



Sensorial Life

for Education

The Whole Brain Teaching

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What is Whole Brain Teaching?

Teachers are always looking for new techniques that can more fully engage their students' attention and mental capabilities. While many concepts are tested and abandoned, one technique, known as Whole Brain Teaching (WBT), is gaining popularity, and some teachers are campaigning to have it more widely implemented in classrooms nationwide.

First developed in 1999, Whole Brain Teaching promotes a high-energy, hyper-focused method where teachers use game-like challenges, key words, and motivational methods, while eliciting continuous spoken responses from their students to keep them fully engaged every minute.

According to educator principal of the education-based non-profit The Children's Guild, the value of Whole Brain Teaching is that it continually engages students' brains and keeps them attentive. This way, students "don't have any downtime to be disruptive or engage in activity that's not related to what they're supposed to be learning," Nicholson says.

Whole brain teaching is an instructional approach that is gaining momentum through the integration of social-emotional learning into a highly energetic, authentically engaged learning process. There is a basic lesson structure that each learning moment follows, giving students ownership of their learning through mimicry.

The whole brain teaching learning circle focuses on four main areas:

- Attention-Getter
- Brain Engager
- Direct Instruction
- Collaborative Learning

Designed for students of all ages, from kindergarten through college, Whole Brain Teaching maximizes student engagement by focusing on mimicry, which is a natural way for the brain to learn. This is coupled with an intense, in-the-moment teaching method that compels constant attention from students. From the beginning, the teacher introduces the basic rules to the

class, a little bit at a time, and students are trained to listen and respond within the framework of those rules.

For example, when the teacher says “Class,” students must instantly respond “Yes!” In many instances, students must also repeat words exactly as the teacher says them (for example, if the teacher says “Class, Class!” then students must respond “Yes, Yes!”). In another core element, teachers use a scoreboard game with rewards, motivating students to pay attention so that they can win points. All of the elements used in Whole Brain Teaching are designed to mitigate inattentiveness and curb disciplinary disruptions, as students are required to respond out loud to everything the teacher is doing and saying. The intention is to keep them attentive and engaged—and to do so in a highly entertaining way.

When and for Which Students is Whole Brain Teaching Most Appropriate?

Whole brain teaching is not a typical classroom. This approach is loud and animated. The teacher is an interactive facilitator of learning who has intricately prepared to provide words and gestures that will solidify content for students through foundational learning.

While this approach is awesome for students who have traumatic backgrounds, there are groups of students that would find this learning approach overwhelming. If you have a student that is shy, quiet, or has sensory processing issues, this may not be the strategy for them. However, research has shown that there are high rates of learning in African-American males and students with ADHD due to the multi-sensory approach, high energy, high engagement strategies that are used. Knowing your students can help determine if whole brain teaching is a valid method of instruction for your students.

Does Whole Brain Teaching Get Results?

According to one California elementary school, math and language test scores increased by 11 percent after WBT was implemented in classrooms. On the other hand, Whole Brain Teaching also has its share of critics, including those who fear that this is a type of educational “conditioning” that at worst suppresses individualism, and at best won’t work for some students—especially those who are shy or introverted, or who are more gifted.

The teaching method has become increasingly popular however. Today, Whole Brain Teaching is now being utilized in many countries, and attracts a following among parents and educators.

Is Whole Brain Teaching Right for Your Child?

Parents will know best whether Whole Brain Teaching might be effective for their children. For students who are easily bored and have trouble being motivated, this energetic, entertaining approach might provide the motivation they need. But if your child prefers to quietly listen in class, this program may not be helpful.

If you think your child might benefit from a teaching method that differs from the one they are currently receiving, visit [K12.com](https://www.k12.com) to read about the personalized learning students receive at [K12-powered virtual schools](#). [Online learning](#) may be a great option for your student!

This teaching style is developed for students of all ages, from kindergarten to college. The whole brain teaching procedure gives special attention to mimicry, which is a natural way for the brain to receive and retain information. In addition, mimicry is coupled with intense in-the-moment teaching methods that require constant attention from the student side. When using this teaching method, I give clear instructions to my students and encourage them to follow the framework. Likewise, you can also train your students to listen and respond actively and simultaneously follow the rules.

For example, when you address students with 'Class' they must reply with a prompt 'Yes!' In addition, you can use board games and link the games with rewards to make students attentive. Every activity in a whole brain teaching method is developed to curb inattentiveness and disciplinary disruptions. As students need to respond to anything and everything you are saying, they remain attentive and engaged during the learning process.

