

PROMOTING SOCIAL SKILLS IN THE TIME OF SOCIAL DISTANCING: WHOLE GROUP ACTIVITIES

WHY WHOLE GROUP IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

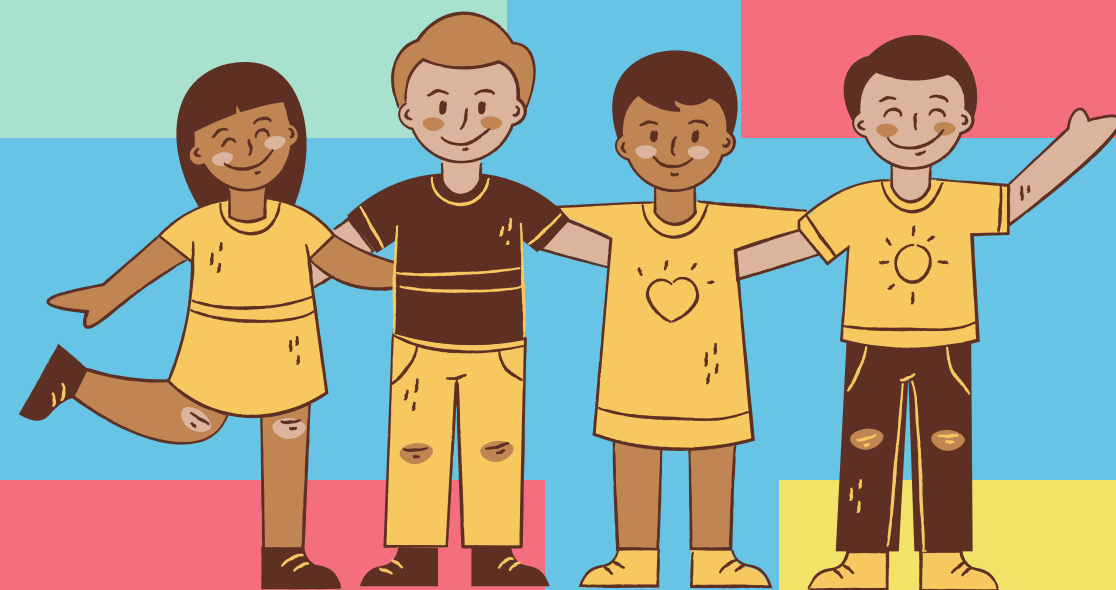
Whole group activities (e.g., circle time) are when all of the children and teachers come together and share the same learning experience. Whole group activities can help build a sense of community in the classroom by bringing children and adults together. Whole group activities should be used when small groups are not an option. If the activity can be modified and used in small groups, consider this to ensure instruction is more individualized based on children's needs.



**BEST
PRACTICES**

**SETTING UP
WHOLE GROUP**

**VARIED
ACTIVITIES**



**SAFETY
EXPECTATIONS**

**VISUAL
SUPPORTS**

**SUPPORTING
CHILDREN**

See the pages that follow for tips on structuring whole group activities.

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BEST PRACTICES

What are best practices?

Organize whole group to keep children engaged. Whole group should last no longer than 10 minutes and should include a variety of ways for children to participate.



Activities should be flexible and adaptable. Allow children to choose the activities or the order of activities during whole group meetings to incorporate children's interests and maximize engagement.

