

Participates in Group Activities

What does “Participates in Group Activities” mean?

This skill is about a child contributing to a large-group activity, such as when the teacher reads a story to the whole class during Read Aloud time. A child that shows this skill is able to engage in the activity and joins in when the group is asked to do something. For example, when the teacher is reading to the whole class and asks a question about the book, a child who participates raises their hand and offers an answer to the question. When children take part in group activities, they learn from others and help others learn. This skill is important because it shows that a child is developing confidence in large-group settings.

TIPS for TEACHERS

How can I explain this skill to children?

Let children know that everyone has a voice and deserves to be heard. Sometimes when you are around a lot of people, your voice can get lost. It can be hard or scary to speak up when there are so many other voices. But if you don't participate, no one will hear your voice and all the important things you have to say. Remind children that their voice matters!

What are some examples of best practices from educational experts and fellow teachers?

TIP1

Crafting Confidence. A key component of participating in group activities is confidence. One way to help children build confidence is by creating leadership opportunities in the classroom. Here are some ways to bolster confidence and encourage children to become leaders:

- Assign children to be the leader of the group in cooperative games like Follow the Leader or Simon Says. It can be especially helpful to give children who seem less confident in a group setting these leadership roles. You can start by being a “co-leader” with them in the game until they feel confident doing it alone.
- Give children simple responsibilities in the classroom. For example, assign children to roles like:
 - Classroom librarian, who keeps classroom books organized
 - Classroom greeter, who says hi to everyone in the morning
 - Cheerleader, who encourages others

- Light monitor, who turns the lights off when the class leaves the room
- Messenger, who collects and distributes papers to the class
- Acknowledge children that normally don't participate during large-group activities when they do join in. For example, if there is an activity where children are supposed to clap to the beat of a song and a child who normally does not participate is clapping, let them know you saw their efforts after the activity is over. Allowing children to participate in large groups at their own pace and acknowledging when they join in, helps them build confidence.
- As group size grows, so do the number of personalities, potential interactions, and contributions. You can help children learn how to be confident in group activities by giving them opportunities to work in pairs, small groups, and larger groups. Providing opportunities to participate in groups of smaller sizes allows children to build confidence before testing them out with larger groups. Remember to be thoughtful about how you group children. For instance, pair less confident children with children who are nurturing or are leaders in the classroom, but make sure more confident children do not dominate activities. Let them know that part of their job as a leader in the classroom is to encourage their peers to participate and make sure others have a chance to speak

TIP2

Structured opportunities for low-pressure participation. To encourage children to participate, provide several structured opportunities to join in during large-group activities. It is especially helpful to provide low-pressure opportunities to join in. For example, doing something along with the whole class creates less pressure than doing something on your own in front of everyone. Examples of low-pressure opportunities to participate include:

- Choral Responding. Before Read Aloud begins, tell the class that as you read, you will ask them all questions and you want them all to respond together, just like a chorus.
- Hand Signals. Allow children to use hand signals as a way to participate. Instead of having to raise their hand and talk in front of the whole class, hand signals allow children to communicate without words. For example, you could tell the class that holding up one finger means you agree with what someone else said. Remember to first teach and model these hand signals for the class. You can also post a chart, like the one below, to remind children of the meaning of different signals.



I AGREE!

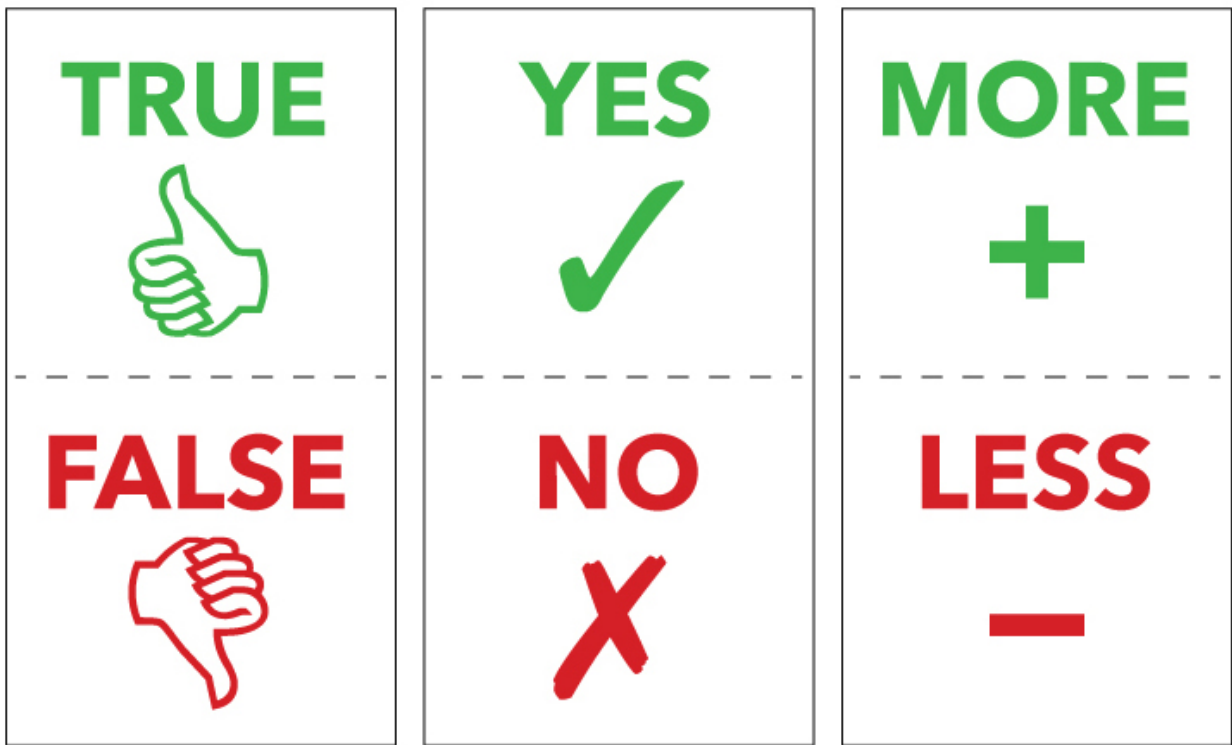


CAN YOU REPEAT THAT?



I LIKED THAT A LOT!

- **Response Cards.** You can create simple response cards, like the ones below, with set answers to common questions you might ask. During large-group activities, give each child a set of response cards. Let the class know that whenever you ask a question they should hold up whichever card they think has the best response.



How can I encourage children when I see them trying to learn this skill?

Acknowledge children for their efforts! For example, say, “Nicholas, aren’t you proud of yourself for raising your hand and telling the class your story?” or “Marta, it was great that you spoke up and shared that with the whole class!”

To learn more about the tips and where they came from, please visit our references page: ckphilly.org/citations