Brain Breaks

Brain breaks should be regularly incorporated into students’ schedules. At the very least, a brain break should be done between each class. However, since the brain fatigues after 7 minutes, consider using it for processing learning information. Also, when the energy in the room is really high or low, consider a brain/movement break as a means to support regulation and/or reduce or increase energy. If you are using a breathing exercise, remember that breathing in activates the sympathetic division of your Autonomic Nervous Response System (ANS) and breathing out activates the parasympathetic division of your ANS. Therefore, breathing out should be longer than breathing in. Many brain breaks incorporate crossing the mid-line activities which helps each hemisphere of the brain to “talk” to each other. Crossing the midline also strengthens the corpus callosum – the broad band of nerve fibers that connects the left and right hemisphere of the brain.

For younger children, you can put brain breaks on popsicle sticks and have them choose one. They can be categorized as individual, group, breathing, movement, etc.). for older children, you can put them on cards, have a computer folder with them or have them create a way to make a “catalogue” of choices.

Below are some examples of brain breaks.

1. Say the alphabet out loud and with each letter write the corresponding number in the air. See if you end on number 26 and the letter “Z”.
2. Have one hand with your thumb up and the other with your pinky out, switch back and forth.
3. Blowing paper off plate with straw
4. Passing books down a double line of students by pressing on the book with palm of hands.
5. Put hands behind your back or head and breathe
6. Lion roar breathing. Breathe in and then when you exhale, roar like a lion.
7. Square breathing – draw a square in the air. Breathe in when you draw the first line, out for the second, in for the third, out for the fourth. Repeat.
8. Ear/nose switch. Cross left hand over right hand and put it on your ear. Your right hand should be on your nose. Switch.
9. Alternating hands. Have one hand move up and down (palm out) and the other move back and forth (palm out) at the same time.
10. Blink with your left eye and snap with your right hand. Switch.
11. Wall push ups
12. Rubbing your ears (ears have the most sensory points of any other part of your body).
13. Sitting against the wall without a chair
14. