

The roles of the Momentum Leader and the Enlightened Shadow.

What is the difference between a group and a mob?

When we succeed in making our class into a group, our children join together in a community, make friends, transition to new opportunities, and share ideas.

Picture in your mind an audience at a lecture, attendants at a museum, fans at a sporting event. In your mind, picture how these people form clusters around some focal point.

Children who are singing together, changing shoes together, discussing their observations together, despite some disruptive outliers, are forming a group that will be beneficial to them all.

A mob brings to mind frantic movement, chaos, disorganized acting in all directions.

A large number of children each doing their own thing in ways that slow transitions, raise noise levels, disrespect the classroom or detract from its focal point are functioning like a mob.

At the most difficult moments, every teacher can feel like she is being swallowed by the chaos of the mob. Complaints compete in a cacophony of loud fractured interactions. Screeching chairs and abandoned materials fill our senses.

You may be in the process of guiding your children through a nature walk to view the signs of autumn and to share their observations, but without well directed group momentum, it may feel impossible to get all those little feet into little shoes and make it out the door to reach the promise of fresh air.

One goal...

My aim is to guide us on an explicit plan for achieving one goal.

Helping our children form and maintain a united, productive, enthusiastic community as they enter, engage in and transition to new tasks throughout the school day.

...but two roles.

The Momentum Leader creates a focal point for the entire group's attention. The Enlightened Shadow helps individuals, on a one to one basis, find the motivation and tools to plug into that focus.

By clarifying these two roles, teachers will find they can shift with clarity between two techniques, one that draws the whole group's attention and one that whispers customized techniques that help the unplugged child/children reconnect by feeling increased motivation, and awareness of and interest in the group.

The Momentum Leader...

- Creates a fully accessible focal point for the group's attention before asking for the group's attention.
- Assures that it's worthy of focusing on by thinking about student interest, motivation, and adding fun and energy.
- Tries to shrink the time span and keep clumps of children in the same stage of a process.
- Thinks about ways to keep language in the present tense, vivid, clear and pleasing. (See effective language chart)
- Leads the pace by engaging early adopters and welcoming pairs of children into the momentum.
- Aims to have the majority of the group smoothly and quickly transitioning together.
- Avoids having children waiting and instead finds ways for the group to keep moving forward together.
- Avoids offering individual corrections for negative behavior and instead relies on or switches to the role of the enlightened shadow for individual support.

The Enlightened Shadow...

- Becomes a quiet coach to shadow and help individuals hook back in when they have lost their connection to the group.
- Weaves connections between reluctant adopters, other students and materials.

These two roles may also be the alternating roles of one teacher, nimbly changing hats as situations demand.

The momentum leader and the enlightened shadow don't have to be two distinct people, but they each have distinct strategies and are often performed by two persons working in harmony.

I invented these techniques and used them successfully as the lone

teacher in a room of 26 students with learning difficulties.

In most cases, teachers will want to flip from momentum leader to enlightened shadow and back many times a day, hour, or minute.

When the group needs momentum, become the momentum leader. When the group is on a roll but a minority are disconnected, switch to being their enlightened shadow.

..... **As the Momentum Leader you will....**

Create a focal point for the group's attention.

Perhaps it's an activity, a book, a photo how-to board, a picture schedule, a group of children circled around shared materials, or an adult leading a song or guiding the group through the steps of 'dip and flip' to put on coats.

Focus on information and setup that lets everyone participate at once.

Form a circle and address the group with positive and engaging info they can get started on right away.

Be a satellite.

The momentum leader should be visible to a majority of the children. Young children often visually check in with an adult. If we are visible they are more likely to regulate their behavior based on the teacher's visible presence.

If you are acting as the momentum leader and are working with a focused group, for instance putting on shoes, be sure you are also visible to the majority of the other children.

Use group voice, but only for a true group message.

Teachers are accustomed to raising their voice and announcing, "Class, please be sure to..." or "friends, I have an announcement..."

Make sure you are only using this group voice if your message is relevant to the majority of the group, about 2/3's of the children. If you have had to tell three children to close their glue sticks but only five children are using glue sticks right now, this is not a group message. Instead you can ask the three to check in with another glue stick user and spread the word. Or you can ask them to plan a short 30 second play to teach the other children this reminder tomorrow right before a new group heads to the art table.

