

Patti Komara

Tumblebear Connection

PO Box 117

Dyer, IN 46311

Phone (219) 865-2274

Fax (219) 865-2389

www.tumblebear.com

pkomara@sbcglobal.net

Keeping Preschoolers Coming Back

I know you're aware of the benefits of Preschool Gymnastics in a gym school- increased revenue, a feeder program for the teams and school-age classes, keeping the gym full during the day and getting full use of your facility, and above all...it's a sound program increasing flexibility, coordination, and self-confidence for the youngster. But, after a few years of these cute little tykes rolling and cartwheeling in your gym, it's tough to come up with new and different things to work into lesson plans.

You need to create a fail-proof, errorless arena so that failure is kept to a minimum and success to a maximum for every child.

If you want your students to keep coming back to your gym, making it fun while they learn is imperative. If you don't make it fun, the children won't want to return and if you don't teach them something, the parents won't take the time and effort to bring them back. You need to leave them wanting more! the goal is to have the child awaken daily and ask his mom, "Is this gymnastics day?"

Kids don't like to stand in line, so give each of them their own carpet square to carry around with them. They can call it their "magic carpet". Then, when they are sitting on it and waiting for their turn, they can be doing straddle stretched, push-ups, sit-ups, butterflies, or anything to keep them busy. With the carpet square, they have their own designated spot to more easily perform these skills in an orderly fashion. A sheet of ethafoam could be a snowbank, pieces of cut up vinyl in geometric shapes, or a hula-hoop to sit in and perform skills.

The real key to a successful preschool gymnastics class is to keep them busy. Activity is a must. The idea is to orchestrate the class, so the class is passively manipulated through various stations meeting many different objectives. For instance, if you are using four sets of unevens, the first set would be where the instructor meets the "gymnastic objectives" such as back hip pullover, straddle swings, swing ½ turn, etc. From there the children would move to Bars Set #2 where there hangs an innertube and they try to throw the bean bags one at a time through it. Bars set #3 the children might attempt to do leg-ups and knock off the two bean bags perched on the low bar. The fourth bars set has different size barrels leading up to the low bar where mounted on top of the highest barrel, the child can now perform a "perfect" front support mount. The height places the child ABOVE the bar so they now feel in control. With no more than eight children in a group, this should keep them busy for their rotation. This set-up can be used for all programs for ages one and older.

For a unique lesson plan, tell the children that today they will be taking a trip to the circus (zoo, farm, jungle, or forest). At this spot the children tell the instructor what

type of animals they might see, sounds they make, and the way the animal walks or moves.

Elaborate and tell them they need to use their imagination. “You’ve heard of the American Nation, the British Nation, and the Russian Nation...well, this is your imagination and it’s right here!” (pointing to your head)

Another excellent lesson plan is to use the children’s Yoga book by Rachel Carr, Be a Frog, Bird, or Tree. Show them the graphics in the book of the animals and then talk a short while about that animal, and finally perform the yoga position that appears in the book.

If you don’t use incline mats, barrels, mailboxes, small trampolines, donuts, etc...you can still have a great preschool gymnastics program. There are a number of pieces of homemade equipment that can be used. We use beach towels, during the tumbling section of your class. Spread them out and “get a tan”. Then, hop up and jump across it. Then...longways. Log roll longways holding one edge. (At this point talk to the class about fire safety...STOP, DROP, AND ROLL). Then, teach them basic math by having them fold the towel in halves and fourths and “feel” that concept. After they fold each section for the fractions have them jump over it, reach over it, do headstands and handstands on it. Have them place their hands on it, and then their feet on it for round-offs. Also use it as a cushion for practicing backbends. Ideas are endless. Have a brainstorming session with the staff of the gym and create new angles to old lesson plans. Once you get started, it gets easier.

Use costumed characters, crazy hats, whatever is fun for that child to learn physical fitness and gymnastic skills. Remember, that is how Sesame Street became so

popular. They made it fun to learn. What you need to do in your gym school is to create a “physical Sesame Street” for your students.

Patti Komara’s Bio

Patti Komara has owned a gymnastics school in Dyer, Indiana since 1969 offering gymnastics, dance, swimming, and a fitness-based educational preschool called Gym-N-Learn. Patti began speaking at national seminars in 1981 and has led hundreds of training workshops. Patti’s Tumblebear Connection has produced more than 80 instructional DVDs. She has written books on yearly lesson plans for The internationally known Tumblebear Gym Program, School-age Gymnastics, Dancing GymBears, YogaBears, CheerBears, Gym-N-Learn, and her very successful Swim Program. Patti co-authored the original USAG preschool KAT certification program. In 2003 she was named USAG Business Leader of the Year. In 2005 Patti was selected as Client of the Year by Action International and in 2006 was given the national service award by USAG. In 2009 Patti began formal consulting for those in our industry and in 2010 her gym, Patti’s All-American, was named in her local newspaper as “Best of the Region” once again. Patti has over 6000 subscribers to her “In the Loop Monthly E-Newsletter” which she has published since February 2007.