



W H A L E C L A S S

Circle Time Guide

Everything you need, one page per day.

Week 36 • Graduation

14–18 June 2027 • 13 minutes a day • ages 2.5–6, English learners

The last week of the year — and the one week that reviews the whole of it • Friday runs long for the ceremony • 夏至 falls on 21 June, in the holiday

WEEK OVERVIEW



Print · laminate · ring-bind · hold this all week

Look how small we were — and look at us now. This is the last week of the whole year, so this week **is** the review: the four trays become a **memory shelf**, and on Friday the class sings its graduation song and then one chorus of every song we sang all year. Every script here is word-for-word the same as the teachers' page.

FIVE WORDS THEY'LL OWN BY FRIDAY

graduation friend thank you grow good-bye

Littles (2.5–3) — one word + a gesture is a win: “Bye-bye!” (a big slow wave), “Thank you!” (hands together, a little bow), “Big!” (stretch tall on tiptoe).

Bigs (4–6) — sentence frames: “I am big now.” · “Thank you, teacher.” · “Good-bye, my friends — I will come back!”

Never ask a little for a sentence. They will get there by watching the bigs.

STILL EXACTLY ONE SONG

“We Grew So Big” is the week's song — same chorus daily, one new verse a morning, the whole thing on Friday. The old choruses are **not** new material: they come back on Thursday as a **memory game** (two bars, shout the title) and on Friday as the finale medley. Never teach a second song this week.

THE 13-MINUTE FLOW, EVERY DAY

2 MIN Magic Box hook — chant, shake, sniff, dramatic peek, the day's real object.

4 MIN Teach — the day's word, dramatised with that object. Get it wrong once on purpose.

3 MIN Song — chorus → today's new verse → chorus.

3 MIN Game — one named game, tied to the day's word.

1 MIN Close — whisper → normal → SHOUT. **Friday runs long** for the ceremony.

IN THE MAGIC BOX, DAY BY DAY

Mon every child's first-day-of-school photograph, printed, with the date on the back · **Tue** the graduation cap and one blank certificate · **Wed** the memory box: globe, dinosaur, rocket, bird's nest, 红包, pinwheel · **Thu** the ukulele itself + the year's song-title cards · **Fri** the ceremony — certificates, the class photo, and every prop of the year laid out along the mat.

THE WEEK'S CLOSE

Everyone: “We were so small... now we are SO BIG!” (crouch tiny on the whisper · rise on the normal voice · jump up with both arms on the SHOUT)

MEMORY SHELF · FOUR TRAYS

1 • Growth timeline — each child's photographs, first day → today, laid along a paper strip. *Control:* the date on the back of each photograph. (From Monday.)

2 • The year memory box — the six real objects and ten month cards to match them to. *Control:* a small photograph of the object on the back of the right month card. (From Wednesday.)

3 • Song request cards — one picture card per song of the year; draw one, the class sings **one chorus**. *Control:* the picture and the title agree on the card. (From Thursday.)

4 • Make a thank-you card — fold, write your name, glue on a flower. *Control:* the tray holds the materials for exactly one card, and a finished model sits beside it. (Practical life, fine motor.)

CHINESE ANGLE

One 汉字 card a day on the mat: 长大 · 毕业 · 朋友 · 谢谢 · 再见. 好朋友 said hand-in-hand on Wednesday; 谢谢老师 with the bow on Thursday. 李白's 《赠汪伦》 is introduced on Thursday and said together at Friday's ceremony: 桃花潭水深千尺, 不及汪伦送我情. A friend came down to the water to sing good-bye, and the poet never forgot it. Then, all together: 老师再见! 朋友再见! 夏至 falls on 21 June, in the holiday.

FRIDAY'S DARK PHONICS SOUND

sh — the quiet one, one long finger on the lips: **shine**, **ship**, **shoe**, **sheep**, and *shhhh*. “Sh! be still — sheep go baba!” It is the sound the whole room makes as the ceremony begins. And because it is graduation, we sing the **grand review** as a ritual too — the alphabet A–Z, the five short vowels **a e i o u** and the double endings **ll · ff · ss**, each hooked to a word from the year. That is a ritual, not a new lesson: the sequence is still the sequence.