Be aware that the way we shift our voice to signal we are talking to the whole group is socially subtle.

Some children may not understand your message is for them if you haven't explicitly called their name. A chime, a brief darkening of lights for important announcements (but not just a complaint about noise), are respectful ways to more explicitly alert children that you need their attention.

Your group will get to experience growing momentum and each day, as this momentum becomes stronger, your children will realize the increasing benefits of being part of a productive community.

Assure that it's a message or activity worthy of focusing on.

Picture your group focusing on you leading an action song, or observing a lizard's tank after you first add some fresh lettuce, or a

hub of children chatting and smiling with one another while facing their friends and their snack.

For children to pay attention, they need something worth paying attention to, and they need help learning to focus their attention.

The momentum leader creates an interesting, meaningful, and functional focal point built around pleasing familiarity or enticing curiosity.

No children should wait for the teacher to arrive.

Never call children to the rug to merely sit and wait. Have an 'appetizer' activity that they can start right away without moving ahead of late arrivers, or keep them in sync as a helper with the step prior by giving them meaningful real jobs that help the group get ready to transition.

Even a small amount of time waiting with nothing to do sets an antsy tone and sends an imbalanced power message. If we inadvertently show children we are the boss and we can make them sit and wait for our lesson, we also send the message that cooperation and group momentum are solely our responsibility.

Share responsibility, autonomy, and activity evenly to encourage cooperation.

When you are torn between various roles in a transition, always offer the most support for the activity that is beginning versus the one wrapping up.

If you are cleaning the room and then heading to the rug for a story, the momentum that will be most important is the timely and engaging beginning of the story. If you flip your focus you will find that you are scolding and managing stragglers instead of keeping the majority of children feeling cooperative and following the momentum leader.

Use curiosity to fuel engagement with an exploration that can start right away

Nothing is as powerful as curiosity in a young mind. Use a 'hole' to motivate completion. Start a project but leave a "hole" to entice children to finish. A puzzle is most enticing when there are just a few pieces left to fill, or when a few pieces have been stacked correctly to set the expectation.

During a whole group activity, invite excitement by creating the "hole" with suspense. Then drop to an excited conspiratorial whisper to deliver exciting information about the activity.

Don't deliver interesting information just to gain attention.

Help your children feel the rewards of interest and connection after they have worked to hand over their attention.

Deliver each students' attention to this focal point.

A large number of children, each doing their own thing, is not a group. To experience a state of flow, the focal point must be relevant, engaging, use language that we can understand, and be sharply focused.

First, identify for your students where the focal point is.

The focal point will often be physical. It might be a teacher at the front of a line, a basket of "hints" to explore on the rug, an invitation to color a paper that will later be cut according to instructions. Use

markers or an item covered with a cloth to show children where to gather. Whenever possible, an adult leading an engaging routine or song will help draw children quickly.

The next step is to make sure your children's bodies form a group around the focal point and that they are physically facing it.

Keep the focal point stationary and visible for every child for the entire duration of the lesson. Watch that their whole bodies, and not just their faces, are pointed towards the focal point.

If the group itself is going to interact with each other through discussion, then children should be in a circle. Point groups of peers towards each other to facilitate group helping.

Physical orientation of the body has a big influence on how we feel and attend. Children who are sitting askance of the group and merely turn their head to face the focal point will quickly turn away again.

Materials or presenters should be at the 'hub' of the group and children's bodies should be close enough to see well, with knees and planes of the chest all squarely pointed at the focal point (toes and planes of chest if standing and heels should be down for best attention).

When holding up a book or object for the group to view, make sure that the object is big enough to be seen by everyone, held still and in clear view the entire time.

Help children find a stationary position where they can see and hear well for the entire experience. If the group is going to all give their attention to a book, then cozy arcs of children sitting close to where the book will be held, all of them finding a spot with a view so the book need never be moved.

Imagine the difficulty of being at a very engaging movie, but the screen constantly rotates around while the projectionist announces, "Please wait your turn, I'm coming around to show the pictures to everybody".

If you are rotating or passing around the focal point, you are essentially breaking up the group into a bunch of individual turns. This means when it's not the child's turn they are back to waiting. And waiting is the thing we hope to avoid when we want group momentum.

