

# The Use of Variety to Enhance Class Quality

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“Variety is the Spice of Attention!”

What does this mean? It’s not one individual tool or trick that grabs someone’s attention; it’s the use of MANY tools working in conjunction with one another. This means the use of VARIETY itself is a tool. It can be said it is actually the movement from one tool to the next that refocuses someone’s attention.

You may remember reading the document, “How to Keep Children Focused.” What are some of the tactics we already use to keep kids’ attention?

## **Pace**

- The pace in which you move or speak (and changing that pace from slower to faster, or reverse) can grab their attention.

## **Voice**

- Volume
  - o A whisper is very effective after you have refocused the children.
  - o Yelling tends to be tuned out and is ineffective in uncontrollable situations.
- Inflection: Change in pitch or tone

## **Proximity and physical positioning of self**

- Move closer to them and crouch down low, or move further away and have them track you with their eyes as you move. Change your proximity to them.

## **Positioning of your students**

- Stand up, sit down, move to the left, turn around. Movement increases blood flow to the extremities, which increases fresh oxygenated blood to the brain – hurray for new brain power!
- Change body position (e.g., sitting to standing, having everyone lie on their tummies, or asking them to put their hands on their heads to refocus their attention, etc.).

## **Actual change in location in the room**

- Move from the circle to the line; move from the line to the mat; move from the mat to the circle, but not continuously. Moving to a new position often means a new activity. This means you have a fresh set of listening ears ready to go!
- A change is coming! The program moves quickly, so the change in location means a change in activity is imminent!
  - o Use the word “when” not “if.” (The word, if, challenges a child to test you more than “when” does.)
  - o Use the words “get to” not “have to.” Getting to do something sounds more like a treat; having to do something sounds more like a chore.

## **Change in activity**

- Change activity from only sitting and listening.
  - o Sing a song
  - o Cheer for friends/teammates
  - o Clap 3 times
  - o Practice a straddle with their feet

The list is endless!

**Imagination/storytelling** (along with voice inflection and tone)

- If you need to capture the children's attention, turn them into certain objects or create a simple scenario for them to act out:
  - Float like a balloon
  - Make a butterfly with their hands
  - Drive on a trip to somewhere in a car
  - Make a pancake or other goodie
  - Break out into a song they all know.
- Use your imagination to create a story. This works well when doing a manip. (e.g., Use a 10-inch ball. "I got this ball at the store the other day. I put it on my head, but it rolled down to my nose (child rolls ball down to nose). The ball rolled down my legs. I tried to stop it by putting my foot on it, etc.")

You'll have them in the palm of your hand. Until you don't... but then, BAM, you change something, and then you have their attention back again.

We have an arsenal of teaching tips and tools for a reason. USE THEM ALL!

Each tool has an appropriate place and time. Remember that using the same thing over and over will wear it out. Switch them up and use the changing of them with purpose.