How Effective is Whole Brain Teaching?

Different teachers have different opinions about the effectiveness of this teaching method. Some have noticed a remarkable improvement in academic performance after implementing a whole brain teaching strategy in the classroom. They have seen an 11% increase in math and language test scores after implementing this teaching strategy. On the other hand, some educators believe that whole brain teaching is a form of conditioning that affects the individuality of students. Despite different beliefs related to this teaching methodology, whole brain teaching has been adopted by many countries across the globe. Many educators and parents are utilizing this method to improve the learning experiences and attentiveness of students.

Is Whole Brain Teaching Right for Every Student?

Whole-brain teaching may boost the attention of students who find it difficult to get motivated. As they have to respond to everything you are saying in the classroom, they are more likely to concentrate on your words. However, if a student likes to attend the lectures quietly, they may not receive the benefits of this teaching process.

Whole Brain Teaching Strategies

Your students might sit in the class physically, but their minds might wander to different locations. As a result, they might not find the motivation to focus their attention on textbooks and lectures. In such cases, you can implement whole brain teaching strategies to keep the classroom interactive. To begin with, here are a few activities that you can follow to improve the learning journey of your students.

Attention getter

A teacher cannot teach if a student is not paying attention. In order to gain students' attention, the teacher begins with "Class-Yes". The teacher says, "Class" and the students are taught to respond with "Yes". Yes is more than a word that is spoken, though. The teacher explicitly teaches the expectations that come with a "Yes" response. They freeze what they are doing, turn and track the teacher, and fold their hands in front of them. If a student does not complete all three components, the teacher reviews and allows students to practice what should happen during the attention getter. Now that you have everyone's attention, it is time to engage students in the learning.

One of the strategies to get students' attention is by making them follow your words. You can use short call-outs to get the attention of your students. For example, if you say 'Eyes on me', your students should fix their gazes on you. They should respond to the verbal prompts as and when you give them call-outs.

Brain stimulant

Students' brains collect information from various sources in a variety of ways. For this brain-stimulating activity, teachers can say a specific word and ask students to repeat that word. This activity is effective when teaching phoneme and grapheme relationships to students. During this process, you can use your hands to make gestures or change your voice. Your students may mimic you as mimicry is considered one of the best ways to retain information.

"Mirror Words," shouts the teacher, reminding me of Mary Katherine Gallagher doing the "Superstar" skit on Saturday Night Live. Her hands fly up looking like rearview mirrors and the students do the same. Everyone participates because she has already gained their attention. She is having fun teaching and the students are sponges, excited and ready to engage in what the teacher has planned for them today.

Direct instruction

Direct instruction is crucial when you want to grab the attention of your pupils. However, talking too much can also demotivate them, and they may not pay heed to classroom happenings. To keep students interested, you can break the content into small chunks using mirror words. In addition, you can also use memory gestures to retain students' attention. Memory gestures can improve learning outcomes as it trains the mind to establish a connection between the action and the concept taught in the classroom.

One-minute lessons are facilitated for direct instruction. Planning for instruction includes gestures that go with each major concept and that word/concept keeps the same gesture throughout the entire lesson. Students then have an association of a word to a gesture and the information that is related to both. For example, when a teacher is teaching a noun, she puts her hands together in front of her indicating it is an object. Every time she says the word "noun", she makes the same motion with her hands.

In whole brain teaching, the teacher breaks up information into short chunks, using large hand gestures, varying the intonation of her voice by speaking loudly and then softly, quickly then slowly. The greater the variance, the more likely students are to recall and use the information. The teacher leads the students through one chunk and they repeat, doing the same motions and saying the same words. This mimicry allows for students to engage with the information kinesthetically, visually, and auditorily.

At the end of the minute, the teacher states to the class, "Mirrors off!" and the students repeat.

Collaborative learning

To check your students' understanding, you can ask them to teach their fellows. This way, you will get to know if they have understood the concept clearly. In the whole brain teaching strategy, you can encourage collaborative learning through verbal prompts. For example, you can ask your students to teach their bench mates and give an outline for the same. Students need to follow the guidelines when transferring their knowledge and understanding to other students.

You can make whole brain teaching successful only when your students are actively participating in the activities mentioned above. To engage students, you can include them in the planning process. Moreover, you can tie awards and recognition to motivate students and maintain their interest in studies. I hope this teaching strategy shows a positive impact and helps you connect better with your students.

