

Group / Mat Time



Group time learning experiences are often used by Educators as an anchor point in the day for bringing children together and creating a sense of community amongst the children. Whether it is a whole group time or smaller group time it is important for Educators to preplan and ensure there is purpose to the group learning.

When planning group learning experiences Educators may benefit from asking themselves a few questions.

- What is the value of the content for the children?
- Does the content and expectations of group time meet the needs of every child?
- What are the expectations of the children and how are these explained / shown/ taught to them?
- Does every child need to attend? Why? Are there other options for those children that find group times too much?
- Preparation is key.
- Ensure that you have adequate space for your group time. This may involve moving some furniture and equipment away that may be distracting for the children's learning.
- Discuss with Co-Educators who will be on the floor supporting the children throughout the learning time.
- Where will the children sit e.g., scattered on floor, sitting around the perimeter, on small mats to designate personal space for each child, coloured tape on floor in a semi-circle.
- If separate spaces are needed for individual children, then make sure these are set up and ready beforehand. Sensory cushion, fiddle toys, sensory items for sitting etc. need to be easily accessible.
- Ensure you have all your resources collected and ready to use before group time. Have enough resources for each child to participate. If using Technology, have it set up and ready to go.

Running the Group Time.

- Be mindful of the capacity of the children in the group to sit and attend, especially if a multi age group.
- Plan movement into group times – finger rhymes, action songs/rhymes.
- Plan gathering and finishing songs/routines (short and part of routine).
- Successful group times can occur indoors and outdoors with smaller groups. Think creatively about how to offer these learning times.
- Plan a shorter group time if needed to ensure engagement.
- Use visuals to reinforce your teaching/story telling.
- Props like puppets, figurines, visuals, pictures, or posters can create more active visual engagement.

Use your voice and tone to engage the children.

- Make it FUN! The more fun you are having the more fun the children are likely to have too.
- Be flexible. If children are struggling to attend, then adapt your approach – e.g., switch to talking about the pictures in a story rather than just reading the text.
- If children are showing signs of tiredness, they may benefit from a short movement rhyme or song.
- Have a Plan B – if something is not working, change to something else or finish sooner than planned.

Your VOICE is one of your greatest assets as an Educator.

Your tone, intonation, and the words you choose to speak have significant impact in every moment. Use your voice as an effective tool with every child you support.

Pyramid Model Checklist

- These checklist points encourage individual self-reflection and provide the opportunity for discussion between classroom teacher, families and the PSFO.
- Post behaviour expectations and regularly review during large group instruction.
- Provide instruction on posted behaviour expectations to individual children, during play, and group activities.
- Give specific feedback on appropriate child behaviour linking back to the posted behaviour expectations.
- Facilitate conversations with children to think about the behaviour expectations and why they are important for them and the class.
- Plan both large and small group activities throughout each day.
- Comment positively and descriptively on children's engagement.

Reflection

How can we make group learning times most effective & inclusive at our service?

What specific changes can we make to group learning times (small or large group) to ensure it is effective and enjoyable for all children involved?

Individual Goals.

Further Reading:

[Tip-Sheet-2-Learning-in-a-Large-Group.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](#)

[Amplify! is the essential early and middle childhood education and care story. - CELA Group-Times-and-Transitions-Presentation.pptx \(live.com\)](#)