



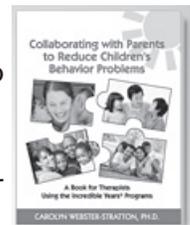
***Group Leader/Therapists' Hot Tips for Delivering Incredible Years®
Small Group Child Dinosaur School***
Carolyn Webster- Stratton
7/31/14

Overview

As an Incredible Years® group leader you are an essential element in bringing about children's ability to learn social and emotional skills. When delivering this program group leaders will be using research-based classroom management skills such as academic, social, emotional and persistence coaching methods and positive attention, praise and incentives for appropriate behaviors as well as proactive discipline approaches such as ignoring, redirection, clear limit setting and problem solving.

The following tips are provided to cover some of the main questions that we hear from group leaders or difficulties we see when reviewing videos of child group sessions.

Also, there is a helpful book for therapists to use to continue their learning about how to deliver this program successfully.



Webster-Stratton, C., *Incredible Teachers: Nurturing Children's Social, Emotional and Academic Competence*. 2012, Seattle: Incredible Years Inc.

We hope you find joy and fun delivering this program to children. Children are so imaginative at this age that you will find that by using puppets, games, songs and small group activities you learn a great deal about these children's ideas, thoughts and dreams. Consultation and support from IY mentors and trainers can be obtained by calling us at 888-506-3562, emailing us at incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com, or check out the website for other resources, www.incredibleyears.com.

Wishing you incredible dinosaur child groups, Carolyn



Room Set Up is Well Organized and Inviting

One section of the room is set up for the small group circle time structured learning. Six children are seated in child-size chairs, or on carpet squares on the floor that are positioned in a semi-circle—with the TV monitor, easel, chip cups, cue cards, and group leaders up front facing them. This room set-up allows children to easily get up to move, to see the chips as they earn them, view the video vignettes, puppets and group leaders. This will also simulate the typical classroom set up for circle time or rug learning. Be sure to also provide a chair or carpet square for Molly or Wally as well as a home or sleeping bag for Dina where she sleeps until it is time for her to come out. Another section of the room has two small tables for small group activities and enough space for games that involve physical activities.





Follow a Predictable Schedule for a Two Hour Group

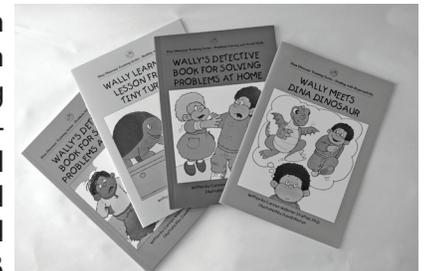
This suggested schedule is a guideline; times can be adjusted according to the developmental needs of the children in your group, but we recommend including the full range of activities listed below—and that children are spending equal or even slightly more time in hands on activities than in structured circle time. Younger children (ages 4-5 years) and children with ADHD will need 2-3 circle times broken up by 3-4 small group activities. Older children (6-8 years) may be able to manage a longer circle time (which include some dancing, songs and play acting) and one longer small group activity time. The dinosaur group schedule and children's job for each session should be posted on the wall.

- **Coached play and Home Activities (10-15 minutes):** Greet children at the door, have them visit the bathroom, and then start coached playtime as soon as they arrive. For children who arrive early or before other children arrive, this allows you to have special time playing one-on-one with a child. One therapist will actively coach three children's social skills as they play together (praise sharing, taking turns, waiting). You will also model and prompt these social skills for children who don't initiate these skills on their own. While this is happening the second therapist is looking at the home activities for the other three children—sitting with each child and giving positive individual feedback and putting Dina stickers on their pages. When all the children have home activities checked and have had about 10 minutes of playtime, then start your circle.

- **Circle (20-30 minutes):** Set up a predictable opening circle time routine by singing songs for children to learn. Give a brief acknowledgement of children's home activities achievements, and then a short review of old content. Preferably this review should be done with a game, role-play, or with a story from Wally—not just asking the children what they learned last time. Introduce new content with a situation from Wally and then show 2-3 vignettes. Each vignette is followed by a role-play practice. Circle time may also include group games and physical movement to teach new content.



