) and/or COR Advantage items
- Events currently meaningful to children

Think about children's individual patterns of engagement to determine appropriate planning for group time with materials experiences (e.g., a new child may be adjusting to the classroom, a child's individual temperament may influence their engagement with materials, a child's home language may influence their understanding, a child's home culture may effect their response, etc.).



## Four Sources of Ideas for Planning Group Times With Materials (continued)

### 1. Children's interests and abilities

- During different parts of the day, watch how children like to play (e.g., messy play, lining up or sorting objects, pretending, filling and dumping, babbling, one or two words, etc.).
- Notice what children choose to play with: blocks, animals, trucks, balls, baby dolls — open-ended materials.
- Examples of experiences throughout the day that lend themselves to group time with materials include dumping and filling at the sand and water table, collecting objects outside, pretending to eat in the house area, and picking up food with fingers and thumbs during snacktime.



*The children had gone on a nature walk and collected rocks. The teacher planned a group time on painting the rocks they collected.*

## Four Sources of Ideas for Planning Group Times With Materials *(continued)*

### 2. Introduce New Materials or Favorite Materials

- Introduce materials children haven't used before.
- Revisit favorite materials.
- Re-introduce materials that are in the room environment but haven't been used in a while.
- Combine familiar materials in new ways.
- Incorporate new materials with familiar materials.



*These children are always engaged in painting so the teacher decided to introduce them to new painting materials.*

## Four Sources of Ideas for Planning Group Times With Materials (continued)

### 3. Incorporate the Key Developmental Indicators (KDIs) and/or COR Advantage items

- Plan experiences to support a specific KDI/COR item (learning goals).
- Introduce the experience but accept when children engage in a different type of learning.
- Common KDI domains observed during group times with materials:
  - Cognitive Development
  - Creative Arts
  - Approaches to Learning



*In this spontaneous group time the teacher focuses on exploring print with the children.*

## Four Sources of Ideas for Planning Group Times With Materials *(continued)*

### 4. Events currently meaningful to children

Consider home, seasonal, or local events that children experience. Plan group times connected to *children's* understanding of and experience with these events.

- **Seasonal holidays or special events**
  - Unwrapping objects (gift exchange)
  - Tasting and exploring seasonal vegetables (harvesting, food-based celebrations)
- **Walks/Field Trips** (for older toddlers)
  - Nature collage
- **Family and Local Traditions**
  - Washing babies (new brother or sister)
  - Exploring art materials (community art fair)



*A few families are farmers and they were harvesting hay and corn. The teachers decided to plan a group time using corn and hay with animals in the sand and water table.*

# A Peek Ahead

## Next week you will explore:

- Scaffolding for early, middle, and later development
- Anecdotes and assessment
- Using children's engagement for future planning
- Follow up: Sharing ideas with families, adding materials to the classroom

