

Tips to Keeping Your Classroom Running Smoothly So You Can Teach

By Amy Tang

Have a routine for your class and teach it to your children:

Children behave best when they know what is expected of them. Begin and end your class in the same way, creating routines that children will look forward to. Here are some examples:



1. Begin with free worship. Hand children props at the door and allow 5-10 minutes for free worship. Intervene right away if children are silly. Remind them, "This is your worship time. Focus on the Lord." (See the video "Helping Children Use Props with a Purpose for more suggestions for how this routine can flow.)
2. Gather children in a circle and discuss what colors they are wearing and why. (See the video "Helping Children Use Props with a Purpose for more suggestions for how this part of your class can flow.) Children enjoy and look forward to this activity.
3. Assign each child a spot on the floor where you want them to go to sit or to stretch when they arrive in class. Many studios have Xs on the floor. Use these or purchase rubber circles to use as markers and place them where you want children to sit. *
4. Have an opening movement prayer and an ending movement prayer. Consider using the Lord's Prayer in Motion.
5. Have a regular flow to your class. For example. You might begin with free worship. Then move into a devotional dance. Next, do a short biblical lesson followed by technique. Finally, close in your movement prayer. Whatever your pattern, be consistent with it.

Do not talk over your students:

Sometimes when children are not listening, we feel like we should just talk over them or we'll never get anything communicated. Resist this temptation. Wait until you have their attention to give instructions. Silence is golden. If they see you silently waiting, smiling, focusing on those who are listening, the rest of the class will get the idea and quiet down. (I should qualify this by saying you may begin moving when they are listening, asking them to mirror you. Usually, the movement gets them focused on you and listening quickly.)



Use a non-verbal signal to get their attention.



1. A tambourine, rain stick, or a bell all have a pleasant and/or interesting sound to get children's attention.
2. Sometimes I count backwards from ten. I don't do this as a threat ("You better listen by the time I get to one or you're in trouble"). Rather, I have a smile on my face. Counting is a way to give them time to get in their spots. It's amazing how quickly children hustle when you count.
3. Use a clapping pattern. You clap in rhythm and have them repeat. Then do another pattern, having them echo. Do this until everyone is clapping with you, focused and ready for the next instruction.
3. Alternately, choose a visual signal to get their attention. You can raise two fingers or raise your hand. The important thing is to choose a gesture, teach it to the children, and use it regularly so that they recognize it.
3. Use a game to get their attention: "If you can hear me, touch your head....If you can hear me, touch your nose....If you can hear me, touch your ear." Smile while you do this, focusing your attention on those who have caught on. Before long, you'll have the whole class with you.

Help them Get their Wiggles Out:

Sometimes children are squirrely because they need to expend energy. If your class is silly or overactive, try one of these things to help them get their wiggles out:



1. Use a leading and following activity to get them moving. Lead them in a big circle around the room. Have them run (instruct them beforehand to leave ample space between them and the person in front of them), skip, prance, and leap. By doing this, you focus their energy on worship and release their energy at the same time.

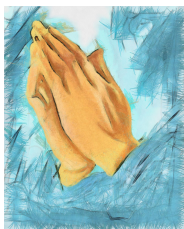
2. Have them follow you around the room pretending to be airplanes**, cars, or different animals.

Keep your interactions positive:

Worship Dance Class should be the most fun hour of a child's day. Make it your habit to smile often and frequently. Make eye contact with your students often. Let them know how much you enjoy them and enjoy worship dance. One of my students, who is also a good family friend, commented to her mother, "Miss Amy smiles so much when she teaches." She caught my passion.

Reward those who are tracking with you by allowing them to do a desired activity. For example, say, "I'll chose who _____ (goes first across the floor, gets to come up and choose a prop, leads the mirroring activity) from someone who is tracking with me." Tracking is making eye contact with you, so that you know they are listening and that you have their attention. Teach them this. *

Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit:



The Lord knows what each child needs and why a particular child may be difficult in class. Pray for your students. Be prayerful about class. Ask the Lord to direct you in wisdom, to show you how to creatively solve classroom issues, how to engage the difficult child. He will. And, please, share with me any wonderful ideas He gives you.

*Alicia Rivera, of Jubilee Dance (<http://www.jubileedance.org/>) shared these techniques with me.

**Sara Lin shared this technique with me.