MONDAY · DAY 1

Look How We Grew

Today's words: **grow**

Grab: every child's first-day-of-school photograph, printed, one each, with the date written on the back, in the Magic Box; a long paper strip per child for the growth timeline (Tray 1); the 长大 card; the picture cards from print pack page 11.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box is light and flat and it does not rattle at all. Hold it up. Whole class chants:

Everyone: "What's in the box? What's in the box?"

Shake it — a soft paper slither. Lift the lid a crack, peek in for a long time, and let your face go slowly amazed.

Teacher: "There are some **very small people** in here... and I think I **know** them." (*draw out the first photograph and hold it against your chest, face hidden*)

Turn it round. One photograph at a time, held high, all the way round the circle. Do not name them — let the class do it. Then stretch up tall together: **"Big!"**

4 MIN TEACH · GROW

Everybody crouches down as small as they can go. We grow up twice — slow, then quick:

When I came here I was **THIS** small, (*crouch right down, head tucked in*)

I couldn't talk, I couldn't run, (*shake your head, hands over your mouth*)

Now look at me — I'm **THIS** tall, (*rise slowly and stretch up on tiptoe*)

And I can do it **ALL!** (*one big jump with both arms up*)

Then the photographs, properly. Hold one up beside the real child standing next to you and say the plain true thing, slowly: **this was you, in September**. You could not say "hello" in English. You are the same person, and you are not the same size, and nobody in this room stopped growing for one single day.

Littles crouch and stretch and say **"Big!"** Bigs take the frame: **"I am big now." "I was little in September."**

Teacher fails: hold up the smallest photograph, look hard at it, then hold it next to **your own** face. "Ah. This is me." Nod seriously. Hold it. Wait for the roar.

Chinese moment: lay the 长大 card in the middle of the mat and say 你们长大了! once, all together. Leave the card there; the row grows by one card a day and on Friday the whole year is on the mat: 长大 · 毕业 · 朋友 · 谢谢 · 再见.

3 MIN GAME · THEN & NOW

"One, two, three — eyes on me!" The photographs are face down in a basket in the middle of the circle.

Teacher: "Take one... look at it... now **find that person** and give it to them."

One child at a time: pick, look, walk round the circle, and hand the photograph to the child in it with two hands. Littles get shown two photographs and point at the right friend — a full win. Bigs say it as they hand it over: **"This is you. You were little!"**

Nobody gets their own. That is the whole game: to find your photograph you have to be **found**, by a friend.

Keep the photographs out afterwards — they go straight onto Tray 1, the growth timeline, with the date on the back as the control. They stay on the shelf all week and go home in Friday's folder.

1 MIN CLOSE

Standing in a ring, crouched right down and ready. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: "We were so small... now we are **SO BIG!**" (*crouch tiny on the whisper · rise on the normal voice · jump up with both arms on the SHOUT*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *Leo the Late Bloomer* (Robert Kraus) — Leo can't do anything at all, until one day he can. It is the kindest book in the world for the child who is still catching up, and this is the week to read it.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — chorus → Monday's verse → chorus, standing in a ring, holding hands.

"Little, little, little me, / Now I'm big as big can be!" (*crouch smaller on each "little"; then shoot up onto tiptoe, arms right up*)

TUESDAY · DAY 2

Cap and Certificate

Today's words: **graduation** (*grow comes back every day*)

Grab: one **graduation cap** with a tassel and one **blank certificate** (print pack page 17), in the Magic Box; a chair or a mat square that marks “the front”; the caps for the whole class if you have them, still in their bag; the 毕业 card; yesterday's photographs on Tray 1.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

There are exactly two things in the box today: one is flat and one is square with something dangling off it. Chant first:

Everyone: “What's in the box? What's in the box?”