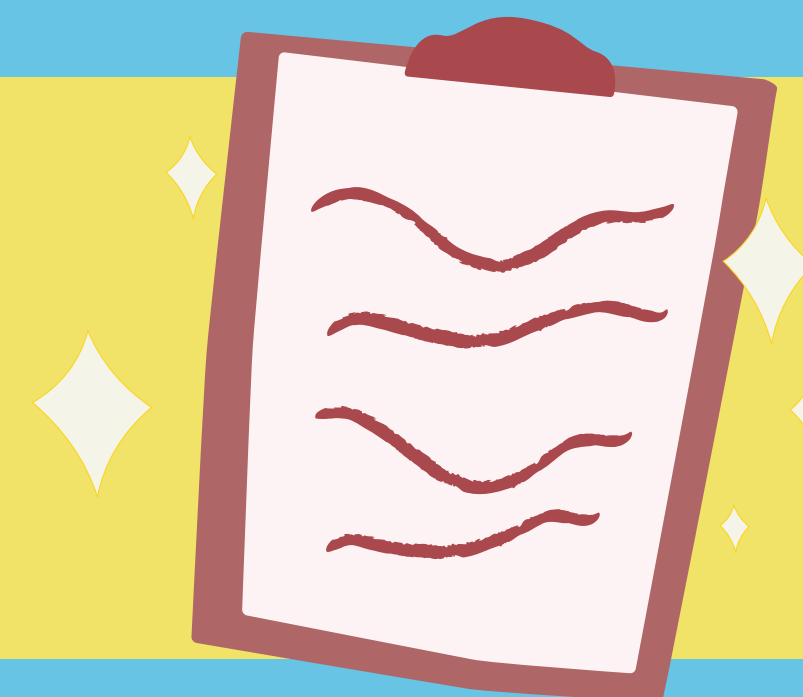


Use this time to provide information that is important for all children to hear. This can include building the classroom community, changes to the schedule, special visitors, and behavior expectations.



Consider these best practices as you adapt whole group activities.

Whole group activities should contain a clear opening to bring the children together, a middle that maximizes engagement, and a closing to help guide the children to the next activity.



(Kostelnik, 2019)

See next page for tips on setting up whole group activities.

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SETTING UP WHOLE GROUP

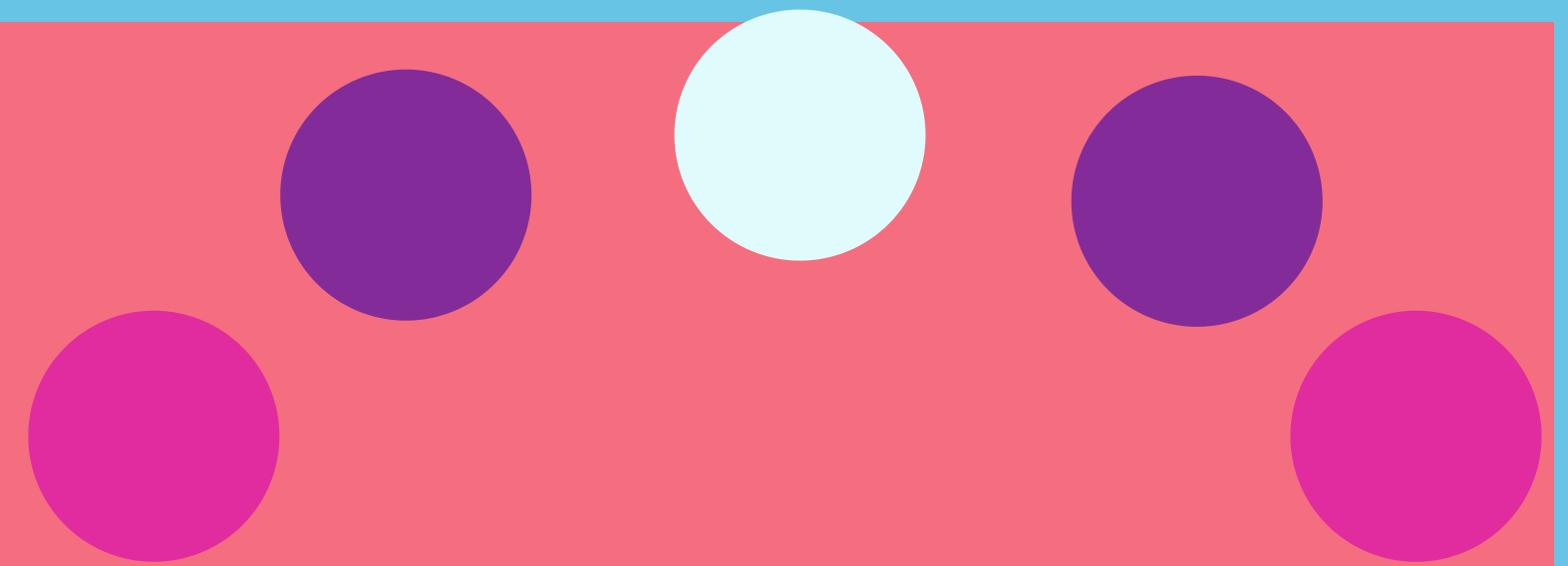
Whole group is intended to bring children together and participate in activities simultaneously.