For this segment of the lesson, the teacher proclaims "Teach!" and the students respond with "Okay!" The students then face a partner and paraphrase the learning, which is a skill within its own right. **Formative assessment** is happening every minute as the teacher combs the room, listening for the paraphrase. When a student is not participating, the teacher whispers, "Bigger gestures, please."

Increasing rigor and complex thinking can happen in this phase of the learning. **Students can collaborate** to complete higher-order thinking tasks including comparing, contrasting, synthesizing, analyzing, and evaluating.

Once the cycle is complete, the teacher starts again by getting the students' attention and providing the next minute of instruction.

What are the Benefits of Whole Brain Teaching?

Neuroscience research shows that learning is not a one-dimensional process. Providing learning experiences that engage multiple areas of the brain allow students to engage in authentic learning where previous knowledge is activated and new information is integrated. Being intentional in the design of the instruction by incorporating the whole brain through hearing, seeing, speaking, moving, and reasoning allows students to create memories that are stored throughout the brain instead of in a single area.

Trauma and negativity affect the brain chemistry and, oftentimes, will block sensory pathways. We know our students do not always come from homes that are meeting all of their basic needs. If a child has experienced trauma before coming to school, engagement can be quite difficult, and nearly impossible, if the teacher does not do something to stimulate positive emotion in the student so learning can occur.

Whole brain teaching starts with positivity, and when students are not engaged, the teacher assumes the responsibility of providing more time to practice rather than scolding. When students are having fun in their learning, their brain can receive, process, and retain information, serving as a catalyst for learning; a benefit of whole brain teaching.

Different teachers have different opinions about the effectiveness of this teaching method. Some have noticed a remarkable improvement in academic performance after implementing a whole brain teaching strategy in the classroom. They have seen an 11% increase in math and language test scores after implementing this teaching strategy. On the other hand, some educators believe that whole brain teaching is a form of conditioning that affects the individuality of students. Despite different beliefs related to this teaching methodology, whole brain teaching has been adopted by many countries across the globe. Many educators and parents are utilizing this method to improve the learning experiences and attentiveness of students.

Whole-brain teaching may boost the attention of students who find it difficult to get motivated. As they have to respond to everything you are saying in the classroom, they are more likely to concentrate on your words. However, if a student likes to attend the lectures quietly, they may not receive the benefits of this teaching process.

Whole Brain Teaching is a research-based approach. Studies show that it has a positive influence on the academic achievement of students. They also show that it has made a huge difference in the way students remember and retain information.

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When **students are having fun in their learning, their brain can receive, process, and retain information, serving the learning process**; a benefit of whole brain teaching.

How to begin the whole brain teaching?

- Start with the Attention Getter (Class-Yes). ...
- Weave Manners into everything you do with the Thank You/You're Welcome gesture.
- Activate the Brain Engager (Mirror Words). ...
- Speak using gestures for about one minute of Direct Instruction, talking only about one new point.

How to introduce the class rules?

A well-founded set of class rules has the power to make any school year great. Great teachers know that rules make learning possible and work hard to choose them. Follow these tips for coming up with the right rules for your class and implementing them.

Keep It Simple

Because rules are meant to serve students, they should be logical and straightforward enough that they make sense after minimal explanation. If a rule is confusing and/or its purpose unclear, your students will have trouble practicing it. Follow these guidelines for designing a functional set of rules that is most likely to have its intended results.

Don't overdo it.

Be economical with your rules list to increase the likelihood of your students remembering it. There isn't a magic amount but the number of rules you implement should generally not exceed half the age of your students (e.g. No greater than three or four rules for second graders, four or five for fourth graders, etc.).

Include important unwritten rules.

Never make assumptions about what your students do or don't already know. Every child is raised differently and cultural contrasts are never more prominent than when it comes to behavioral management and rules. Hold your students all to the same standards only after teaching the rules and not before.

Use positive language.

Write what students should do rather than what they should not do. Positive language is easier to follow because it communicates expectations more clearly.

Choosing Between General and Class-Specific Rules.

Most teachers tend to follow a similar roadmap for rule-setting: Briefly highlight student preparedness, outline what being respectful of others and school property looks like, and set behavioral expectations during instruction. These standard guidelines are prominent for good reason.