Tip the box gently — a slide, then a swing. Lift the lid and take out the **certificate** first, holding it flat in both hands like something precious.

Teacher: “This is a **paper**... and it has somebody's **name** on it. Whose name do you think?” (*take out the cap, put it on your head, and let the tassel swing*)

Both hands on their own heads: **“Graduation!”**

4 MIN TEACH · GRADUATION

Everybody stands. We put the cap on twice — slow and careful, then proud:

Cap on my head, (*both hands lower an imaginary cap onto your head*)

Tassel on the side, (*flick two fingers beside your ear, swinging*)

Walk to the **front**, (*four big marching steps on the spot*)

and stand up with **PRIDE!** (*stop, feet together, back straight, chin up*)

Then explain it once, plainly, because most of them have never heard the word: **graduation is the day we say you are finished.** You came, you stayed the whole year, you learned all of it — and on Friday everybody watches you walk to the front on your own and take your paper. Nobody has to be brave. We are going to practise it until it is easy.

Littles pat their heads and say **“Graduation!”** Bigs owe you the sentence: **“I am big now.” “On Friday I walk to the front.”**

Teacher fails: put the cap on **backwards**, with the tassel hanging straight down over your nose, and try to read the certificate through it. Blow the tassel out of the way. Try again. Wait.

Chinese moment: the 毕业 card joins 长大 on the mat — 毕业啦! shouted once at full volume, both arms up. Then 毕业帽 as the cap goes round the circle and every single child wears it for three seconds.

3 MIN GAME · GRADUATION PARADE PRACTICE

“One, two, three — eyes on me!” Mark “the front” with a chair. Four steps, and the class says them out loud with you each time: **walk · stop · bow · cap on.**

Teacher: (*call one name at a time, exactly as you will on Friday*) “...and now — **Mei-me!**” (*everybody claps until she is back in her place*)

Every child goes once. Littles walk it holding a friend's hand and that is how they will do it on Friday too — decide it now, not on the day. Bigs go alone and take the pretend certificate with **two hands**: **“Thank you!”**

Clap for every single child, exactly the same amount. They are counting, and they will remember for years who got the loudest clap.

1 MIN CLOSE

Standing in a ring, caps on (real or imaginary). Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: “We were so small... now we are SO BIG!” (*crouch tiny · rise · jump up with both arms on the SHOUT, tassels flying*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* (Dr Seuss) — read two spreads only, not the whole thing, and read them slowly. Save the rest for Friday.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — chorus → Tuesday's verse → chorus, sung marching, and stop dead on the last word. “Cap on my head and a smile so wide, / Walk to the front with a little pride!” (*hands on head, then draw a big smile; four proud steps, then stand still*)

WEDNESDAY · DAY 3

Our Memory Box

Today's words: **friend** (*grow · graduation come back every day*)

Grab: the **memory box** — a globe, a dinosaur, a rocket, a bird's nest, a red envelope 红包 and a pinwheel — one object per big stretch of the year; a cloth to cover it; the month cards for Tray 2; the 朋友 card.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box is **heavy** and it rattles like a whole cupboard. Carry it in with both arms. Chant:

Everyone: "What's in the box? What's in the box?"

Shake it once — an enormous clatter — and look alarmed at the noise you just made. Then lift out one thing at a time and say nothing at all.

Teacher: (*hold up the globe, then the dinosaur, then the rocket, in complete silence*) "...we **did** all of this."

Every object goes into the middle of the mat. Hands to the temples, remembering: "**I remember!**"

4 MIN TEACH · FRIEND · REMEMBER

Everybody sits round the six objects. Say it twice, and the second time they say it with you:

Do you **remember?** (*both hands to your temples, eyes shut*)

Yes — I **do!** (*eyes open wide, one finger up*)

A star, a dinosaur, a **seed** that grew... (*point up · stomp · hands opening like a flower*)

and best of all — **YOU!** (*point at the friend beside you*)

Now take each object round the circle and let them tell **you**: the **globe** is when we found all seven continents and sat on the map; the **dinosaur** is when we dug for fossils; the **rocket** is blast off; the **nest** is where the bird lives; the **red envelope** is 春节; the **pinwheel** is the windy day. Then say the true thing: not one of those days happened on your own. You did every single one of them **with your friends**.

