

One Page Resource: Small Groups



*You can discover
more about a
person in an hour of
play than in a year
of conversation.
~ Plato*

Tips to Keep in Mind:

- Activities planned should be broad enough so that each child can participate and be successful at his/her own level
- Activities are in depth enough to keep children interested for 10-15 minutes
- Small ratios allow for large amounts of individualized attention



Why have small group activities?

Research in the early childhood field has indicated how important the teacher-child relationship is as an indicator of quality. Small groups allow teachers to build and support a relationship with each child. Not to mention the opportunity to model social and problem-solving strategies.

Teachers should reflect on what small group activities would work with different children. Just like not all children enjoy the block area not all children are going to like playing a board game. However, maybe a small group activity could be sitting round the play dough table, if that is what a child enjoys most.

Small groups should have a clear purpose. This time could be used to develop or support a skill, or it could be for safety reasons that a small group is best. Teachers should always be sensitive to the children's limits. However, small groups can support the development of attention spans.

Required or Optional?

Small groups can be done a variety of ways. As a teaching team you need to work together to find which way is going to work best for your classroom and your group of children.

If your teaching team decides to do small group during self-selection this gives the children the opportunity to choose whether or not they would like to participate in the activity.

If done this way the teacher can lead the Small group providing teacher supports as necessary and engaging with the children, on an in-depth level, while the other teacher in the room engages with the students participating in self-selection in the play areas.

If your teaching team decides to dedicate a specific part of the day to small group the children can be divided into 2 or 3 groups with one teacher leading each activity. You may also dedicate one group to work independently on an activity.

For an effective small group, teacher student ratio should be maximized to 1:6

Some options for small group work...

Read or act out a story with the children using...

- Flannel board
- Puppets
- Drawing board
- Or your own idea!

Provide an art experience...

- Exploring clay/play dough
- A project related to the child's interests
- Open-ended material exploration and creation

Play games with teacher supports...

- Board game
- Puzzles
- Dramatic Play
- Manipulatives (sorting, classifying)

Create a science/sensory experience...

- Make play dough
- Cooking activity
- Sensory exploration (touch, taste, smell, sight, hearing)