Think about ways to keep language in the present tense, vivid, clear and pleasing.

Use an excited, breathy voice, a gasp, pointing, or wonder aloud.

Then reward your children's attention with exciting pieces of information.

Use words that cue children to think about themselves as members of a meaningfully gathered group.

As the momentum leader you should avoid naming individual children. Call out children's names in clusters of 2-3, and spotlight the pro-group behaviors they are engaged in. "I see Jim and Claire are cleaning up. I see Bill and Sally are cleaning up. Our group is cleaning up!"

Often use the words "all", "group" and "together". Emphasize the connection of the group with expressions like, "We are all doing..." "All of us are in the clean-up group."

Use opportunity language.

"Guess what?" "Don't miss it!" "The group is doing...!" to highlight the fun part of being part of the group. We make the most progress when, instead of pushing for will power, we ask children to tap into the natural motivation of being part of a group by showing them how good it feels not to miss out, but be connected and engaged together.

Become a well paced leader moving the classroom quickly and smoothly through transitions.

Make sure children have meaningful ways to engage with the focal point for the duration of their presence.

Ideally, children should never sit and wait for an activity to start but instead should arrive to an 'appetizer' they can freely explore as they wait for the rest of the group. If things have to be passed around or if children have to 'wait their turn' then they really aren't able to form a group; instead they are being treated like a line of individuals. Group momentum is possible when clusters of children are experiencing the same thing at the same time.

Make sure the teacher isn't the only source of help and information about what comes next.

Use picture steps, accessible materials, songs, pneumonics, and encourage peer-to-peer help so the whole group can keep going without waiting for the teacher. Build up peer expertise by enlisting the authentic help of classmates to share in the responsibility and authority for planning how things can get done.

Most cooperative behaviors need to be trained rather than taught.

We sometimes think we need to win over the minds of children so they will choose to cooperate. But much of human behavior is governed by habit more than choices.

Say less.

When possible, avoid a long explanation about why children need to be quiet. Instead, focus on routines and cues that put children in the habit of being attentive listeners.

Put things in hands.

Focus less on explaining why you need cooperation and instead put objects in hands and keep moving briskly forward so children can experience a quick transition.

A talking stick helps children feel and see the invisible lines of where our attention should go. Handing a child an item and saying, "Here ya go!" or "Go ahead!" is often a much quicker way to get them started on drawing or cleaning or playing vs. a long discussion about its benefits.

Slowly pull the train out of the station

Nothing signals momentum better than a group moving along. Instead of a stationary line at the doorway, consider a slow snaking walking line that begins moving toward the doorway like a creeping cat or a sneaky snake that whisper hisses as it slides slowly toward the door. When late adopters see the line beginning to move they

are more likely to increase attention to their own next steps so they can jump aboard the moving train before it pulls away without them!

Even if you are not leaving the room, you can use movement to create momentum: Consider a walking line to tour the class towards the end of clean up time so the early adopters can admire the great clean up work and spot any last minute items to clean up. This will “shrink the span” because it provides a productive group task for the children who are done cleaning up without sending them to sit and wait for the next activity. The movement will be visible to any stragglers who will be more eager to finish their clean up and join the fun clean-up check-up train.

Shrink the span.

Many transitions have 4-10 steps if we truly break down what the children need to do. If you have your class spread out in various stages across this wide number of steps, there will not be group momentum because nobody is doing the same thing at the same time.

Envision a complex sequence such as cleaning up snack and getting bundled up to go outside. Children will be eating, clearing dishes, cleaning up their snack area, putting away their food, gathering their warm clothes, gathering shoes, attempting to change into boots, attempting to put on mittens (potentially too early before they’ve used their fingers to zip up coats), dip and flipping coats, and waiting warm and bundled for the group to head outdoors.

Children will need support at each of these steps. If teachers all become 1-1 shadows giving individual help they will surely get overwhelmed by the many needs and tasks and a few compliant children will be unpleasantly warm while they wait the 15-20 minutes required for the rest of the group to bundle up.

Look for places to shrink the span of activities.

One place is to keep children at the snack table until a majority of children are done eating. They can chat with peers while they wait, they can be encouraged to try to take a half bite and then half of a half until they take the smallest bite possible, they can enjoy a short song or story on CD from their snack seat as they wrap up.

Look for helpful roles that keep kids no more than one step ahead.

