

# Getting Student Attention

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Getting a classes attention can be done in numerous ways using sounds, gestures, verbal cues, physical actions, or a combination of these. Below are examples of each. The most important thing to remember about using an attention getting signal, is to choose one you are comfortable practicing and enforcing with your students. Any one of the ideas presented here can be effective.

**Effectiveness is ultimately not about which procedure you choose. It's about how you introduce, model, practice, and reinforce it.**

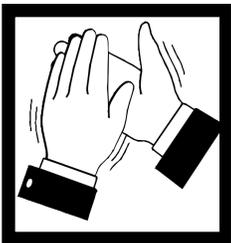
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## Call and Response: Verbal

Call and response cues are a common way to get attention. At the elementary level, a teacher's "1,2,3 eyes on me" is responded to by students with "1, 2, eyes on you." The advantage of verbal call and response is that students have to stop talking to their peers in order to respond. Other examples are things like "A hush came over the crowd" to which students respond "hushhhh." At the secondary level, whole brain teaching uses "class, class" to which students respond "yes, yes." But the "yes, yes" has to be in the same verbal style as the "class class." For example, if the teacher says "class-ity class" students respond "yes-ity yes." If the teacher draws out the words "classsssss, classssss" students respond "yesssssss, yessssss." Another variation is to a two word name, such as the name of your school. For example, the teacher calls out "Pleasant" and the students respond "Valley." With verbal call and response remember that you may have to repeat the cue twice in order to get 100% compliance, and that's ok. Some students won't hear you the first time, but by the second round everyone will be with you.



## Call and Response: Non-Verbal



Clapping rhythms are often used as non-verbal call and response attention getting cues. The students might repeat a rhythm the teacher claps first or they might have a specific response rhythm that goes with it. Either way, the advantage of this is that students have to put down their pencils and other materials to respond. In addition, the response is physical, which increases circulation and attention in general. Be ready to repeat the rhythm twice to get all kids with you.

## Call and Response: Combination

Teacher gives a verbal cue, and students give a non-verbal response. For example, teacher states "If you can hear my voice, clap once" (students clap), then "if you can hear my voice clap twice" (students clap, clap), then "if you can hear my voice clap three times" (students clap, clap clap). Variation: Teacher states "eyes" (students clap), ears (students clap clap), mouths (students clap, clap, clap).

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## Sound Signals

Bells, chimes, whistles, squeaky toys, and other noise makers can be used to alert students that you need their attention. Choose something that is loud enough to be heard over student voices but quiet enough to not startle them. And choose something that can be repeated 3 times or played over approximately 3 seconds. Hitting a chime once, for example, will only register in the brains of a few kids. But playing it three times gives all brains an opportunity to process and respond to the cue for quiet.

Another possible sound-related technique is to use a short song, such as a tv commercial jingle or tv show theme song or just the last 20 seconds of a pop song. When you need students' attention, put the song on. Teach students that they have the length of that song to finish their conversation and be sitting quietly with eyes on teacher.



## Visuals and Gestures



Pictures or signs can be held up when you need quiet. Kids match the picture or sign. Gestures such as counting down from 5 using fingers in the air can be added so students know how long they have to get quiet. This can also be combined with a quick sound signal. Play a quick sound, like hitting a hotel bell to indicate its time to get quiet, and then count down from 5 on fingers to convey how long they have.



Teaching a procedure effectively requires more than just telling students what we want and how we want it. As Mark Twain once famously remarked, "If teaching were the same as telling, we'd all be so smart we could hardly stand it." When we take the time to not only explain it, but also to show it, model it, have students practice it multiple times in a row, de-briefing after each time, then we see the magic happen.