Littles hold one object and name it — "**Rocket!**" Bigs give the sentence: "**You are my friend.**" "**I remember the dinosaurs!**"

Teacher fails: pick up the bird's nest, look at it blankly and guess: "A hat? Is it a little hat?" Put it on your head. Wait to be corrected, loudly, by everybody at once.

Chinese moment: the 朋友 card joins the row — 好朋友. Then everybody turns to the child beside them, takes both their hands and says it: 你是我的好朋友. Tomorrow we thank the teachers; today we thank each other.

3 MIN GAME · MEMORY-BOX GUESSING

"One, two, three — eyes on me!" The six objects go back in the box under the cloth. One child at a time, **eyes closed**, hand in.

Teacher: "No looking... feel it... **what is it** — and **when** did we do it?" (*the whole circle waits; nobody shouts the answer*)

Naming it before seeing it is the work; naming the *month* is the extra step for the bigs. Littles feel it and give one word: "**Rocket!**" Bigs give both: "**A rocket — that was May!**" Then out it comes and everybody sees.

Put the same object back in twice on purpose. A child who feels the nest a second time and names it instantly, without stopping to think, has just shown you that the word is theirs for good.

1 MIN CLOSE

Standing in a ring, holding the hands of the friends on either side. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: "We were so small... now we are SO BIG!" (*crouch tiny together · rise together · all the arms go up together on the SHOUT, hands still joined*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *My Friend Is Sad* (Mo Willems) — two friends, almost no words, and every child in the room can read the faces. Let them do the voices.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — chorus → Wednesday's verse → chorus, holding hands right round the ring.

"Stars and dinosaurs, seeds and snow, / All the things we got to know!" (*point up · stomp · hands opening · falling fingers; then sweep both hands round the circle*)

THURSDAY • DAY 4

Thank You + Our Songs

Today's words: **thank you** (grow · graduation · friend come back every day)

Grab: the **ukulele itself**, in the Magic Box if it fits and beside it if it doesn't, plus the year's **song-title cards** (Tray 3); the thank-you card materials for Tray 4 — folded card, a model, glue, paper flowers; the 谢谢 card; the memory box still out on Tray 2.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box will not shut, because the ukulele is sticking out of it. Carry it in that way, seriously, as if you had not noticed. Chant:

Everyone: "What's in the box? What's in the box?"

Shake it — and the strings go *brrrrr* all by themselves. Look at the box, astonished. Shake it again.

Teacher: "This box is **SINGING**." (*lift the ukulele out and hold it up; strum one slow chord and say nothing*)

Then the song-title cards, fanned out like a hand of cards. Hands together, a little bow: **"Thank you!"**

4 MIN TEACH • THANK YOU

Everybody stands. Say it twice — once quietly to one person, once out loud to the whole room:

Thank you for the songs, (*hands together, bow to the ukulele*)

Thank you for the days, (*bow to the window*)

Thank you, all my friends, (*turn on the spot, bowing all the way round*)

in a hundred **different ways!** (*both arms thrown wide*)

Then the real thing, and take your time over it. Ask them who they want to thank — and take every answer: the cleaning 阿姨, the cook, the driver, the teacher who plaits their hair, a friend who shared a bike. Write the names down as they say them; that list is who Tray 4's thank-you cards get made for. Say it plainly: **thank you** is two words that you say *to somebody's face*, and this week we are going to say it to everybody who helped us.

Littles put their hands together and bow: **"Thank you!"** Bigs owe you the whole line: **"Thank you, teacher."** **"Thank you for the year with you."**

Teacher fails: hold the ukulele the wrong way round, strum the back of it with great feeling, and look puzzled when nothing happens. Turn it upside down and try again. Wait.