Here are some ways you may do this while following safety guidelines.

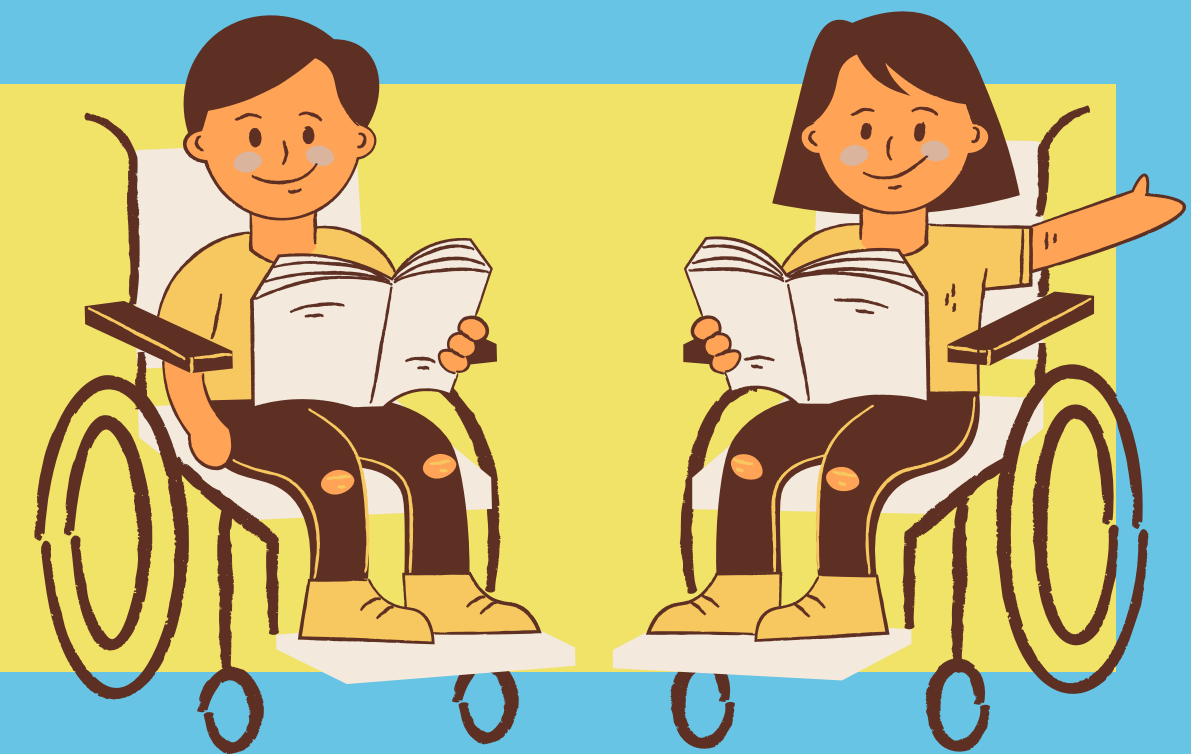
Choose a location of the classroom where children have plenty of room to distance and move around when needed.



Use tape or other markers to help children know where to sit. Make sure the markers are large enough for children to see.



Ensure all children can see you from where you are leading whole group. Adjust your distance as needed to prevent challenging behavior caused by children trying to see what you are doing.