An early finisher could be taught to bring every child’s shoe box into the room and to line it up next to a picture. This child will have a meaningful way to contribute real help to the group and they won’t get too far ahead in their own bundle up process.

Use supplies as a guide to keep students from moving ahead too quickly.

Use the placement of materials to keep folks doing things together. Rather than grabbing all their gear, children might only be invited to get their snow pants and boots. Coats could be gathered in a big pile or a coat rack out of the way and saved for a big ‘group finale’. Children will have fewer tasks to do on their own so a momentum leader can guide pairs to work on shoes together. Then the group can put the coats in a circle and all practice dip and flip as a group.

Create visuals that give you information at a glance.

The momentum leader will want to be able to scan at a glance to

see who has gotten a turn, or been to the bathroom, or has chosen a book. Create pocket charts, sign up name cards, or use the containers from shoes or supplies so you can easily see the status of every child instantly. A good visual choice system should have a good default: all the children must have a clip or card, there should be a “I haven’t remembered to move my card” section where all the name clips begin. This will show you who hasn’t marked their status using the system yet, and then the two options: I need the bathroom, or I have been to the bathroom.

Use a class name tick list to keep track of who has completed each step.

The momentum leader needs to know instantly what the majority of the group is ready to do next. Sometimes these steps are visible, like who is wearing a coat. But sometimes, they require checking in with a child, like who has gone to the bathroom already.

A momentum leader cannot ask individual children their status. This would be 1-1 interaction and it would disrupt momentum. Sharing a tick list with a shadow, a peer leader, or keeping one handy and helping children check themselves off as they head to the washroom can provide the leader with info at a glance.

A class name list helps quickly keep track of the whole group. Write and wipe boards or laminated charts are easy to bump or brush against, losing your info. A better option is to print piles of duplicated skinny columns with the class names, usually about six or so lists per page, and keep them handy in the room.

Children also love using these lists to take surveys of their friends. A peer leader can be coached to check off children who will need help or who want a turn feeding the class fish. The lists are also handy for subs, for making sure you have photos or anecdotes for every child, or for collecting permission slips.

Use containers or supplies out to show you the group’s status.

You can also build a passive system. For example, if each child has a shoe box for storing indoor/outdoor shoes and you bring them in and line them in a tight circle at the ‘focal point’ of the group, the leader will be able to peek at the boxes and quickly see which children still need to change into boots.

Get group buy in by asking for an affirmation action or an “okay I’ll....”

Get a yes to anything. If the children are invited to signal their engagement they are more likely to deepen their investment in doing what the group is doing. In sales, adults focus on getting a potential customer to say yes to anything because it increases the chances they will ultimately buy the product. Similarly, getting a yes to anything helps kids stay plugged into you.

You can: ask the children walking along in line to imagine picking up imaginary bubble gum and putting it in their mouth to chew for their quiet street crossing. You can ask walkers to all point to the nearest tree. This cooperation will give you a read, before any disruption, about how tuned in the children are to the leader.

Invite participation through simple actions.

When reading aloud after describing an action such as “The old woman stirred and stirred and stirred the porridge...” you can pause and ask the group excitedly, “Can you?”

Ask for an affirmation action.

If you want children to agree to wrap up in five minutes, ask them to hold up five fingers to signal they know clean up is near.

If you ask the group to whisper, ask them to all whisper back to you, "Okay we can whisper."

If you want children to answer questions, start by asking them to raise their hand if they know their own name before you ask them a question for which they might not know the answer.

Set pacing based on the 51% of the class that is on board and engaged. Don't slow the pace for the reluctant adopters.

The momentum leader must set the pace to keep the majority of the group engaged, keep things moving forward and make the group feel connected to each other and to the focal point she has created. If most of the group can transition quickly many children will jump on board sooner. Those same children may be 'late adopters' if the pace moves too slowly. Some children will only jump into action when the window to join is almost closed. Just as adults often don't take action until the moments before a deadline, reluctant adopters will often not progress until they see that most of the group is moving on. Getting the pacing right so the majority of the group isn't waiting for the stragglers helps everyone transition more quickly.

The leader will minimize the time required for transitioning and learning new routines, but no matter how engaging a teacher's read aloud is, or how well planned a shoe changing routine is, some children will still get 'unplugged' from the group's momentum. This situation will always be handled, not by the role of the momentum leader, but rather by the role of the enlightened shadow.

