

Up, Up And Away!

Getting Ready for Parachute Play



Playing is Learning!

It's the first day of school! You're ready... or at least you think you are. The adrenaline's been going and you're in high gear and so are your students! You love new beginnings and can't wait for the start of what you're sure is to be a great year. This year, you're determined to include movement and physical activity as part of your daily curriculum.

The recent surveys have confirmed what you have observed of the youth today—they are more obese, leading a sedentary life style with the increase of TV, video, computer games—not to mention fast food. And, yes, they will have sit down time too in your classroom. You know about the correlation between moving and learning. You know that in order for the brain to grow, the body has to move. You know that children need periods of physical activity interspersed with quiet or passive activities. It increases focus and attention span. You want the children in your class to get-to-know each other and enjoy participating in group activities. What better way to engage them than by pulling out the bag with the parachute in it.

But, where is it? You know it's in some closet in some classroom, somewhere! Go find it, now! If you don't have one, purchase one. The benefits outweigh the cost (relatively inexpensive). They are now so affordable that every classroom could have its own rainbow colored parachute. Check out the 4 sizes available in the Discount School Supply catalog. They're made out of strong, durable, lightweight nylon and are machine washable. Honest, I just throw mine in with warm water and Tide on the large capacity setting. Look for parachutes that have a mesh-covered center hole. This is primarily for safety reasons. The hole or center opening is an invitation for a young child to run underneath and stick their head through it. Other children holding onto the parachute and pulling on the edge can unintentionally cause neck and spine injuries to a young body. If the parachute you presently own has an uncovered hole, it's easy to fix. Just find yourself a piece of mesh at the fabric store or purchase a small mesh bag at the "dollar bins" from your local grocery or variety store. With needle and thread sew it around the inside perimeter of the hole and voila... your parachute is ready for safe play. Most parachutes have stitched handles, usually having as many handles as it is wide. For example, a 12' parachute will have 12 handles. I recommended not even using the handles --just flip them inside the outer edge and roll up the edges (about 5 times). Now instruct the children to hold the parachute with palms and thumbs down in a claw-hold grip --just like a little birdie sitting on the branch of a tree. Children will be ready to listen and play when holding the rolled up parachute edge at their belly buttons. Trust me, the "belly button place" really works! Parachute play can be a wild and uncontrolled activity if you don't establish these types of rules. And when using the parachute, plan on children participating for ten to twenty minutes maximum. Young children's arms tire easily and attention spans wane quickly.

The parachute is about the most "user friendly" piece of equipment. I can't wait to tell you more! Watch for my next featured article on UP, UP AND AWAY - Getting Set for Parachute Play.

Sharron Krull

Teacher • Trainer • Author •
Play Guru • Consultant

2831 Lakeview Drive
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Office: (831) 713-5323
Mobile: (925) 980-8353
Fax: (831) 713-5324

Sharron@SharronKrull.com

www.SharronKrull.com

