

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

WHY SMALL GROUPS ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Small groups are a key time to implement instruction and meet goals for learning. Well-planned small groups can be an opportunity to build social and academic skills. They can also be a place to teach classroom rules and expectations. Small groups can be flexible to each child's needs, allowing teachers to efficiently differentiate instruction.



**BEST
PRACTICES**

**CLASSROOM
CONNECTIONS**



**SAFE SMALL
GROUPS**

**ADAPTING SMALL
GROUP
LEARNING**

**SUPPORTING ALL
CHILDREN**



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

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BEST PRACTICES

What are best practices?

Small group activities should be well-planned and organized. Have all materials prepared beforehand to minimize wait time.



Consider these best practices as you adapt small group activities.

Best practices guide practitioners by considering what we know about how children develop and learn; strengths, needs, and interests of individual children; and social and cultural contexts in which children live.

Lesson plans should include the domain, activity, goal, objective, content, materials, procedures, adaptations, extensions, and evaluation. Also include how to incorporate IEP goals and objectives.



Set goals for children's learning and evaluate yourself and the adults implementing small groups for effective teaching practices. Include specific data collection for IEP/IFSP goals.



Check out the [DEC Recommended Practices](#) for more classroom considerations.

Include activities that span across domains and meet individual learning needs. Examples of domains include: social-emotional, literacy, math, science, and motor.



(Kostelnik, 2019)

See next page for tips on how to connect small group instruction to the rest of the classroom.

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CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Use visuals to support learning. They can be used to remind children of behavior expectations, to review daily or group schedule, or to learn new things



Small groups can be used to teach, extend, and individualize classroom instruction.

Review behavior and safety expectations when small group begins. Include examples, non-examples, and modeling to help children understand the new expectations.



Select activities that meet curricular goals while being mindful of child preference and including activities that involve active participation from the children (ex: songs, dances, games)



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



SAFE SMALL GROUPS

Use small groups as an alternative to whole group activities by distancing children and teaching a few at a time.



Set up the physical space with markers or chairs for children to sit distanced. Consider plexiglass dividers or body orientation (where children are facing) for activities in which children are close to each other.



Use nonverbal and verbal cues to let children know what you are thinking and doing. (ex: thumbs up and saying "I am smiling because I am happy you all did so well following expectations today!")



Provide materials for each group to minimize sharing of materials.

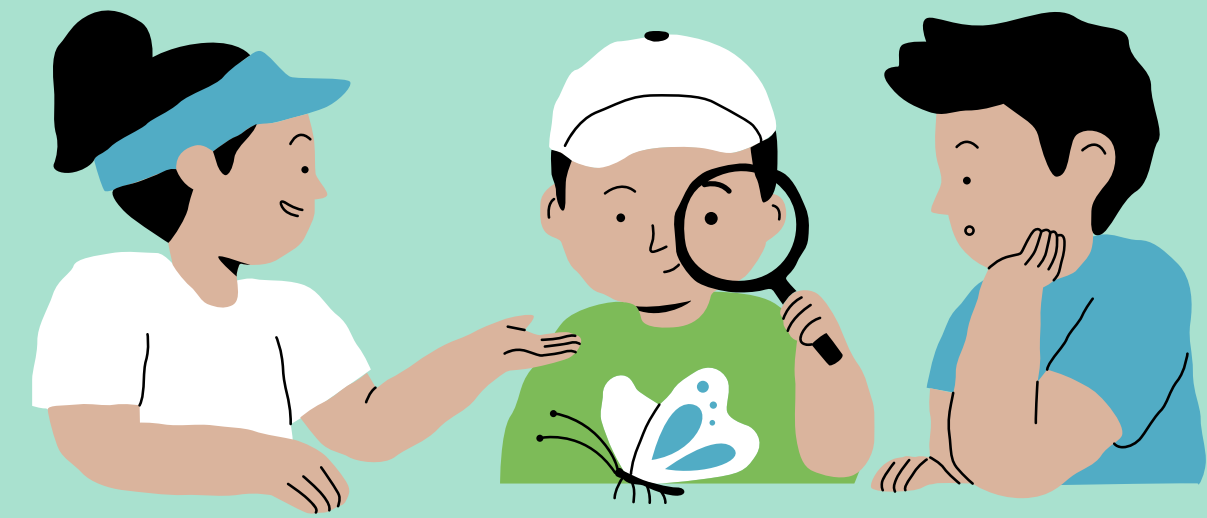


Small groups are a great time for explicit instruction to teach kids new skills. Here are some ways you can adapt small group activities while following current physical distancing guidelines..

See next page for tips on adapting small groups.

ADAPTING SMALL GROUP LEARNING

Consider the strengths and needs of the learners when arranging groups. More advanced learners may be good models for other students, while pairing learners with similar abilities will make instruction more cohesive.



Curriculum modifications are used when children show interest in an activity but are not able to fully participate. Pre-plan these adaptations and think about embedding IEP/IFSP goals into your activities.



Adaptations include: modifying materials, simplifying or breaking down activities, incorporating child preferences, providing adult assistance, teaching peers to support each other, and environmental arrangements.



Use "invisible support" to structure activities and increase engagement. This can be arranging how children take turns, doing fun activities after difficult ones, balancing teacher directed and child directed activities, and capitalizing on typically occurring opportunities to support children.



(Sandall et al., 2019)

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

SUPPORTING CHILDREN

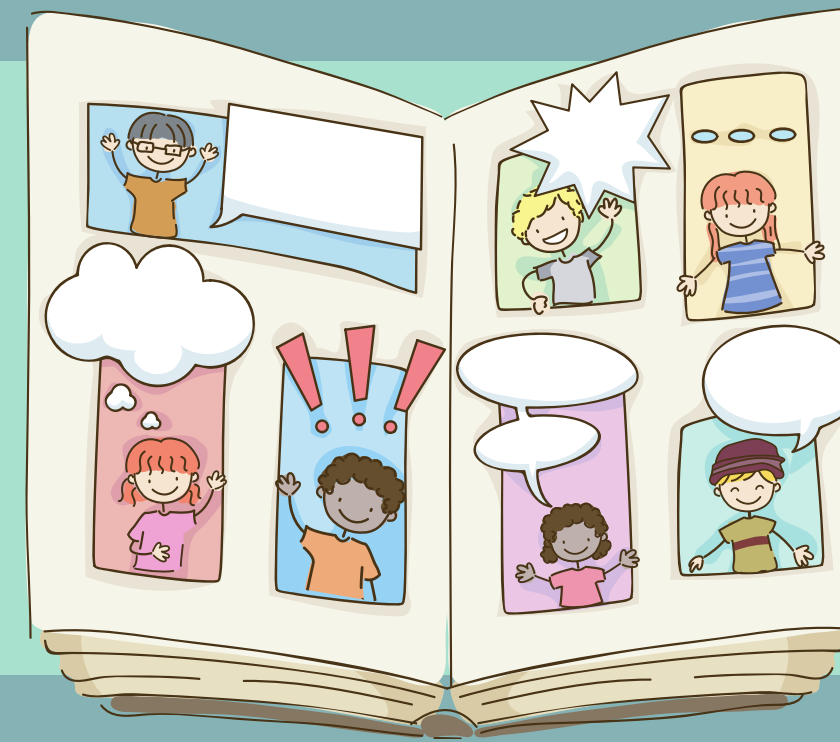
Teachers should support children's learning in small group by encouraging participation.

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 and give positive descriptive feedback.



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



Clearly communicate with other adults in the room so that everyone is clear what their role is and how they are supporting children's learning during small groups.



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

