

Setting the Tone with Every Lesson

Let's imagine you've started out strong: You've built positive rapport with your students, and they work well together. You've established behavior expectations with them, and they are invested in following those expectations. Now we can turn our attention to how to set the tone within each lesson throughout the year. Whether you are teaching a lesson on worm bins or balanced food groups, the following routines will help you and your students get the most out of the experience:

Circling up for Each Lesson Opening: Each FoodCorps lesson starts with whole-class introduction. Whenever possible, we recommend that you gather students into a circle for the lesson opening. Opening each lesson in a consistent way builds routine and allows students to know what to expect and how to prepare for their time with you. In the classroom, this may often entail bringing your students to “the rug” or whatever space they have designated for whole-class meetings, read alouds, etc. In the garden, this will entail bringing students to a gathering area that is large enough for them to circle up. Create and teach your students a special “circle up” signal to use in every lesson, such as calling out, “*Magnetic Elbows*,” ringing a chime, or howling like a coyote. The specific callback you use will depend on what feels like a good match with your personal teaching style and with the culture of the school. You can observe other teachers in the school to get ideas. When students hear that sound, they'll have ten seconds to gather in a circle. Explain that you'll count down from ten, and once a student is in the circle, she or he can help you count down. Practice this with students right after teaching it, encouraging them to

all make it back in before you finish the countdown. Once everyone is together, build anticipation by introducing a quick, fun cheer, such as, “*We are, now in FoodCorps Time! FoodCorps Time!*” to the tune and beat of “We will, we will rock you”

Getting Students' Attention: FoodCorps Lessons are very interactive. As such, they involve a lot of student conversations and movement. It is important to realize that if you talk to your students while they're busy talking with one another or doing things, they likely won't catch what you say. So how do you get their attention when you need it? Here again, the specific strategy you use will depend on what feels like a good match with your personal teaching style and within the cultural context of the school and community you are serving. You can observe other teachers in the school to get ideas. The following are some tried-and-true ways to get students' attention when they're all talking or doing something:

- Teach a call-and-response signal, and practice it with students, such as the following:
 - Call: “*One, two, three, eyes on me!*” Response: “*One, two, eyes on you!*”
 - Call: “*When I say 'sun,' you say 'flower!' 'Sun!'*” Response: “*Flower!*” (You can change this one up to be relevant to what you're teaching, as in “*When I say 'Fruit,' you say 'Smoothie!'*”)
- Say quietly, “*If you can hear my voice, clap three times.*” Then clap three times along with the few people who heard you. Then say, “*If you can hear my voice, clap five times,*” etc. Each time, more students should clue in to what you're doing. You can then add in fun ones like, “*If you can hear my*

voice, point to the tallest tree you can see,” or “If you can hear my voice, touch your nose,” etc.

- Have a chime (or a bell, whistle, rainmaker, or gong) that you can use to gather everyone’s attention. Explain that when they hear the chime, it’s time to turn their attention back to you. When working outdoors, make sure your noisemaker is loud enough for students at the other end of the garden to hear.

Once students know your circle-up and attention-getting routines, you can use them regularly throughout all your lessons, every time you need them to come back into a circle or quiet down to hear what’s next. Keep these routines consistent throughout the year, and, in no time, they will become second nature to you and your students.