- **Small Group Activity (10-15 minutes):** This should be a hands-on activity that is structured to practice the skill or topic that was covered in circle time. Some of these activities include small Wally Problem Solving Detective books for use with hand puppets or with writing or drawing assignments, pass the hat game, bingo, friendship game, food projects and cooperative art projects. Academic and persistence coaching is carried out by therapists constantly during these activities along with social and emotional coaching. Typically children break out into 2 small groups of 3 children at a table each with a therapist to do these activities. This allows therapists to tailor each of these 2 groups according to developmental abilities for some activities. In addition to recommended activities in the manual protocol for the session, the manual also includes a wide range of other small group activities for each of the Dinosaur Program topics. Please check these out, as you may want to select some other activities according to your children's specific developmental abilities and individual children's goals. There are pre-reading and pre-writing activities as well as activities for those who read and write as well as activities that encourage fine motor skills and use math and science concepts.



- **Snack (10 minutes):** Snack and bathroom break, if needed. Therapists should sit with children during the snack time and facilitate social interactions between the children by using social and emotion coaching. Wally or Molly may also join snack time to model social skills and to model how to share experiences and feelings with other children.

- **Second Circle (20 minutes):** This circle is usually shorter and similar in structure to the first circle—puppet situation or problem, game, songs, 2-3 vignettes and more role-plays.

- **Second Small Group Activity (10-15 minutes):** Another hands on small group activity is provided to reinforce circle time content.
- **Coached play and Chip Counting (15 minutes):** This closing experience is similar to the coached play session that opened the group. During this time children are individually pulled aside in pairs to count their chips and to choose their prizes.
- **Parent report (5 minutes):** If a parent group runs concurrently, one therapist visits the parent group room to give parents a brief report on the content and tell them about the home activity for the week.
- **Compliment Circle (5-10 minutes):** Dina and/or Wally or Molly join the closing circle to facilitate the modeling of how to give each other compliments. Dina also reviews the dinosaur home activities to be done with their parents.



Use Academic, Persistence, Social and Emotion Coaching Methods During Child-directed Play Times

The coached unstructured playtime is a valuable chance for children to practice using emotion language and social and problem solving skills in real play situations with their peers. The playtime is set up with several toys placed in different parts of the room. Legos, blocks, imaginary play figures, and puzzles are all good activities. Toys are rotated each week so that children can interact with different toys. Children are usually allowed to choose where they want to play and therapists move about the room to coach different groups. Occasionally the therapist will deliberately pair two children together to work on particular skills. Therapists use narrated child-directed commenting, social, emotional, and persistence coaching to support children's play interactions.



Singing and Use of Music is Key to a Group's Success

Music should be an integral part of opening and closing circle times and transitioning between the activities. The Dina's Greatest Hit's CD has songs that can be used for regular transitions as well as songs that support each of the Dina curriculum content areas. The content songs should be used regularly to support each unit of the curriculum. For some of the transition songs (*Everybody Sit Down*, *Shake Hands With a Friend* and *Dina Wake Up*), it's recommended that the therapist use the CD to learn the songs and then sing them "live" with the children. In addition, it's often useful to sing the song several times, until all children are regulated and engaged. In addition to the songs from the CD, therapists may bring in supplemental wiggle break songs, finger plays, and stretch breaks. Most groups will need 2-3 songs or wiggle breaks in a 20-minute circle.



Dinosaur Chip Giving Should be Frequent

Most dinosaur chips are given out during circle time—this is the most structured time of the group and is, therefore, the hardest for most children to manage. Chips can also be given for special behaviors during playtime, small group activities and snacks, but often, these activities are engaging enough that chips are not needed to maintain positive behaviors. Each time a chip is given, the child's name should be used and the behavior should be labeled. For example, "*John is getting a chip for giving a compliment to a friend.*" "*Mary is getting a chip for sitting in her spot.*" Children typically get chips very frequently, for many small, positive behaviors. On a typical night, children usually earn enough chips to get two prizes (16 chips).