Never disrupt the momentum of the whole group to address its least productive members.

You will lose a few children and then a few more and soon your group will become unraveled. Therefore, as a momentum leader, never respond with personalized attention to a disruption. You will be spotlighting the very behavior you find disruptive. You can keep your eye contact and verbal focus on the group while reaching out a hand to rub a back, or redirect a child in motion. But your words and your focus need to stay on the group. Avoid saying individual names to correct misbehavior in a voice intended for the whole group's attention.

Resist stating, "I'll wait until you are ready".

This gives great power to a reluctant adopter who will usually give in to the temptation of being in control and will slow the group's progress.

Imagine we are back in that movie theater, but now some of the audience is being disruptive. Some people are talking loudly, a baby cries, a family spills popcorn and shuffles about trying to clean it up. What would happen if, at each disruption, the projectionist paused the movie, turned up the lights, and called, "Please quiet down that baby. We'll all wait until the baby is quiet before resuming the movie." Would this reduce your chances of staying connected to the momentum of the show?

Instead, the role of the enlightened shadow now comes into

play, dealing with children on an individual basis while for everyone else, your show goes on!

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As the Enlightened Shadow you will....

Be a quiet coach to shadow and help children individually 'hook back in' when they have lost their connection to the group.

All children deserve to be taught the skills necessary to become a functioning member of their group. When most of a group is plugged in but some individuals are still disconnected, these children are entitled to the support of the enlightened shadow. At first you will find the children who are disruptive or habitually off task. With practice, a skilled shadow notices the early signs of disconnected behaviors and plugs a student back in before there has been any disruption.

Children are most likely to transition smoothly if they have experienced a smooth transition.

Observe the group and identify individuals who seem out of touch with the focal point. You may find yourself drawn to the most problematic behavior, but triage the needs of the group and try to give assistance and guidance first to the children who can be most quickly reconnected to the group. By zipping about the crowd offering 1-2 whispered comments to the late adopters, you will keep reinforcing the groups momentum by quickly and easily returning children to the momentum leader's focus.

For children who are very volatile, disruptive, or actively interrupting their peers, consider "gluing" them to your side with warm companionship but no other attention while you move about helping the late adopters. Once most of the group is focusing on the momentum leader you can then give more in depth support to a child who may demand more time or require more support to reluctantly adopt the group's focus.

Weave connections between your child and others by staying out of the middle of interactions.

Don't repeat the words of others.

When children fail to listen, it can be tempting to repeat what they missed. "Did you hear that John, your friend said you can have the marker when he is done with it?" But this trains the child that the shadow is like a filter or a secretary. It encourages the child to ignore messages from leaders and peers because the child can assume if it's important the enlightened shadow will repeat the message.

Instead the enlightened shadow points out that something was missed and then coaches the child to ask, "Whaddya say?" or "Can you say that again?"

The enlightened shadow never repeats directly what has been said by the momentum leader or peers. Instead, the shadow seeks to direct the child's attention to the group and guides them through a process for helping them figure out what they missed. The shadow might point their gaze back to the momentum leader, or may even, in a whisper directed solely to the child, coach the child to ask the leader to repeat a comment that has been missed.

The shadow could whisper a self-talk question for the child to

ponder such as, "What is everyone doing right now?" and guide the child to look at peers and mimic their engagement.

The shadow looks for ways to keep the individual's focus away from him/herself, while finding other ways to reconnect the child directly to the focus of the group or to other children already engaging in the focus of activity.

Don't block direct views or occupy seating that could be used by peers.

Choose your position carefully. The enlightened shadow stays

outside the circle of interaction and behind the child so the child can observe the group and so peers talk directly to the child.

When seated, the enlightened shadow doesn't occupy the seat near a child who needs more group connections. Instead, she allows the child to sit with a peer on either side and pull a seat up behind the child requiring shadowing.

Find peers to hand off materials.

Never hand needed materials directly to a child, but instead will give peers the object to hand the child.

