

## 5 Tips for Running a POWerful Mat Chat

- (1) **Have a transition:** *In order to help the children get ready for the mat-chat, designate a special place on the mat or in your building. For example, you may have a “ring” design on your floor made with different color mats. In this example, you might have everyone line up as they start class and say with excitement, “everyone go stand on a space on a red mat and clap as loud as you can!” Then walk over to where the children are standing and say “Lock it up!” The children are to respond, “Lock it up, Sir (Mam!)” Then take your seat and start the mat-chat.*
- (2) **Set the stage:** *If your children are slouching or facing the wrong way, you may find that they are distracted. Here’s a helpful hint—make sure YOU are the one facing the door (and their parents) NOT them! This way, the children will be focused on you, and parents will be able to hear you with ease. You are educating the parents as much as the children during a mat-chat. If children are slouching, I often make a positive example of someone who is sitting up straight. “Everyone look at Jackie. She is showing such great respect by having her back straight, her head held high, and her eyes on me. Great job, Jackie.” Jackie will be beaming and her classmates, as if someone is pulling them up by a string, will amazingly, sit up as well. You might say then, “Great, now it looks like everyone is ready to learn.” You will find that others hope you pick them next time to set the example.*
- (3) **Be animated and alive:** *Obviously, if you show excitement, so will the students. The converse of that is also correct, if you show boredom and lethargy, so will your class. Which one would you rather have?*
- (4) **Use open ended questions for inquiry and closed ended questions for energy and unity.** *An open-ended question is one that asks for each child to formulate their own answer. For example, “What respectful choices do you make each day that show your family that you care?” A closed ended question is one that has a definite answer, usually “yes sir” or “no sir” or “yes ma’am” or “no ma’am.” For example, “are you going to show respect at your house this week, if so say “yes, sir!” There is only one correct answer. The class answers in unison and it is very exciting. It is important to end your mat-chat this way since it gets everyone charged up!*
- (5) **Praise, praise, praise.** *Children love to be recognized. It is sometimes scary to speak in front of the class. When someone speaks (especially someone who does not often speak in class), let them know you appreciate it. For example, “Wow, Johnny, what a GREAT answer! Thank you for sharing that with us.” You may speak with Johnny after class and let him know how proud you were.*