Chips should be given for genuine positive behaviors, but after several sessions therapists can begin to individualize according to a child's developmental abilities and target goals. One child may get chips for being in his seat for 30 seconds, while another child may be earning chips for friendly behaviors or putting up a quiet hand.

If a child is having a particularly difficult night, therapists should work hard to find opportunities to give chips for small positive behaviors. If possible, even on difficult night, it is good for a child to earn at least 8 chips. This ensures that therapists are working hard to notice positive behaviors, and that the child leaves with one prize—and a tangible marker of success. Therapists should ask parents for suggestions of what kind of prizes will motivate their children such as baseball cards, colored crayons, small cars, finger puppets, bubbles etc.



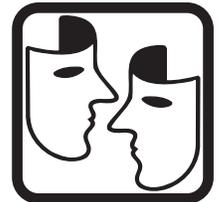
Vignettes Are to Be Mediated

It will not be possible to show all recommended vignettes that are listed in the protocol for each session. Therapists should show between 3-4 vignettes in each of the two circles. It is important to pick vignettes carefully to focus on the skills that are most needed for the particular children in the group. The protocol gives suggestions of vignettes that are more appropriate for older or younger children. It is better to show fewer vignettes and to mediate them in an interactive way, with discussions and role-plays, than to show many vignettes in a didactic way. Start by introducing and orienting children to the vignette before showing it—let children know what they're going to see and look for in the video. For example, you might say, *"This is a movie about Oscar and he is feeling badly—I want you to listen and tell me his problem."* Then involve the children to start the vignette by saying, *"Ready, set, action."* Pause vignettes part way through to get children to process what they've seen. At the end of a vignette, first ask the children what they saw, what the problem was, what the children felt or did, and then always follow up with a role play practice to have them show you and each other what they've learned—or have them practice the positive solution that they've suggested.



Do Many Role Play Practices

Role-play practices are a very important component of every circle time. Each child in the group should have at least one chance to practice a skill in each circle time. Ideally, every solution or idea that is discussed is also practiced. Almost every vignette should be followed by a practice. Role-plays can be brief, but should always be scaffolded. For example: *"That's a great idea to ask for a turn. Let's pretend that Wally is using a truck that you want (set the scene). You're going to come up and try your idea: "What words would you use to ask him?"* Check to make sure the child has a script. For younger children, the therapist may provide the script or model it first by whispering in their ear the words. Then start the practice and guide and prompt the action, if needed. Depending on the situation and the children in the group, role-plays may be acted out between two children or between a puppet and a child. Children are NEVER asked to act out negative behaviors. If negative behavior is going to be shown, the puppet acts out the negative behavior. Even then we limit the amount of negative behavior that is acted out. The role-play might be started after the negative behavior happened. For example: *"We'll pretend that Wally took your car, and you're going to tell him that you want it back."* Wally also makes it clear that the role-play is pretending by saying, *"Okay, I'll pretend that I took it so we can practice, but I wouldn't really take your car!"* Or, Wally may share with the children a problem he had and a mistake he has made (such as yelling or pushing or taking the car) and ask the children for their help with a better solution that is safe, fair and leads to better feelings. After the children have suggested other solutions, Wally acts out the positive replacement behavior to illustrate how he learned from their ideas.



Leader Roles are Clear, Separate and Choreographed

For each circle, assign a content therapist and a process therapist. The content therapist has a puppet and leads the vignettes, asks most of the questions, sets up the role plays, and games. This leader keeps the action going. The process leader gives praise, chips, and attends to the behaviors of the children. If a Time Out or other discipline is needed, the process therapist attends to this so that the content therapist can keep the circle content discussion going. There is some give and take in these roles and the content therapist may also give chips and praise and the process leader may also add to the content; so therapists always support each other in the whole process.