There is nothing wrong with having rules similar to those of other teachers. In fact, this can make your students' lives easier in a lot of ways. However, nonspecific rules don't always make the most sense and you shouldn't feel tied to them. Teachers can deviate from the norm as they see fit based on what will work best in their classroom. Use a combination of general and class-specific rules until you are comfortable with your code of conduct.

Sample General Rules

There are some rules that can be applied to every classroom. This is true of the following examples.

1. Come to class prepared.
2. Listen when someone else is talking.
3. Always try your best.
4. Wait for your turn to speak (then raise your hand)
5. Treat others the way you want to be treated.

Sample Class-Specific Rules

When general rules don't cut it, teachers can use more precise language to put their expectations into words. Here are some examples.

1. Complete morning work as soon as you come in.
2. Always be helpful to others.
3. Give eye contact when someone is talking.
4. Ask questions when you don't understand.
5. Never make a classmate feel like you don't want to work with them.

Steps for Introducing Class Rules to Students.

Always introduce rules to your students as soon as possible, ideally within the first few days of school. Prioritize this over other activities and introductions because rules lay the groundwork for how your class will function. Follow these steps for success when presenting class guidelines to students.

1. **Involve your students.** Many teachers create class rules with the help of their students. This is an excellent strategy for long-term success. Instilling a sense of ownership in your students with regard to the rules will make it more likely that they follow and value them. You can even have your students agree to abide by them by signing a contract.
2. **Explicitly teach the rules.** Once your class has come up with practical rules, work together to talk about what they mean. Teach and model the rules so that the entire class is on the same page. Let your students help you demonstrate desired behavior and have meaningful conversations about why rules are important.

3.Post the rules. Your students can't be expected to remember every rule after only hearing them once. Post them somewhere visible so that they can be easily referenced—some teachers even send students home with their own copies. Keep the rules fresh in their minds and remember that sometimes they merely forget and are not deliberately misbehaving.

4.Talk about the rules often. Keep the conversation going as the year progresses because posting the rules isn't always enough. Issues will come up that require you to revisit your guidelines with individuals, groups of students, and even the whole class. No one is perfect and your students will need to reset sometimes.

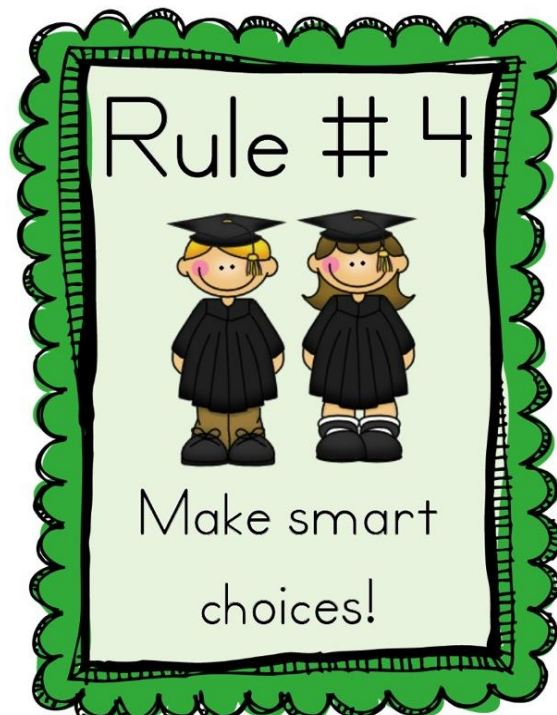
5.Add more rules as needed. You don't have to have it all figured out the day your new students walk into class. If you ever realize that there are rules missing that would make everything run more smoothly, go ahead and add, teach, and post them as you did with all the others. Teach your students about adapting to change whenever you add a new rule.

What are Whole Brain Teaching Rules?

Whole Brain Teaching is a style of teaching where instruction seeks to actively engage every learner in activities. The whole brain teaching rules are just one aspect of the teaching method that I will be sharing today.

My favorite part of Whole Brain teaching are the classroom rules and I have been using them in my classroom for a few years now with a lot of success. They are fun to learn, easy to remember with actions, and effective at getting students to remember the rules. **Please note that I am using an adapted version of the rules that I prefer for my own classroom needs.**

Slow transitions from reading to writing to math to lining up, at every grade, not only wastes time but are also breeding grounds for disruptive activity.





Let's think about the first three Whole Brain Teaching classroom rules. Each will help solve one teaching problem.

Implementing Rule 1, "Follow directions quickly," will speed classroom transitions.