Chinese moment: the 谢谢 card joins the row — 谢谢老师, 谢谢朋友, said with the bow. Then tell them about tomorrow: 李白 wrote a poem for a friend who came to sing him good-bye — 《赠汪伦》 — and we will say its last line at the ceremony: 桃花潭水深千尺, 不及汪伦送我情。

3 MIN GAME • NAME THAT SONG

"One, two, three — eyes on me!" Ten song-title cards face down. You play **two bars only** — no words — and they shout the title.

Teacher: (*strum two bars of "Dinosaur Stomp" and stop dead*) "...which one?"

Good ones to play: *Two Little Eyes · Autumn Is Here! · I Love My Family · A Little Seed · Ring the Bells, It's Christmas! · How's the Weather? · Gong Xi, Happy New Year! · Blast Off! · Dinosaur Stomp · Summer, Summer, Sunny Day*. Whoever gets it turns the card over and the class sings **one chorus**, standing.

This is a memory game, not new material. One chorus each, no verses, no teaching, and no correcting — the words come back on their own or they don't. The week's *own* song is still "We Grew So Big", and it is the only one we are still learning.

1 MIN CLOSE

Standing in a ring, hands together ready to bow. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: "We were so small... now we are SO BIG!" (*crouch tiny · rise · jump with both arms up on the SHOUT, then one last bow to each other*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *Thank You, Omu!* (Oge Mora) — everybody takes a little of the stew, and then everybody brings something back. Read it just before the thank-you cards go on the shelf.

3 MIN • Today's song moment — chorus → Thursday's verse → chorus, sung quietly — do not let this one get shouted.

"Thank you, teacher, thank you true, / Thank you for the year with you!" (*hands together, a deep bow; then both hands out to the whole room*)

FRIDAY · DAY 5

The Graduation Ceremony + the Whole Year

Today's words: **good-bye** — and **graduation** · **friend** · **thank you** · **grow**, the whole week, and the whole year

Grab: the **certificates**, names written in, one per child (print pack page 17); the caps; the class photograph plan (who stands where); **every prop of the year** laid out along the mat in order, September on the left; the ukulele; the thank-you cards the children made; the 再见 card; tissues for the parents. **Today runs long** — the ceremony is not squeezed into 13 minutes.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

The box comes out bulging and will not close, and the whole year is laid out on the mat behind it.

Teacher: "Today the box is **FULL** — it has our whole **YEAR** inside it!"

Pull each thing out and hold it up in complete silence. They will supply the word before you can.

The photograph → "**Little me!**" The cap → "**Graduation!**" The memory box → "**I remember!**" The ukulele → "**Thank you!**"

Last of all, one small thing left in the bottom: a **certificate** with a real name on it. Read the name out. Then wave it, slowly, high. **"GOOD-BYE!"**

4 MIN TEACH · GOOD-BYE, THEN THE WHOLE YEAR

Everybody stands. We tell the whole week with our bodies, twice — slow, then fast:

I was so **little**, (*crouch right down*)

Now I've **grown**, (*rise onto tiptoe*)

Graduation day — (*both hands lower the cap onto your head*)

Thank you, friends, (*hands together, bow all the way round*)

Good-bye — but not for long! (*a big slow wave, then both arms wide*)

Then walk the mat, September to June, and let them name it: I'm special · my body · five senses · feelings · autumn · food · family · my house · plants · helpers · Christmas · winter · Beijing · China · 春节 · the continents · the oceans · Africa · spring · habitats · the Earth · the universe · the solar system · space · dinosaurs · summer. Say the true thing at the end of the walk: **you did all of that**, and in September you could not say "hello".

Littles do the five gestures and shout the five words. Bigs owe you a whole sentence each: "**I am big now.**" "**Thank you, teacher.**" "**Good-bye, my friends — I will come back!**"

Teacher fails: start handing out the certificates to the **parents** instead, very solemnly, shaking each of them by the hand. Keep going until the children stop you.

