

Scattered Pandemonium or Structured Participation

The children were all wound up. We were teaching a large group of *live wires* (early elementary age children) and needed to get them *grounded*. It was time for structured participation (or so we *thought*).

“Let’s bring out the *clappers!*”

As we handed out the clappers to be used during the song and memory verse teaching, we tried explaining how the children were to use them. However, instead of listening, the children were *playing* with the clappers. After several wasted minutes of getting the children’s attention and attempting to explain how to use the clappers, we finally started our teaching time. This experience taught us a valuable lesson—we definitely needed structure *before* as well as *during* class participation.

Early elementary children desire group activities but also need clear explanation of what is expected of them during class participation. Too often, teachers start passing out the balloons, balls, bean bags or other objects *before* (or even *while*) attempting to explain the activity. Thus there is classroom pandemonium instead of structured participation. Even though most children *can* multi-task, we’ve learned that it is best to clearly explain the activity before the object comes out—while we still have the children’s full attention.

Check out our *Let’s Give Kids a Hand* teaching tip and we’ll share ways we use “clappers” for structured participation.