Ensure you have all materials needed for the activities (ex: music, books) prior to starting whole group to decrease the time children spend waiting for an activity.

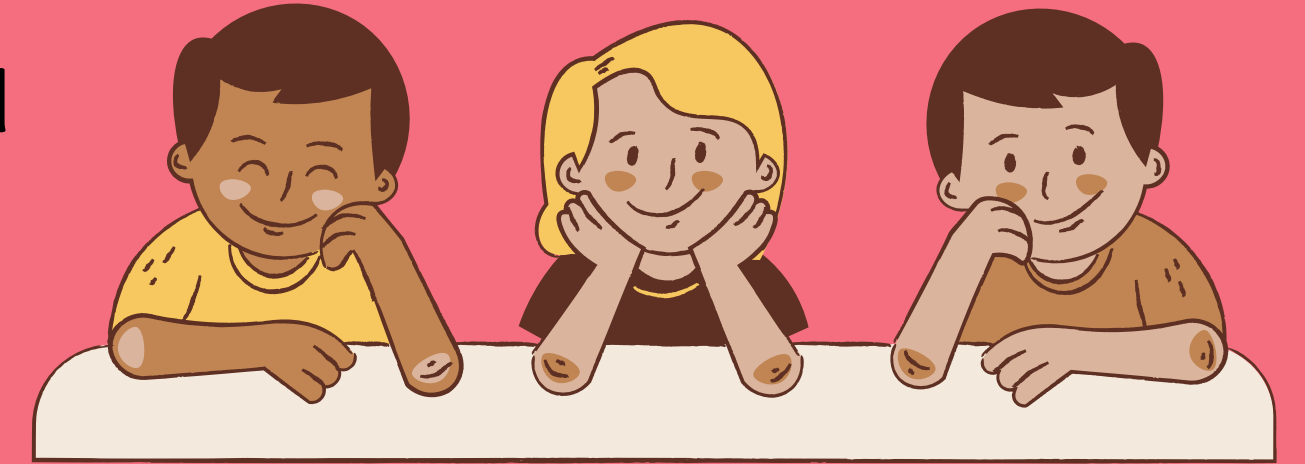


See next page for tips on differentiating instruction in whole group.

