

Making group time about the children

Group time has been around as a concept for many years with lots of different interpretations and implementations in different services. These points will help you reflect on your use of group time.



Learning is learning

Children learn in a range of different ways and through a range of different experiences. Sometimes we stop child-directed and interest based small group learning to do group time just because it is on the routine. This may not be maximising children's learning opportunities and may actually restrict their learning.



Teaching doesn't mean leading

Sometimes when conducting group time we feel the need to sit on a big chair and assert ourselves as the dominant leader of the learning. Children can learn more effectively when the lesson is conducted with them, instead of at them. Consider where you position yourself and how the children see their role in the learning.



Interests = interested

The more children's interest are reflected in the content the more they are likely to engage with the experience. This is most likely to happen when children have a voice during the group time and can share their ideas and discuss their own thoughts about a topic. You may not finish the set topic because another is more interesting to the children, just remember, learning is learning.



Children all learn differently

Group time is often about one style of teaching and the children are expected to keep up and remain focused. This approach does not support inclusive practices nor does it support compliance around each child's learning opportunities being maximised. Consider how you teach the content and the size of the group.



Consider timings

It can be an interesting experience to time how much of the day children spend sitting down under the instruction of an adult. We may think children sit down for a 10 minute group time but by the time they are gathered, then there is a discussion, then group time, then waiting for the next activity, then transitions the time period may be much more like 30-40 minutes. Which is 30-40 minutes the children may not be engaged in child-directed learning.