



Dealing with Wild Monkeys

Writer: Mark Jones

TEACHER- QUESTION

One "management" question for you. I work with 3s, 4s, and K-2nd grade. I believe in a LOT of movement in my classes--I have them sit for MAYBE five minutes before we're up and moving around for the rest of the hour. However, I find that when I get in charge of a class that's immediately "after" a class where the teacher made them sit for pretty much the whole time or stand still in choir, it's like trying to control a group of monkeys. There are too many wiggles and no good productive way to get them out--even given my plan for lots of movement. What would you suggest doing at that point?



MR. MARK- ANSWER

Your class sounds like lots of fun. Sometimes the makeup of a class causes less success with one group compared to another. The first mistake teachers often make is thinking all kids are the same. All of us have a learning approach we most desire. The Learning Approaches are: Visual, Auditory, Hands-On, Reflective, Relational, Physical, Nature and Musical. Try to identify which best appeals to the child and begin providing those activities.

With the freedom design you enjoy with kids in your classroom, it might only take a couple of children to cause it to unravel. Look and see if any of the kids might be an instigator to %wild monkey+behavior. If so, assign special leadership roles for him to assist you. This will allow you more time with the child to work together and have conversation before they get involved in an activity. Use words of affirmation and appreciation with the child. This might help them focus and self-regulate their actions.

Building a relationship with the child is always going to benefit you and the child. I suggest visiting at the child's home. Take a small gift or photos of them from your classroom. Let the child see you interact with his parents and tell him, %am so glad you're in my class.+ A child will behave better for a teacher he likes.

Finally, let me suggest using large motor skills with marching, twirling ribbons, relay races and such to focus attention on you (the teacher) as a large group activity at the beginning of your class. This will allow you to establish leadership, burn off wiggle energy and enjoy one another before working in small group activities. The best advice I can give is to laugh with kids. My class is always drawn to me when I laugh and enjoy them.

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