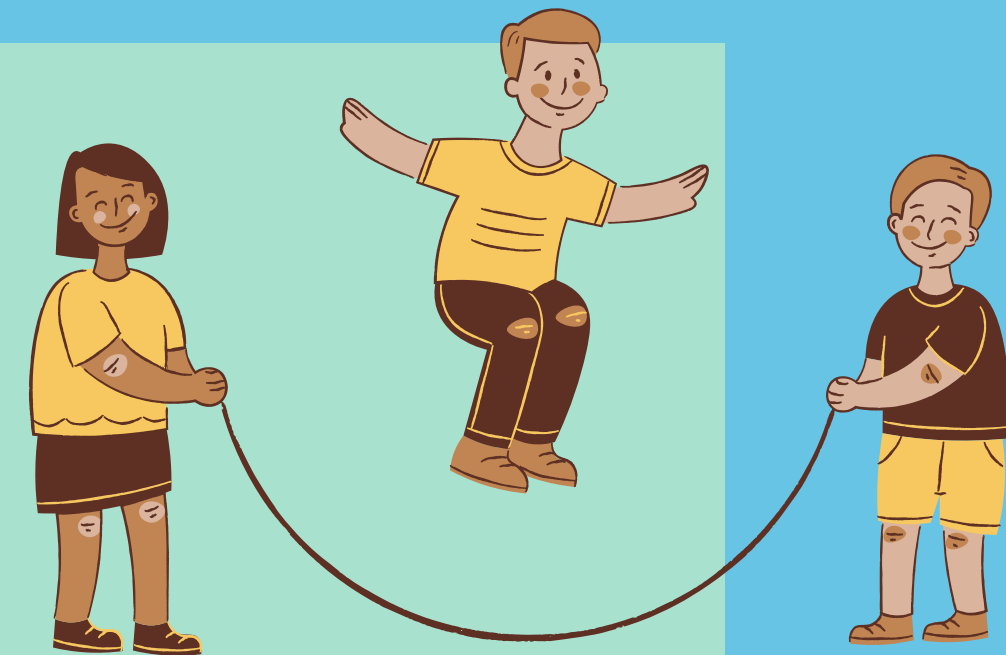
VARIED ACTIVITIES

Varying activities involves incorporating a variety of activities to maximize children's engagement. When planning activities, think about how you can vary the response is required from children (ex: movement, singing, answering questions).

Select activities that meet curricular goals and are fully accessible to all children. If the activity cannot be modified to meet the needs of all children, consider using that activity only in small groups or individual instruction.



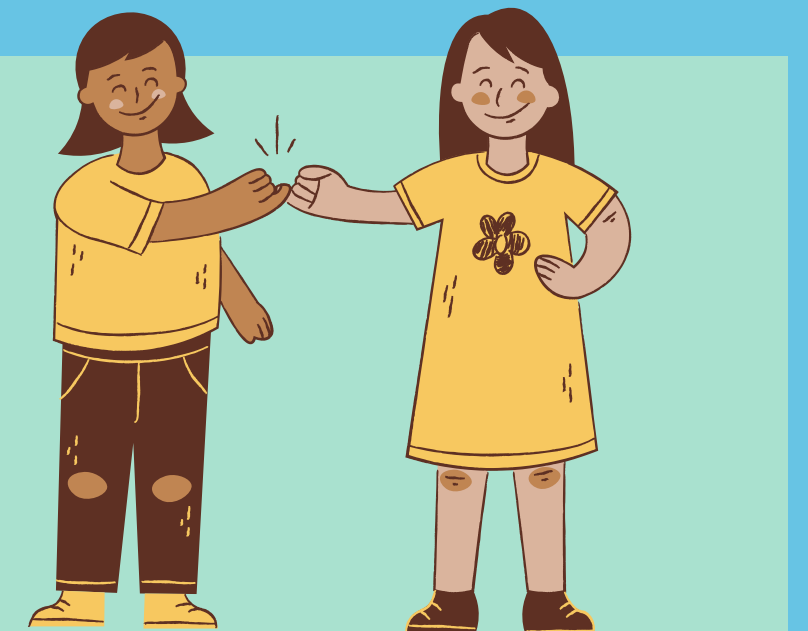
Include activities that involve active participation from the children (ex: songs, dances, games). Repeat these regularly so children become familiar and comfortable with them. Incorporate choice by encouraging children to choose the activity.



If you offer more than one activity in whole group, alternate activities that require children to be still (ex: reading a book) with activities that involve movement so children are not expected to sit for the entire whole group activity.



Review children's accomplishments by providing positive descriptive feedback for behaviors that meet the classroom behavior expectations. Incorporate non-contingent positive attention OFTEN to build positive relationships with children.



See next page for tips on safety expectations in whole group activities.

SAFETY EXPECTATIONS

Build safety expectations into daily behavior expectations (ex: "be safe" now includes staying 'two arms' away from your friend). Provide frequent reminders of expectations and how to engage in expected behaviors.

Use whole group to review expectations. Include examples, non-examples, and modeling to help children understand the new expectations and how they apply to different activities (i.e., rules).