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Enlightened Shadow techniques:

- *Use a whisper voice.*
- *Stay low and behind your child. Don't spotlight yourself.*
- *Don't get in the middle of interactions nor the circle.*
- *Position children so their bodies are in a position that is comfortable, calming, and fully facing the focal point.*
- *Get bodies closer so that children are near the core of the group. Shrink gaps in lines as soon as they form. Help a reluctant adopter be near the group and in view of the focal point.*
- *Point to the activity hub. Standing behind the child with the child facing the focal point, Use a flat palm from behind your child's head, capturing his/her peripheral vision and end by pointing towards the focal point.*
- *Don't spotlight misbehavior.*
- *Use a curiosity tone to model self talk questions like, "Oh, what is that friend holding?"*
- *Point towards the class focal point, emphasize the value of being part of the group with expressions such as "Don't miss it!"*

- *Model the way children can make meaning of things by asking internal questions such as, "What is going to happen next?", "Oh, what is that thing?", "Where did it come from?"*
- *Whisper a wonder aloud, such as, "Oh, what is that?". Phrase your question like a question the child could be asking him/herself. Make sure to sound curious and to model wonder and interest at joining in.*
- *Whisper "Are you lost questions" that help your child plug back in, such as, "Oops, what is the group doing now?", "Where are they all going?", "What did he say?"*
- *Help a child repair a missed connection by coaching them to ask, "What?"*
- *98% rule: Build independence by having your child start and end a task on his/her own. Even if the shadow helps do 98% of the work, let the child feel the excitement of completing the task on independently.*
- *Pair your child's name with that of a nearby early adopter in order to deepen your child's connection to the group.*
- *Use "gluing" to keep a reluctant child feeling physically attended to while your main attention is on early or late adopters.*

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The three tiers of student involvement.

The enlightened shadow should scan all the children in the classroom and mentally divide them into three tiers: Early adopters, late adopters and reluctant adopters.

The majority of children in most classes are children who are independently ready to move on to the next thing: early adopters.

Some early adopters may have gotten momentarily distracted. Perhaps they got their sleeve stuck during a coat change, or got wrapped up in a loud side conversation. However, these individuals can be plugged in quickly.

You may be suspicious that you have few children who can plug in, but check if you have really offered them a fast paced engaging focal point to engage. Most classes only have 1-3 children who will do what they are told regardless of the rest of the group.

In every classroom, we frequently overlook or over rely on early adopters.

Those who seamlessly clean up and come to the rug on their own often end up being punished by having to wait several minutes for the remainder of the group to join them.

If momentum is managed well, there is an engaging focal point, and the momentum is based on the positive actions of children on task, it's rare to see a classroom where more than half the students cannot be brought into the fold in just a few minutes.

If you reverse your focus for the transition, you can engage these early adopters in an "appetizer" exercise that gives them something meaningful to do at the start of a new activity, without leaving later adopters to have to catch up. For example, exploring the xylophones before the mallets are handed out, or searching a book that will soon be read aloud, or invited to count how many different animals children can find in it.

The enlightened shadow can quickly flit around to children who are slightly unplugged, quietly pointing out ways that peers can help one another, repositioning bodies to orient towards the group, whispering a rhetorical question in their ear such as, "Oooh, what's happening in that picture from the read aloud?", "What is that?", or "What is the group doing right now?", while pointing attention with a sliding palm towards the focal point.

After early adopters have been helped to join in with the group, the enlightened shadow can turn her attention to the late adopters.

Late adopters are children who have the skill and quickly connect to the group with a bit of support. They don't naturally and independently do what the group is doing but can rejoin with a quick intervention (even if they need several at various times).

Late adopters may be very socially interested but get sidetracked in small conversations.

They can be refocused by helping them to see the social connections to the group, or by using name pairing to help them and their buddy gain momentum.

Late adopters may need extra fine motor help.

They may have more difficulty than their peers putting on coats, removing marker caps, opening lunch boxes, or have more spills or stumbles than the rest of the group.

Following the 98% rule, pair this child with a helpful peer or allow him/her to feel some accomplishment just by receiving a lot of short term help.

Late adopters may just be wiped out.

Some children may have a tired or off day, and some children will often have less stamina for sticking with the group. These children benefit from an extra pat on the back or a help reviving their motivation with imagination. Use theatrical, whispered language, wondering aloud, and pretend themes to entice him/her back to the flow of the group.

Reluctant adopters, who routinely disrupt or abandon group activities, struggle with transitions, social interactions or group participation, should always receive extra warmth and support.

