**7 Musts for Using Manipulatives**

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**Grades: Pre-K thru 8th**

* Talk with students about why manipulatives help them learn math. Introduce the concept they will learn with the material.
* From day one, set ground rules for using materials. Talk about the similarities and differences between manipulatives in class and playing with toys or games. With toys, children can make up their own rules. With manipulatives, they are given specific problems and activities.
* It is important for students not to interfere with one another.
* Set up a system for storing materials and familiarize students with it.
* Time for free exploration is worth the investment. Free exploration time allows students to satisfy their curiosity so they don’t become distracted from the assigned tasks.
* For easy reference, post class charts about manipulative materials.
* Manipulatives are a natural for writing assignments. They provide concrete objects for children to describe.
* Let parents get their hands on manipulatives. It is important for parents to understand why their children are using materials.