

**Professional Development Situation: Meeting**

**Skill Focus: Managing Groups during STEM**

**Time Required: 20 minutes**

# STRATEGIES FOR GROUP MANAGEMENT

Participants will identify and try out strategies for positive group management in STEM.

## Agenda

Strategies for Managing Groups—15 minutes

- [Strategies for Managing Groups](#)

Conclusion—5 minutes

## Materials

- Chart paper and markers
- Pens for participants
- One copy of [Strategies for Managing Groups](#) for each participant

## **Before the Session**

- **Read this meeting guide** to become familiar with the content and allow time to personalize the activities to best suit your presentation style. Watch all videos and read informational materials.
  - *Italics indicate text that can be read aloud or emailed to participants.*
- Send a reminder email about the meeting. Determine if any participants require accommodations (sight; hearing; etc).
  - *The next professional development opportunity to enhance our STEM skills will be on DATE at TIME at LOCATION. Our focus for this session will be “Managing Groups during STEM”. Let me know if you require any accommodations to*

*participate in the training. I am happy to answer any questions you have and look forward to seeing you at the workshop. I can be reached at CONTACT INFO.*

- Gather all materials needed for the session.
- Develop a list of possible questions participants might have during the meeting. Create potential responses to be explored through informal conversation. Review any key terms or ideas that may be unclear.

## Session Outline

### Strategies for Managing Groups (15 min)

- Pass out the [Strategies for Managing Groups](#) document. Ask participants to read it with a table partner.
  - *Put a star next to items you think you might try in your setting.*
  - *Note: These are for youth in elementary school. You may need to adapt them for use with older students.*
- Bring everyone back together and ask them to add at least 10 things to the list. Then ask them to look over the items they've starred.

**Management puts youths' learning first. Control puts the teacher's comfort first.**

### Conclusion (5 min)

- Ask participants to set a goal for trying out one of these strategies in their program.
  - *Write your goal down somewhere and share it with an elbow partner. Tell them why you chose the goal and how you feel about trying it out.*
- Thank participants for thinking about the difference between management and control, and encourage them to get in touch with you if they have questions.

## After the Session

- Email the participants:
  - *Thank you for your participation in the recent Click2Science training on "Managing Groups during STEM". I hope you found it useful and applicable to your practice. Consider sharing your thoughts with a co-worker, supervisor, or friend. Please let me know if you have any questions. You can reach me at CONTACT INFO.*

Want to Earn Credit? Click2Science has teamed up with Better Kid Care to provide continuing education units. Check it out at: <http://www.click2sciencepd.org/web-lessons/about>

## Strategies for Managing Groups

### Strategies for Providing Structure

Consider using one or more of the following strategies to provide structure to the environment to support group management.

#### Names in a hat

Put each child's name in a hat. When it comes time for leaders to be chosen or decisions to be made, pull a name out of the hat. Most youth like things to be fair, and using a system for determining whose turn it is to choose or lead appeals to them.

Alternate version—names on popsicle sticks in a can

#### Chart with designated numbers in each area.

Hang a chart in each area of the setting marked for exploration. Allow a certain number of youth for each area. Once the number of youth allowed in an area has met, that area is off limits. Overall, this strategy reduces issues with space and large numbers of youth trying to work together and makes it much easier for them to negotiate all of their ideas.

#### Cloud of ideas

Hang a piece of chart paper that can be used for brainstorming ideas. Since not every idea can be implemented at the same time, save these ideas in the Cloud to review at a later time for possible implementation. Youth often need reassurance that their ideas are not bad, and placing them in the Cloud may preserve them well enough that they are willing to implement someone else's idea first.

#### Democracy

Implement a majority vote of the group to decide what will happen first, next, etc.

#### Project timeline

Create a visual project timeline showing when different experiments or parts of projects will be implemented. This could be taken a step further by also naming youth who are in charge of different parts of the project.

#### Cozy corner

Set aside a space in the room with pillows and soft toys in which youth are allowed to spend alone time. Youth in after school settings often need down time when they do not have to interact with others. Having a designated space for this tells youth it is okay to have alone time and gives them a space to calm down if they are upset.