Once the majority of the class has formed a solid group momentum, the shadow will give reluctant adopters full support.

You can offer a warm arm or hand to hold right away, but the individual attention should come after the late adopters have been woven into the group.

When about 2/3 of the children are plugged into the class focal point, the enlightened shadow turns with warmth and empathy to the reluctant adopters to teach them both the joys and the skills of being part of the group.

By interacting on a one to one basis with each reluctant adopter, the enlightened shadow avoids disrupting the momentum of the entire group.

Reluctant adopters can be allowed to temporarily lay down, read quietly, or stray to the outskirts of the room if they are not disrupting the group momentum. This should be brief and temporary but it allows the enlightened shadow to first support the group momentum and then return to the reluctant adopters with more time and attention.

Reluctant adopters deserve our care and attention.

Most reluctant adopters may not be disturbing the momentum of the group, but may be losing their own chances to learn and participate. They may seem unmotivated or actively resist activities in which the group is engaged.

These children may have special learning needs.

They may struggle with tasks that have a lot of verbal information. They may rely more heavily on visuals. They may have more emotional needs and seek to get special individual help from the teacher, even when they have the skills to perform a task. They may get overwhelmed by changes and the increased noise and activity at big transitions, such as clean up time.

The best thing we can say to a reluctant adopter is, "This is what the group is doing right now and we'd love to welcome you to the group." However, that is only true if the enlightened shadow

has first ensured that the majority of the class is connected and engaged in a shared task that is clearly visible. The shadow helps the child deal with sensory or emotional difficulties that are unplugging him/her in that moment.

Helping the reluctant child experience motivation is much more likely to get them closer to the group than trying to induce shame or a sense of duty.

Shift from “They should” thinking to asking, “What is the goal of this

child’s misbehavior and how can I help him/her achieve a more pro-social version of that goal?”

Caution: Children who are particularly needy, physically rough, worried or raucous can rarely be left to roam alone.

The shadow may choose to use a Montessori technique called “gluing” to warmly and firmly wrap one arm around a reluctant adopter and take him/her along as the shadow scurries around the edges of the group helping the easy adopters plug into the group’s

..... **Purposeful language demands help you keep momentum.**

Remember that we form groups because we want the class to work together, NOT for the convenience of the adult.

Sometimes a teacher needs to give every child the same message, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that a meeting for the entire class is the best way to deliver that message.

If you want children to enact verbal instructions, rather than announcing once to the whole group, circulate among groups of children working on their own and repeat your message to each cluster.

Rotate and repeat information as it becomes relevant to each child and you’ll find he/she can adopt your instructions more quickly.

For learning how to use a new class microscope or to fully clean a lunch table, repeat the lesson for small groups already actively engaged in the task.

If each child needs to be holding an actual object to meaningfully engage with it, feel free to have the children already working independently with their materials lead the momentum.

Then move to small groups around the room, helping children connect with their work. Or move around as a shadow, guiding individuals to observe peers and find their own solutions.

Imagine you want all the children to learn to dip and flip their coats to put them on. If none of them have this skill, you will not be able to lead momentum. Instead, pull small groups of children you suspect will be early adopters and teach them to dip and flip ahead of the time that the group will all need coats on. Then set these children up as momentum leaders to model for the class.

Use clear and simple language.

Make language easier by using present tense.

Instead of “Why were you knocking the blocks over?”, try “The blocks are on the ground and the building group is sad and mad. How can we fix this?”

Make language easier to use by overusing names while dropping pronouns.

Instead of “You told her you were not going to play with her and you knew that she wanted to join you all”, try “Emma wants to play with Mark and Mark is in the play dough group.”

Make language clearer by using specific active verbs at the start of the message.

Instead of “We all need to help one another to do our best so we can be ready for our meeting”, try “This group needs to scoop the blocks, and match them on the shelf so we can tidy the rug for our meeting.”

Use the structure of your language to improve positive responses.

Phrase the default to aim at the outcome you desire.

People tend to accept the second(B) option in an A or B choice. So put the more desired outcome last in your list but respect the child’s choice.

For example, “Do you want to get out the markers or shall we use the fun crayons that we have here at the art table?”

Avoid “yes/no” questions.

