



Tips for Tots



Tip #4: Encourage Social Development Through Circle Time

Strategies

Did you know?

Infant/Toddler:

Circle time can be a fun time to bond with infants and toddlers. It allows time during the day for the children to connect with each other and their caregivers. Circle time encourages listening, talking, and sharing among the children and modeling opportunities for the teacher. Also, it encourages the development of social skills by providing daily, structured social interactions. Various circle time activities give the children opportunities to enhance their language and gross motor skills.

Preschool:

Circle time is a wonderful opportunity to share short and meaningful learning experiences with preschoolers. Circle time promotes many key areas of development for children including: social-emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development. Circle time allows children to share their thoughts and ideas with classmates. Children also get to practice turn taking, learn respect for others opinions, and understand the need for rules. It helps children to prepare for kindergarten activities.

Resources:

- Preschool Classroom Management-150 Teacher-Tested Techniques by Laverne Warner & Sharon Anne Lynch (2004),
- The Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)-<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu>.
- Practical Solutions to Practically Every Problem by Steffen Saifer (2003).

Infant/Toddler:

- Circle time should be very short. Plan for a few minutes to ten minutes depending on children's ages and attention spans. Remember, not all children may be ready or willing to participate in circle time activities. Give them other options such as: looking at books, doing a puzzle, or playing quietly.
- Provide opportunities for children to sing, dance, and move. Teach them finger plays and simple poems.
- Plan lots of activities that match their interests. For example, use their favorite songs or stories.
- Attempt to conduct circle time daily to help the children learn the classroom routine. Say a certain poem or sing a song so the children will know when it is time to go to circle time.
- Be prepared for circle time. Select the activities, songs, or books ahead of time, to minimize the transition time and hold the children's attention.
- Conduct circle time in an area with plenty of space for the children to move around safely.
- Use visual boundaries to show children where to sit -- place a throw blanket on the floor or use individual carpet shapes.

Preschool:

- Circle time should be realistic/age-appropriate and last only as long as the children are engaged (15 to 20 minutes).
- If the children are having difficulties paying attention, it is okay to change an activity or to end circle early.
- If space or wait time is a concern, conduct 2 smaller groups.
- Arrange the environment to promote positive behavior. Use carpet remnants, pictures of children, shapes, etc. to designate seating spaces for the children.
- Develop a signal that calls children together for circle time (play or sing a special song or use a certain puppet).
- Follow the same circle time pattern daily so children can learn the routine.
- Use visuals to help children learn circle time expectations (i.e., social stories or pictures of children following the rules- -sitting, listening ears, and looking at the teacher).
- To help hold children's attention, include songs, finger plays, movement activities, etc. Allow children to participate in the circle time discussion and follow their lead as much as possible.

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