Implementing Rule 2, "Raise your hand for permission to speak," will produce orderly discussions.

Implementing Rule 3, "Raise your hand for permission to leave your seat" will keep your classroom from turning into kiddie bumper cars.

Rule 4 "Make smart choices" is perhaps the fundamental rule for all human behavior, in or out of the classroom.

WBT educators have discovered that **Rule 4 is wonderfully powerful. The rule covers every area of a student's life at school, at home, out with friends, on the Internet, engaged in a sport or hobby, Everything. From childhood to adulthood, we need to make smart choices.**

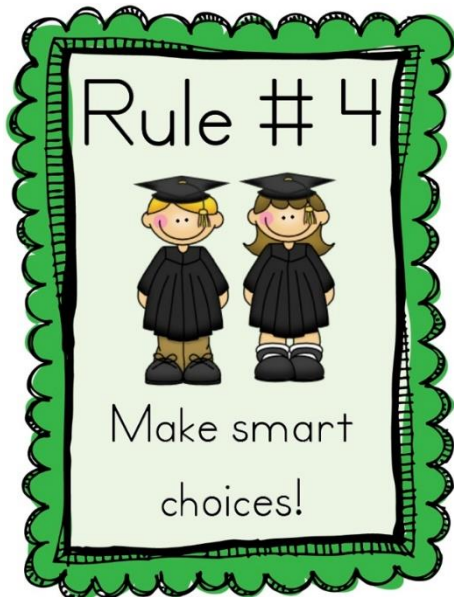
Rule 4 is especially powerful in covering all varieties of disruptive student behavior, in or out of class.

Happily, enough, implementing the Smart Choices rule is easy.

Smart Choices in Content: Discuss the smart and foolish choices made by characters in a story, famous people in a history lesson, kids in the lunchroom.

If a child claims, incorrectly in your view, that one of her choices was smart, you respond, **"Okay. But what would be a smarter choice?"**

This may involve considerable discussion, but it's worthwhile. Teach your pupils that smarter choices are always possible.



When we began to develop Whole Brain Teaching's rules, our goal was to cover every classroom problem.

We wanted a couple of principles that were as specific as possible and one or two others that covered every variety of disruptive behavior. Thus, we have Rules 1-3 that target individual classroom problems. Rule 4 is marvelously general, addressing every decision a child can make. Rule 4 can be applied to any issue not covered by the first three rules.

So, why do we need Rule 5, "Make your dear teacher happy?" Rule 5 addresses your most challenging students... the ones who will argue with you about Rules 1-4. Chatty kids can claim they weren't speaking to anyone. Your most challenging students can even deny they are out of their seat... when they are standing in the middle of the classroom! "I'm not out of my seat. I'm just getting my pencil sharpened."

So, what's a beleaguered instructor to do? You need one rule that can't be disputed. We've never discovered a child who could convince their instructor that their disruptive behavior made, dear team stronger. Kids understand teams, organized, rule following communities they participate in during online games, playground activities, or sports. Rule 5 is the argument stopper, the backtalk squelcher.

Following directions quickly, raising your hand for permission to speak or leave your seat, making smart choices ... all these principles are team strengthening. That's why Rule 5 is the Rule of Rules.

W.B.T is based on seven core components, referred to as The Big Seven:

1. Class/Yes.
2. The Five Rules.
3. Whisper/Release.
4. Mirror/Mirror.
5. Scoreboard.
6. Teach/Okay.
7. Hands and Eyes.

1.Class/Yes.

Attention-Getter

A teacher cannot teach if a student is not paying attention. In order to gain students' attention, the teacher begins with "Class-Yes". The teacher says, "Class" and the students are taught to respond with "Yes". Yes, is more than a word that is spoken, though.

The teacher explicitly teaches the expectations that come with a "Yes" response. They freeze what they are doing, turn and track the teacher, and fold their hands in front of them. Now that you have everyone's attention, it is time to engage students in the learning.

2. The five rules.

3. Whisper/Release.

In using whisper and release, the teacher breaks up information into short chunks, varying the intonation of her voice by speaking loudly and then softly, quickly then slowly. The greater the variance, the more likely students are to recall and use the information.

4.Morror/Mirror.

One-minute lessons are facilitated for direct instruction. Planning for instruction includes gestures that go with each major concept and that word/concept keeps the same gesture throughout the entire lesson. Students then have an association of a word to a gesture and the information that is related to both. For example, when a teacher is teaching a noun, she puts her hands together in front of her indicating it is an object. Every time she says the word "noun", she makes the same motion with her hands.

