Games and Crowd breakers: Their importance and necessity in the classroom

Purpose of games/ crowd breakers in Sunday school: to break up monotony, encourage mingling, to bring the kids into the flow of the class and start them moving, as a group, to get where we need to go. Games and crowd breakers are not time wasters or time fillers, they are an integral part of making and maintaining a dynamic classroom environment.

It is good for your game to have a point and to tie into the overarching lesson, but even without a point it is still better than no game at all.

Flow of class: I like to break my classes up into 10 minutes increments. Any longer tends to make the focus start to waiver. This means that in a 60 min class you should have a minimum of 6 activities planned.

An example:

1) Songs
2) Offering, prayer requests, announcements
3) Game
4) Object lesson/ Puppet show
5) Game
6) Final lesson

If you have the staff and time it is also really good to have pre class games going on as the kids arrive. This allows the children to burn off some energy ahead of time, and also allows them to enter into the flow of the class.

Tips:

Make sure you are prepared ahead of time. Have all props in place ready to go that way you don't lose momentum with prep time.

SELL IT!!! If you project enthusiasm your kids will pick up on it as well. A simple game can be the best time ever if it is packaged right.

It is almost imposable to get 100% participation on any given game. Don't waste momentum trying to achieve it. Make it so fun the kids feel like they missed out by not participating

Mix it up. The kids have all played "rock, paper, scissors"; but how many have played "Gorilla, lady, cowboy"? Sometimes just making something really weird is enough to make it exciting

Don't reinvent the wheel. There are thousands of crowd breakers, youth games, kid games online. You don't have to be creative on your own, let other people do the hard work for you.

Resources:

Google

Pinterest

http://www.apostolicsundayschool.com/

Former teachers

http://www.thesource4ym.com/games

http://insight.typepad.co.uk/insight/2009/02/10-more-icebreakers.html

http://fervr.net/youth-group/top-13-youth-group-mixers-icebreakers

http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/ice-breaker-games

http://www.ultimatecampresource.com/site/camp-activities/ice-breakers.page-3.html

Thousands and thousands of more sites available….

Dollar tree, clearance aisles, etc.…

Jonathan's "Seven Deadly Sins" of Game Leading

What's the Trick to Leading Games?

By Jonathan McKee

The Seven No No's -

Do these seven things and your games will stink!

1. Tell the crowd that you're going to play a game!

Best way to ruin a game is tell kids that you're going to play a game! Youth groups across the nation consistently use this pathetic transition: "okay, we're going to play a mixer now!" First of all ... does the average jr. higher off the street know what a mixer is? Yeh! It's the thing their mom uses to stir cake mix. When starting a game ... just start doing it. For example: "hey, before we get started today I want everyone on this side of the room to scoot one foot that way while my staff run this rope between you ..." Just start it. Ten minutes later kids will be looking at each other saying, "hey ... we're playing games!"

2. Don't be prepared

Time is always crucial because attention span is short. In this fast food, microwave, quick cut, MTV, minute rice, Taco Bell generation, kids are used to having what they want, stimulating their eyes, ears and mouth EVERY SECOND. Now if we stand up to play a game that required two marshmellows with a piece of string tied around them ... if you walk up with a bag of unopened marshmellows and uncut string that is NOT ALREADY TIED ... you've already lost. Have everything ready. If you've never done the game before ... test it. So many times I thought I was the "Game Master" and all of a sudden I'm up short in front of a bunch of kids. Not a pretty sight. Test it!

3. Don't have your staff playing with them

Hopefully your staff are there to hang out with kids, not to be just a chaperone. Chaperones are no fun and no kid wants a relationship with one. Your staff should get on the teams with the kids and participate as much as possible. I have

students to this day that still remind me of times we annihilated another person with Q-tips when I was on their team during a Q-tip war. Fun memories make lasting impressions.

4. Explain the game for more than 30 seconds

As we talked about above on #2, time and attention span are short. Part of being prepared for a game is knowing how to explain it quickly. Give the basics, maybe with a visual example and jump straight into "ready, set, go!"

Don't be afraid to start a game even when some are still confused. Your staff can help push these people along once you start.

5. Take more than 30 seconds to divide teams

Same principle as above. Have a quick tactic planned to divide teams fast. Always try to use natural divisions: grade levels, gender, half of the room, etc. Only # off as a last resort!

6. Have someone without ability or even a personality leading the game

Game leading isn't something you should just throw on a new staff member. They should be trained in the basics and given an opportunity to lead a game every once in a while. You'll find that some people just aren't gifted in being up-front. Don't use these people. A key to a successful program will be putting staff people in areas that they are gifted and feel comfortable.

By the way ... if something goes wrong, play it off. Games will go sour- it's a fact. If they do, use the opportunity to make fun of it. If a game goes wrong and the leader is funny about it, kids will still have a good time ... and that's the point, right?

7. Make sure the crowd can't see those playing the game.

"Of course" you say. But how many times have I seen some cool crowd breaker where a kid is getting dowsed with syrup or a girl is about to suck a jelly bean out of some jello and ... I couldn't see cause some stupid game leader was standing right in the way! If you're leading a game ... STEP ASIDE! If you're in a level room and you have a visual game ... elevate it somehow! You get the point.