Young children especially savor a chance to feel powerful by saying “No!”. Most people, when unsure, take the conservative option of saying no to something they don’t yet fully understand.

If you offer Yes/no questions, you will likely get a lot of “no”s no matter how desirable the choice. Phrase them in an A/B format, while remembering that it’s easiest for the listener to choose option B. Start with a few small specific options to get the group some momentum for answering before broadening to a “what else” type open question.

Instead of “Hey kids, do you think we could make a robot like that with our recycled materials?”, try, “If you were using this part to make a robot, what part would this be? Would this be a leg or something else?”, “Can you find a part that looks like it could be a robot’s arm?”, or “Now how else could we use these materials to build a robot?”

Use “I wonder” to introduce a topic or float an idea without directly asking a question that must be answered.

For example, “I wonder how the children will build a roof over their block building?” or “I wonder if Sam wants to put on his left shoe or his right shoe first?”

momentum. This closeness to the adult can be recharging for the child and the experience of seeing so many other early adopters plug in can be influential.

Don't reward the child artificially for joining the group by paying him/her with earned alone time.

Value proximity to the group as a mini step towards eventual full participation. If we pay for the child's participation in meeting time, we undermine the fact that it is an expectation not an option, and

we devalue the inherent fun of being with the group and instead emphasize the excitement of getting to escape the group for five minutes of iPad time.

Model the vocabulary needed for the answer.

Choose key words that your child might need to use to respond and "warm them up" by using them often before asking a question.

For example, "I wonder what Sarah might be in our restaurant game. Sarah could pretend to be the waitress, or the customer, or the chef at our restaurant.

The waitress is fun. The waitress gets the apron and the notepad. The customer is fun. The customer gets the good food to eat. The chef is fun. The chef gets to cook.

Hmm, I wonder if Sarah wants to be the waitress, or the customer, or the chef, or something else. Hey Sarah, who do you want to be in the restaurant game?"

Can the children visualize what you are saying?

Could you replace some of your explanation with a visual?

Bring a photo of the topic, bring the actual objects, make a photo chart to demonstrate steps; make a sign-up board where children can simply mark their choice of activity.

Use the word "picture..." to introduce the topic you want children to think about before you begin asking for responses.

For example, "Class, picture the gate to our outdoor garden".

Enhance the imagery in your language by using the Lindamood-Bell gestalt imagery words.

Add details about some of these concrete categories: Number, color, shape, size. What parts? What name? What sound, what mood, what background, or what perspective?

For example, "Picture that black gate with about ten metal bars. Can you see it in your mind? Can you hear the way it goes 'squeak' as it opens? Now picture it painted bright blue! Now picture who is standing there when it opens. Is it someone silly, or is it someone you know?"

Keep instructions focused on what you want children to do (which can be visualized) vs. what you DO NOT want them to do (an absence of an action is hard to visualize.)

Instead of asking how they will replace their negative behavior, (Spilling milk as they walk to their tables.), help them visualize

their replacement behavior, (Carrying the glass with two hands while walking slowly.).

Anthropomorphize your instructions into characters.

Instead of "make sure to keep your books in their library bag, try "The books are scared when they sleep over at your house. Make sure you tuck them into their library bag sleeping bags so they will feel cozy and they'll make it back to school safe and sound."

Instead of "Put your coat on the other way when you dip and flip", try "The hood is so tricky when you dip and flip, so sneak up behind the hood and then slip your hands into the little arm tunnels."

ACT it out with puppets.

Use a puppet to act out the instructions. Remember to model what you want the children to do more than negative examples. The children will want to try what they see so demonstrating mistakes can increase the chances that children will repeat them.

Use theatrical speech.

Can you make your tone pleasing and inviting? Can you sing instead of talk?

Consider if certain reluctant children are soothed by only high or low pitched speech. Instead of instructing, make your message more inviting with a simple repetitive sing song tone or turning your words into a song.

Can you use repetition to make the information sound like a nursery rhyme?

For example, "We need to scoop scoop scoop all the sand up. Scoop that sand right up."

Use sentence frames to make language more familiar.

The whole group is going todip their hands in!

The whole group is going todip and flip!

The whole group is going toflip the coat right over their heads!

Use a gasp, or an "Oh!" to gain attention in an exciting manner quickly.

"Oh, that is such a tall tower you built!"