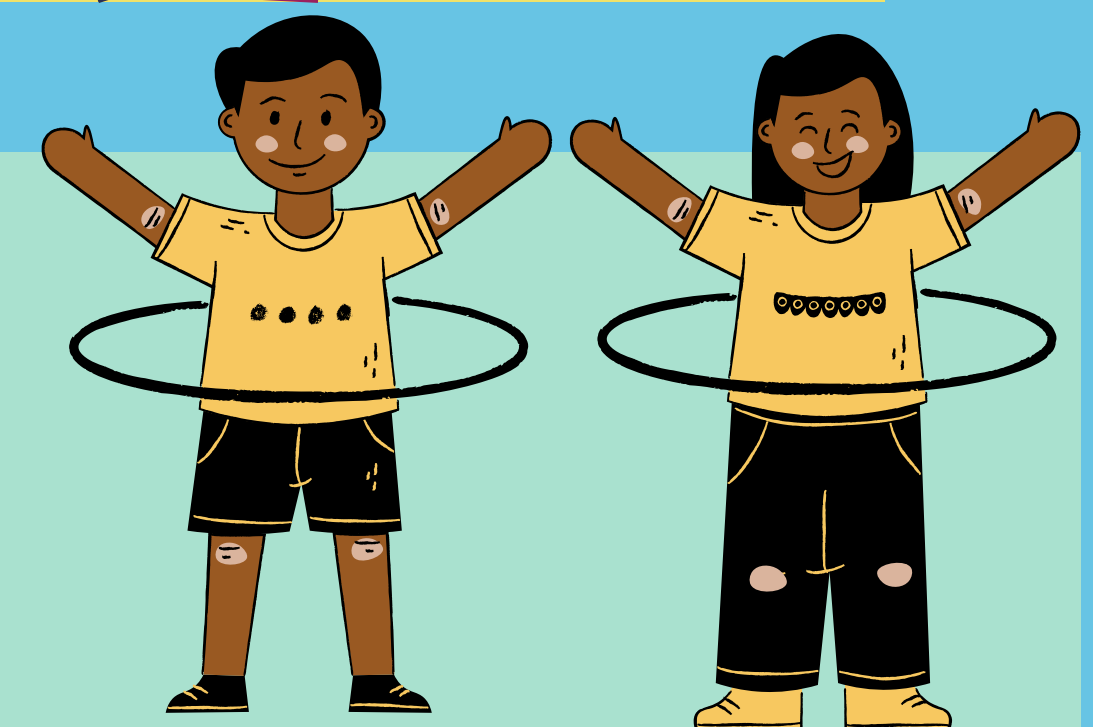
Give positive descriptive feedback and reinforcement (ex: thumbs up, air high fives) often for following safety expectations in whole group.



If you have "helpers" or "jobs," add a new "safety patrol" job. This person can remind the class of the expectations.



Avoid doing activities that involve passing objects between children. When objects are needed in activities, ensure these items are placed in a germ bucket for later sanitation.



VISUAL SUPPORTS

Incorporate visuals to remind children of the schedule and expectations. Important visuals include safety expectations and order of whole group activities.



Ensure visuals are large enough that children can see from where they are. Consider posting important visuals in multiple locations so all children can see them. Some children may need individualized visual supports.



Show children what a safe distance looks like (use a yard stick or other measurable, accessible object to teach and remind children of safe distances).



Review the whole group activity schedule after each activity so children know exactly what is coming next. Remember, limit activities to a total duration of 10 minutes for whole group.



Visuals can be helpful tools to promote understanding and remind children of what's next. In order to be effective, you must teach, review, and refer to the visuals often.

See next page for tips on supporting students in whole group activities.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN

Teachers can support children's learning in whole group by encouraging participation.

Give frequent positive attention and positive descriptive feedback often. Use this time to nurture positive relationships with children.

Give children frequent positive attention, regardless of behavior. This helps build positive, nurturing relationships.



Avoid using "No, Stop, Don't" language. Instead, tell children what they should do.



Ensure all children are able to participate in the activities. Plan for activity adaptations based on children's strengths and needs.



Clearly communicate with other adults in the room to ensure everyone knows what they should be doing to support children's learning during whole group.



See next page for additional resources.

RESOURCES

BUILDING POSITIVE CHILD-
TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS



EXPRESSING WARMTH AND
AFFECTION TO CHILDREN

ACKNOWLEDGING
CHILDREN'S POSITIVE
BEHAVIORS



SUPPORTING FAMILIES,
EDUCATORS, AND CHILDREN
WITH DISABILITIES