Chinese moment: the 再见 card completes the row — 长大 · 毕业 · 朋友 · 谢谢 · 再见, the whole week on the mat. Say 《赠汪伦》's last line together, slowly: 桃花潭水深千尺, 不及汪伦送我情. A friend came down to the water to sing good-bye, and the poet never forgot it. That is exactly what today is. Then, all together: 老师再见! 朋友再见!

3 MIN GAME · THE GRADUATION CEREMONY

"One, two, three — eyes on me!" Caps on. Everybody sits in the ring; the parents sit behind. Exactly what we practised on Tuesday: **walk · stop · bow · cap on.**

Teacher: (*one name at a time, said clearly and slowly*) "...and now — **Mei-mei!**" (*she walks, takes the certificate with two hands, bows, and everybody claps until she is back*)

Littles walk it holding a friend's hand, exactly as agreed on Tuesday. Bigs go alone, take it with two hands and say it out loud: "**Thank you!**" Every child hands their **thank-you card** to the person they made it for on the way back.

Then the **class photograph**, everybody in, teachers included — and one silly one straight afterwards.

Same clap for every child, and read every name slowly enough to get it right. Somebody in this room will remember this two minutes for thirty years.

1 MIN CLOSE + CERTIFICATES

Standing in the ring, certificates held in two hands, caps on. All five gestures, one last time:

Everyone: "We were so small... now we are **SO BIG!**" (*crouch right down on the whisper · rise on the normal voice · every arm and every certificate up on the SHOUT*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *The Kissing Hand* (Audrey Penn) — the good-bye book, and the one that lets a child cry about it without anybody making a fuss. Then send them out of the door with their folder: photographs, timeline strip, worksheet, certificate.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — Friday's verse, then the **WHOLE** song, top to bottom, and then the year's medley.

"Good-bye, good-bye — but not for long! / We'll come back and sing our song!" (*a big slow wave; point at the door, then arms wide*)

SONGBOOK

★ “We Grew So Big”

C (0003) F (2010) G7 (0212) Am (2000) · Strum: Down · Down · Down-Up (“we grew — so — big-ger”)

Bright and marching, with a big **rest** before “SO big!” so the whole room can jump into it together. Four shapes, and **Am** carries the two lines that make the parents cry — it is one finger, second fret of the G string, so it is worth the five minutes. Every verse is only C and G7. C is one finger, Am is one, F is two, G7 is three; learn them in that order and leave G7 till last.

CHORUS — EVERY SINGLE DAY

C We were so small, and F now we're SO C big! (*crouch tiny, then stretch tall*)

Am Look how we C grew — let's G7 dance a C jig! (*everybody jumps*)

C Thank you, teachers, F thank you, C friends, (*hands together, bow both ways*)

Am Sing our C song — it G7 never C ends! (*arms wide*)

MONDAY · GROW

C Little, little, little me,

G7 Now I'm big C as big can be!

TUESDAY · GRADUATION

C Cap on my head and a smile so wide,

G7 Walk to the front C with a little pride!

WEDNESDAY · REMEMBER

C Stars and dinosaurs, seeds and snow,

G7 All the things C we got to know!

THURSDAY · THANK YOU

C Thank you, teacher, thank you true,

G7 Thank you for C the year with you!

FRIDAY · GOOD-BYE

C Good-bye, good-bye — but not for long!

G7 We'll come back C and sing our song!

Friday's medley — the one exception of the year. After the whole song, one **chorus** each, in order, no verses: *Where Do You Live?* · *This Is My Earth* · *Up the Mountain, Down the River* · *Love the Earth* · *The Big Bang Boom* · *Round and Round* · *Blast Off!* · *Dinosaur Stomp* · *Dig, Dig, Dig* · *Summer, Summer, Sunny Day* — then back into the “We Grew So Big” chorus to finish. These are **remembered**, not taught: hold the song-title cards up as you go, and if a chorus has gone, skip it and keep moving.