#### Warnings for transitions

Give reminders of how much time is left before transitioning between activities,

experiences or events. Transitions are difficult for most youth, so reducing the amount of stress around moving from one activity or experience to another can prevent outbursts. Sometimes it can take youth 30 minutes or more to begin to interact or engage with materials, and failing to allot time for them to go deeper in their exploration or asking them without warning to stop what they are doing can cause frustration. If this happens often enough, it could lead to lack of motivation for participation. A good idea for all ages is to give a heads-up warning at 10 minutes and again at 5 minutes to give time for winding down.

### Strategies for Group Gatherings

#### Where is my space

For younger youth: identify spaces for sitting with carpet squares or other markers (colored shapes/letters/numbers) to define individual spaces. For older youth: allow them to self-select whom they sit next to with the understanding if they aren't able to stay on task or have appropriate behavior, they will be moved to another location of the adult's choice.

#### Make use of small fidget toys

For younger youth (and some older youth who have difficulty sitting in a group), provide small fidget toys (soft toys that can be squeezed) available for group gatherings. Youth often have difficulty keeping their hands to themselves during group gatherings, so the fidget toys give them something to do with their hands, enabling them to focus better.

#### Bubbles in

For younger youth, ask them to 'put your bubbles in'—pretend to blow a bubble with your mouth and catch it with cheeks puffed.

#### Catch your answer

When asking questions to the whole group, have youth catch their answers in their hands, then raise their hands to tell the whole group. This prevents youth from blurting their answers, often perceived to be a negative behavior. In truth, they may not be able to hold their answers for the time it takes for others to be get in trouble for blurting, they may give up and avoid answering in the future. By encouraging youth to catch the answer, the adult expects everyone to answer and the noise level to go up, rather than expecting only a few to answer while others are asked, in essence, not to participate.

#### Sit on your pockets

Ask youth to sit on their pockets, indicating a preference for them to sit on their bottoms. Many times, if a game or playful language is included in a directive, youth

are more likely to cooperate than if they hear a harsh tone or the directive feels punitive.

### **Tell your idea to your neighbor**

Asking youth to tell their answer to a neighbor gives an expectation for participation.

This prevents youth from having to wait to their turn to give a response and helps the adult prepare for an increase in noise level.

### **Write down your answer**

Make individual journals, notepads, or pieces of paper with writing utensils available for youth to write down their answers when group questions are asked. This helps prevent wait time for youth and prevents higher noise levels if you are in a space that needs to be quiet.

### **Meeting time**

Utilize larger group gatherings to discuss current issues in the setting. These can be both positive and negative in nature. Encourage youth to talk about what is going well and what needs to be improved. Let them be a part of the problem-solving and solutions to issues that need to be resolved.

### **Agreement chart**

Have an agreement chart posted somewhere so it is easily visible to all in the setting.

Have youth and adults in the setting participate in developing the agreements for the space. At the same time the rules/agreements are developed, create a possible outcome for violating or breaking each rule/agreement. These outcomes/consequences also should be developed with youth and adult input.

## **Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Behavior**

- Move physically closer to the youth.
- Have the child do something motor related (take a walk or be creative—depending on space—can the child jump up and down? Do a somersault? Do a backbend, etc.?).
- Have the child get a drink.
- Have the child take 10 deep breaths.
- Have the child draw a picture and/or write out what happened, how they felt, and what they could do next.
- If the behavior involves more than one child, try using a modified version of Gartrell's Conflict Resolution:
  1. Bring both youth together.
  2. Have each child tell their version of what happened.
  3. Have each child identify how they feel/felt.
  4. Have each child come up with a solution to resolve the problem.

5. Help the youth carry out the solution.

- Have a designated cozy corner where a child can go to be alone to calm down.
- For on-going problems, talk with the parents/guardians to discuss making a behavior plan.
  - A behavior plan should include short and long term goals with specific things the youth is expected to do. A rewards chart or box of items to choose from could be used to help reinforce positive behavior when the child reaches goals.