But having a clear content and process leader role makes it easier to keep a continual flow of the content and to make sure that someone is pacing the content. This role usually switches for first and second circle—e.g. Therapist A and Wally might lead the first circle and Therapist B and Molly or Dina might lead the second circle. If you have groups with high levels of ADHD or conduct problems you may also need a third person who can sit just behind the semi-circle. This person's role will be to give out hand stamps, whisper ideas they can contribute, take children to the bathroom if needed and monitor any Time Out to Calm Down episodes.



Bring Puppets Alive and Make them Real

Puppets should be an integral part of the group, particularly during circle time. A puppet will be present for almost all of each circle. Typically one puppet joins the circle at a time, and is used by the content leader. Occasionally the session scripts call for two puppets to interact (Wally and Molly are together a few times), but these are brief interactions and then the process person's puppet leaves. It is extremely hard for the process therapist to be attentive to process, give out chips and to use a puppet effectively at the same time.



Puppets enter and exit in predictable ways. Usually Dina lives in a box, house or sleeping bag and children sing to her to wake her up. Molly and Wally may be present at the beginning of the group; they come to circle with the children and have a chair to sit in. They wear different clothes each week and therapists have developed bio sketches for them so they can share with other children information about their family situations and interests. Puppets should not be left lying around the room. At the end of the circle, they should be gently placed in a chair: *“Wally, will you wait here till we come back from snack?”* or should be put away, with proper goodbyes. For example, *“Wally is going to go back into his house, can you all tell him ‘goodbye?’”*

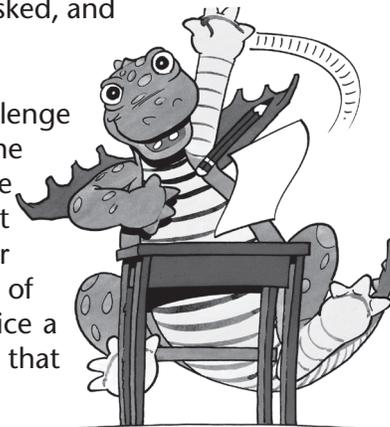
As much as possible, have the puppets share as a group member in the learning and discussion of the new content. Children will be more interested if Wally shares an idea or a problem than if the therapist does. Much of the new content is presented as a problem that the puppet needs help with. The manual suggests scripts that can be used, and therapists can tailor the presentation of new problems to match issues that children in the group are experiencing. Wally and Molly model the appropriate social skills and share their emotions and experiences with the issues being discussed.



Establish Special Challenges Directed at Children's Target Behaviors

Around session 5, therapists will introduce special challenges to the children. These are specific behaviors that children are aware of and are actively working on. They are tailored to different children's needs. Two children in the group may be working on raising a quiet hand to talk, another child in the group may be working on giving on-topic answers to questions that are asked, and two children may be working on giving compliments to others.

Special challenges should be set up so that the child can earn the challenge each week. Typically, systems are set up that require the child to do the behavior 6-8 times during the group in order to earn an extra prize. These goals can be marked in a variety of ways. For example, therapists might use special gold chips that go into the child's chip cup, or a star chart for each child that is displayed on the easel in front of the group. The goal of special challenges is that each child has multiple opportunities to practice a behavior that is harder. It is often up to therapists to set up situations that allow the child to be successful.



In this sense, the child's success is often dependent on the therapists' behavior. For example, if the child's goal is to raise a quiet hand, the therapist might say: *"John, I'm going to ask a question now—if you can raise your quiet hand, you'll get a stamp for your special challenge."* Without this prompting, the child would forget, but with the prompt, the child can usually do it. If the goal is giving compliments, then the therapist might say: *"Let's stop and do a compliment check. Mary, can you think of a compliment for the way that Sean did that role play?"* If a child refuses to respond to a prompt (e.g., says "no" or is actively defiant), then the therapist should let it go, ignore, and not give a token/stamp. The therapist then looks for a new chance to prompt the behavior.



When explaining the special challenges to children, the therapist must clearly define the behaviors and have each child practice the goal and earn the first star during this practice. It is also important to have a visual picture reminder of each special challenge posted next to the child's name/chart.

Wally should be involved in explaining the special challenges. For example: Wally might come out and the therapist might say: *"Wally, today is such an exciting day, because it's the day that you and the kids in the group are all going to get a special challenge!"* Then the therapist explains Wally's challenge to him. *"Wally—you have so many ideas in circle and you want to share them all. That's great! Your special challenge is going to be to remember to raise your quiet hand when you want to talk."* Then Wally might say: *"I think I can do that."* The therapist says: *"I know you can, Wally! We're going to practice right now—so I'm going to ask you a question, and I want to see if you can show me your quiet hand."* Give Wally a reward for being successful.

Then each child will get a challenge, a chance to practice and earn a first star—you may break into 2 groups to do this—3 children with each therapist, because it is time consuming to explain and practice each challenge. The challenge is explained to the children just the way it was explained it to Wally with a very simple description of the exact behavior.



Be Sure to Connect With Parents After Every Session

If parents are picking their children up from group, each child should be individually walked over to his/her parent so that the therapist can reinforce positive behavior from the session. For example, *"I wanted to let you know that Maria was so friendly tonight. During playtime, she was building a beautiful Lego house and another child asked to play with her. I could see that the house was important to her, but she agreed to let the other child build with her. That was hard to do, but her friend was really happy and they worked so well together!"* Be specific and positive. In many cases parents and children in these groups will not have experienced this kind of positive message from teachers. The end of group should always convey this positive and hopeful message. If a child had a hard night, it is still important to be positive with parents. Find something to praise. If the child had a bad night, consider what needs to be shared. If the negative behaviors were taken care of in the group, and if the child is calm and positive at the end of the group, then focus on that. If the child had a very hard Time Out or an incident that was upsetting, then parents will need some information to help the child process:

"I wanted to let you know that I'm proud of Johnny—he had a rough time in the first circle and he had a Time Out—I know that was really hard. But he really worked hard to calm down and then in the second circle, he earned so many chips for listening!"

Parents should be given the message that all behaviors are handled in Dinosaur School, so they do not need to discipline or talk about negative behaviors with their children. Instead, they can praise the child for calming down, predict a better time next session, and focus on positive skills. Parents will want to hear about the children's progress and behavioral issues, but that is done in the context of phone calls or behavior plan meetings where the focus is on how the systems that are in place to support positive behaviors and on strategies for managing positive behaviors.



Give Out Parent Communication Letters

The manuals include letters to parents, which include information about the content of the child group session and provide suggested tips for how they can support and reinforce their child's learning and practice of the specific skill they have learned at home. These letters may be sent home with parents and explained when children are picked up at the end of group or maybe emailed to parents.



Involving Teachers is Important and Well Worth the Effort

In addition to helping parents understand the program goals and content, it is equally important to involve teachers in this partnership. Most parents will give you permission to share information about their child's program with their child's teacher and most teachers will be grateful for the support and happy to be part of the team. The manual includes sample letters that be regularly sent to teachers which include session goals and provide tips for how teachers can support the child's practice of the target behavior for that segment of the program in the classroom. The manual also includes some editable forms that can be sent via email to teachers. In addition to emails and letters, it is highly recommended that teachers be called and invited to provide information in regard to the child's behavior plan. If possible it can also be very helpful if the therapist can observe the child in the classroom. Following this observation establishing at least one meeting between one of the therapists, the parent and the teacher to review the behavior plan and target goals is extremely useful.

Finally, in our studies with children with ADHD, we offered teachers an in-service training day to help them understand what the dinosaur program was about and to review with them the behavior management strategies we felt were working with the children. In addition, we provided them with materials they could use in the classroom that were used in the small group such as the Calm Down Thermometer, Wally's solutions, stickers and copies of award certificates such as Happy Grams. See website for some of these awards: <http://incredibleyears.com/resources/gl/child-program/>



Prepare for Certification/ Accreditation

Be sure to go for certification or accreditation as a group leader. This process validates your skills and competency to deliver this program with high fidelity. Not only that the self-reflection and coaching you receive is empowering and gratifying. Learn more about certification in your leader's manual and on our website: <http://incredibleyears.com/certification-gl/>