The teacher leads the students through one chunk and they repeat, doing the same motions and saying the same words. This mimicry allows for students to engage with the information kinesthetically, visually, and auditorily.

At the end of the minute, the teacher states to the class, " Mirrors off!" and the students repeat.

5.Teach/Okay.

Teach! Okay! is a fabulous way to reinforce concepts and ideas throughout the lesson. This practice combines seeing, saying, hearing, and doing. It gets students involved and talking. It's noticed that teachers TALK A LOT! If we can transfer some of that speech to our students, they can take more control of their learning. Plus, it sticks in their little brains better.

You can put students in pairs with who they were sitting by. (If someone's partner was absent, they just joined in the nearest group and made a group of three). Kids usually really good at noticing if another person's partner was missing and would quickly get together with them.) During a lesson (math, LA, science, writing etc.), you will teach a key point or concept. Then, you will look at the class, clap twice and say "Teach!". The class would clap back twice and say "Okay!". Then, partner #1 would start teaching partner #2 what we had just learned. They would use the vocabulary and any gestures you did during the lesson. It was fun to see that they even mimicked your tone and emotion in your voice.

This is something that happens very quickly. It's just 1-3 minutes, sometimes less. Teachers say key concepts or vocabulary that they want to reinforce before they had the kids teach each other.

For example. If the teacher was teaching perimeter, teacher would say something like "Perimeter is... the distance around an object, add the length of the sides!" while drawing an imaginary picture frame in the air. Then teacher would clap twice and say "Teach!". Kids would clap twice and say "Okay!" and then teacher would hear "Perimeter is... the distance around an object, add the length of the sides!". Then partner two would repeat and gesture the same thing back to them. This all happens within a minute and then we move on.

6.Score board.

The Scoreboard is your class motivator, a team game that advances your kids to higher and higher levels of academic and social behavior. Teacher should award positive mark for positive behavior...negative mark for negative behavior.

When your class is engaged, following classroom rules, treating each other with respect, performing transitions quickly, staying focused on tasks, mark a positive tally. Kids clap their hands, a One Second Party, and exclaim, "Oh, yeah!" When students are disengaged, off task, behaving rudely, breaking class rules, mark a negative tally. Your students quickly lift their shoulders and utter a Mighty Groan/ "Oh, no!".

To turn every second of your class into a living video game, put the Scoreboard on your whiteboard - the larger the display, the more hypnotic. If you have a self-contained classroom, divide your day into four equal periods. Decide on when each period will begin and end. For example, you will play from morning until music, then from music until lunch, then lunch to math, then math until the end of the day. Choose what works for you. Label each side of your scoreboard.

Every time you finish with "Class-Yes" you should look and listen to see how the students did with the expectations. Are they looking at you? Are voices off and have hands stopped working? If so, you should say, "Yessss!" and make a tally under the smiley face. Kids say the "oh yeah!" with you, and then you continue with your teaching message.

If, on the other hand, you notice talking, movement, or that several students have not done the "Class-Yes" then you drop your shoulders and moan while you make a tally under the frown face. Kids make the moan with you then you continue with the lesson.

Few Important things to remember:

1. Kids should make the Yes and Moan noises with you- it refocuses us as a class.
2. Remind the kids that a frown face point is not the end of the world, it just encourages us to do better next time.
3. Making the Yes and the Moan should be QUICK! They should not stop the momentum of our lesson and instead should keep up moving forward as a class.
4. I do NOT give out a frown face point for the actions of one student.
5. At the end of the day, after we have packed our bags and stacked our chairs, we take a look at the scoreboard as a class to see how we did. If we have more smiles than frowns, you should give a small reward.
Examples: An extra minute of recess the next day.
-A sticker on their way out
-A Dance Off!

7. Hands and Eyes.

Whenever you really need your students to stop what they're doing and listen to you, use the "hands and eyes" cue. When you say "hands and eyes" your students should stop what they're doing, repeat "hands and eyes", and have their hands in their laps and eyes on you.

Since this is usually when you want to make a big point too you will usually give your students a point if they do this exceptionally well.

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The End

Resources:

- The Whole Brain Teaching for challenging kids Book.

By: Chris Biffle.

- Whole Brain Teaching Presentation.

By: Katie Defazio and Ashely Kelly.