

Tactics for Small Classes and Programs

Although the below tips were created for small programs ranging in size from 2 to 5 children, many of them can be utilized in all classes and programs with regard to timing and genuinely great teaching.

Do's and Don'ts of a Small Class

- If a class has 4 or fewer students enrolled, do make an announcement that members should call ahead of time if they will be absent.
- If only one child shows up for the class, have the parent schedule a make-up. Don't do free play for the entire hour. Be nice but not overly compliant.
- If only two children show up for a class, run a class, no matter what. Just keep making it fun, and it will grow. Stretch all of the ingredients out by giving a lot of free play.
- Always space children apart evenly around the circle. Even with only a few children, they should be evenly spread out around the entire space.
- Don't let siblings on the floor. There are rare exceptions when you might let a very good older sibling participate in an older children's class to fill space. Let parents know, however, that this is a rare occasion and that it is not usually done. Never allow an older sibling to join a parent participation class.
- Always have both teachers spotting gymnastics skills. You can complete more rounds and keep the kids moving.
- Do more, not less:
 - o Always bring out the full set of toys, swings, and equipment, even if there are only a few children. FILL the circle with toys and games. This will help offset the potentiality of a lower energy small class.
 - o Always have a backup ingredient in case you have a few additional minutes to fill at the end of the class.
 - o Add age-appropriate/creative rounds to games. For example: After completing Red Light, Green Light, add an additional round where the Gymsters receive cars to ride. For Mr. Fox, if children are older, maybe have them skip or hop instead of tiptoeing.

Tactics Specifically for Timing/Energy in a Parent Participation Class

- Stretch your time:
 - o Start later. Normally, you would always begin your classes on time; however, with 3 or 4 children, you can start 5 minutes late.
 - o Move through the transitions a little more slowly. You might still have to do a pretty quick circle time if your children are antsy, but all the other ingredients can be stretched out. Be even more aware of the time than usual because you don't want to be stuck at the end of class with 10 minutes left and nothing to do.
 - o Give extra rotations/turns.
 - o Space it out. Wait an additional few extra minutes after bringing out the Adventure before bringing out the Skill Stations.
 - o In addition to the above, wait a few minutes after bringing the Swings out before introducing the Big Deal.
 - o If children are really paying attention and having fun, stay with an ingredient longer than planned.
 - o Add another puppet, song, or gymnastics skill to fill time.
 - o For Terrific Tots, add a question at the start of the circle time.

- For Gymsters, complete BOTH parent share and independent time instead of rotating them.
- Keep energy high:
 - Having a shortage of children doesn't mean it is okay for your team to lack energy. There should still be echoing and smiles as though there were 15 children present. Have fun and play; enjoy the kids!
- Rotate your team:
 - Alternate the instructors who teach the small class each time, if you can. This keeps energy high.

Tactics Specifically for Timing/Energy in a Non-Parent Participation Class

- Stretch your time
 - Ingredients will go much faster than usual. Lengthen the time spent on them, and give each child a few extra turns. Keep it fun.
 - Make it a positive that this is a small class. Let the children know they are lucky because they have the gym all to themselves.
 - Use fun fillers. Now you can be more talkative with the children.
 - Complete 3rd and 4th rounds of the gymnastics skill.
 - Find ways to adapt tricky games to run with fewer children. For example: For Parachute, have the parents come in onto the floor and play with the kids.
 - Longer playtime: Bring out a special treat once in a while. For Preschool Gymnastics or Ninja Jr.: rings, circus tent, train, adventure of the week, etc. For Ninja or Gymnastics: rings, spinning disc, Hula-Hoops, jump ropes, etc.
 - Make substitutions, or adapt the program. Play games that require only a small number of children to be fun. Play the games that usually provide only a couple of turns per child when the class is full.

Notes on Gymnastics Stations

- With 2 – 3 children: Always complete stations in one group.
- With 4 – 5 children: Typically, 2 groups (with an exception made if you have a child who is working on completing stations and never sits on the mat or always runs away)

Utilize Small Classes for Training

- It is okay to practice your spotting techniques or to train another team member during the adventure time. Do not have it appear as though you do not know what you are doing.

Raising enrollment

- Promote smaller classes to guests or current members.
 - During your weekly team meeting, make team members aware of which classes are very small, and have them encourage sign-ups in those classes.
- Move people who have complained about their large class to the smaller ones. If they do move, everyone will be happy because it will solve two problems.
- Graduate children from larger classes to the smaller ones of the next level.
- If the parents in a class really need to remain on that day, keep it open and “push” the class. Ask members to bring friends, and offer a referral incentive. The class will usually grow if you have a positive attitude.
- Offer coupons or limited specials to help boost the classes that have the greatest need for additional children.

- Example: “Get 4 weeks for \$49! Offer valid for 20 months and younger, and for 6 years and older”.
- Donate FREE months to schools with same limitations as above.
 - Gear these presentations toward Gymsters and younger, since they have the potential to remain members for the longest period of time.
- Look at your class rosters and analyze what new classes you should offer next month. Smaller classes may be cancelled to create space for an age group with a higher demand.
- Check and follow up with your wish lists and waiting lists. You may have overlooked someone who could help fill a small class.
- Do watch attendance of that class closely week to week to decide if it is better to keep it open or close it. Often, just after you have closed a class, someone will appear who would have needed that class.

NOTE: For tips on building up enrollment in small Camps and other programs, see Marketing for Camps document in the operations manual.