

## The First Ten State Changes

The definition for a state change is “A change in a student’s thoughts, feelings or physiology”. Remember, you only need to change one of these to change all three. For example, if I can tell a humorous anecdote and get students laughing, I have changed their feelings and thoughts, so I have also bought some more time with their physiology so they will be able to sit and attend to the lesson for a bit longer.

The following are the suggested first 10 state changes that you may want to try. They are all physiological state changes. The students must do something with their bodies to engage in these state changes.

Remember, watching students’ physiology is one of the best ways to know when your students need a break.

The physiological cues to watch for are called: moving, talking, physiology, gaze, little interruptions become big distractions, and lack of student participation.

Skill 2.4 *Gimme a Break!* can help you develop the skills to know when students need a state change.

### 1. Deep Breath

Our brains run on empty. The brain does not store food or oxygen, and must therefore rely on a constant supply of richly-oxygenated blood to supply it with nutrients and Oxygen. To make sure there is plenty of oxygen in the blood, a great state change is to have students stop what they are doing and either sitting or standing, take a few deep breaths together before beginning their work again.

### 2. In, out Down

This is another state change related to breath. It is listed in Skill 8.4 *Stopping Routine*.

To help students refocus at the end of an exciting activity, I'll often facilitate them taking a couple of deep breaths as a group, before they sit down. This became so common in my classroom, I now call it "In, out, down". I say "Ok everyone, take a deep breath in (hold) and let it out. Take another deep breath in (hold), and as you let it out, slowly sit down. This is a great routine to stop one activity, and to help them refocus into the next activity.

### **3. Finger-Thumb switch**

Hold up finger on one hand, hold up a thumb on the other hand, then— switch! Your finger hand holds up a thumb, and the thumb hand holds up a finger. Go back and forth several times as fast as you can.

### **4. Nose-ear Switch**

Hold your nose with one hand, reach across your head to grab an ear with the other hand and switch back and forth several times as fast as you can.

### **5. Toe Lifts**

The body has several great blood pumps. The best of course is the heart, but the calf muscles also help keep blood moving. When it's time for a state change, students stand up and do a couple of toe-lifts. They can do both feet at once, one foot at a time, or any other variation that you create.

### **6. Change Location**

Human memories are very contextual. We remember best when we can recall the context where we first stored the memory.

When changing subjects or topics in class, one way to change the context for the students would be for you to change where you are teaching from in the room. If that is not possible or convenient, give the students 20 seconds to move all of their belongings to a new location in the room.

## **7. One-song break**

When students need a state change, put on a short song and let them stand up, stretch, get a drink from the water fountain, etc.

Two rules:

One:

They can't sit down while the song is playing, and When the song is done.

Two:

They must be sitting down and ready to continue learning by the end of the song.

Note: I like to play songs from the sixties—many of them are short (Many Beatles songs are just over two minutes duration), have clean lyrics and are familiar to students because many of them are in movie sound tracks or have been used for commercials.

## **8. Stand and Stretch**

Have the students stand up, put on some soft music, and either you or a student lead them in some gentle stretches i.e. have them bend over to touch their toes, reach up to the sky, slowly stretch side-to-side with their hands raised over their heads.

## **9. Cross Clap**

Tell the students “Every time my hands cross, you clap”. You position your hands apart, one above your head, one by your knees. You quickly switch the position of your hands. As they cross in the middle, your students clap.

## **10. Teach it standing**

We have a teaching paradigm that students sit while learning. Break things up a bit and have students stand by their desks during part of a lesson.