

Hello Everybody,

2am/3am/3pm 12-12-13

Our group times are pretty lively this year! We're singing up a storm, sharing fingerplays, and one group even had a lively discussion during which almost everybody raised their hand and had something to contribute.

Often, just making the effort to sit together is a challenge for kids this young. Group time is one of the only times of the day when we expect our whole group to do the same thing at the same time. At group time children don't just follow their own interests, but are asked to adjust their ideas and consider other points of view. This is a real eye-opener for children who are so egocentric. Sitting together on the rug provides a visual reminder about the number of children in the group and the fact that each child is a part of that group. Waiting for a turn, following somebody else's idea, hearing different ways of doing things, and seeing that there are ideas other than your own are all some of the benefits of group time.

Lucky for us, this year our classes are finding their way to the rug, settling in to their places with a minimal amount of fuss, and really seem to enjoy participating. There are a lot of kids who like to sing and do fingerplays, and we've expanded into songs that offer a chance for kids to contribute a part. They like to suggest places to stick the Icky-Sticky Bubblegum, or put something into the Bubbling Hot Soup, and these are some ways kids contribute to the group experience, and have a chance to hear each other's voices.

Eventually, as kids can sit for longer periods, group time can provide a forum where teachers or kids can bring ideas to the group and discuss them. It's also a great place to demonstrate new activities, discuss classroom dilemmas, or vote to make group decisions. Although teachers keep things simple at first, we like to offer kids whatever choices we can, and encourage them to begin to make suggestions.

Since some of you asked us during conferences about words to the songs, we've included a few of them here. It's hard to reconstruct them without knowing the tune, but maybe this will help if your child is trying to sing at home.

Here is a favorite fingerplay, in which the five fingers of one hand become the 'pumpkins' sitting on the fence formed by your other hand. When the witch comes along, fly your fence hand over to the pumpkins, and pluck one off.

Kids are working hard just to manipulate their hands, to hold up the appropriate number of fingers, and to count down from five to zero. They all really love when the witch cries at the end – and some are offering suggestions, like, "Get more pumpkins!" or, "She could have apple pies."

FIVE ORANGE PUMPKINS

Five orange pumpkins sitting on the fence.

The witch comes flying by.
"Hee, hee, hee, I'll take one home
to make some pumpkin pie."
(countdown until none left)
No more pumpkins sitting on the fence
The witch comes flying by.
"Boo, hoo, hoo, What shall I do?
I'll have no pumpkin pie."

Another very simple fingerplay kids always love is a classic tale of separation and reuniting.

THE LITTLE FISH

When I was a little fish, a little fish, a little fish....
When I was a little fish, swimming in the water....

(make a fish with finger and thumb of one hand, and swim it around.)
(then, create a bigger fish with all fingers of other hand touching thumb, and swim towards the little fish, connecting for the 'take me home' part)

My Mama came to get me, to get me, to get me
My mama came to get me, and take me home.

(repeat with any other adults until you or your child is finished, and then put palms together and swim both hands away while you sing:

Swim away, swim away, all day long.

ICKY STICKY BUBBLEGUM

Icky sticky, icky sticky bubblegum, bubblegum, bubblegum
Icky sticky, icky sticky bubblegum
Makes my hands stick to my _____ (insert any place/body part/object)
And I pull it, and I pull it, and I pull it away! (repeat with other parts)

BUBBLING HOT

(we pretend to get out a big pot, and stir the 'soup')

Bubbling, bubbling, bubbling.....HOT! (clap)
Look to the moon!
And, laugh like a loon. (laugh)
(then, kids suggest items to put into the soup, which we add in turn, saying the item and putting it into the pot)
for instance, if one child says peas and one says sand, we say:

Peas and Sand!
Peas and Sand!
Peas and Sand!
Bubbling, bubbling, bubbling.....HOT!

(silly things and real foods are equally popular additions to our soups!)

THE TREE IN THE VALLEY

There was a tree, a very fine tree
As fine a tree as you ever did see
And the tree
Was a-way down in the valley-o.

There was a branch, a very fine branch
As fine a branch as you ever did see
And the branch was on the tree
And the tree
Was a-way down in the valley -o

(Continue adding –
Twig; nest; egg; bird until the song ends up like this:)

There was a bird, a very fine bird
As fine a bird as you ever did see
And the bird was in the egg
And the egg was in the nest
And the nest was on the twig
And the twig was on the branch
And the branch was on the tree
And the tree
Was a-way down in the valley-o.

Our 3pm group had a lot of ideas about this song, and we had a great conversation during group time. One kid suggested adding a leaf to the tree, and then many kids clamored with ideas. We encouraged taking turns so that we could hear all the ideas, and kids really got the hang of raising hands to indicate they wanted to say something, and waiting for their names to be called. Just about everybody in the group had something to add – and almost all were able to attend to each other and listen while kids shared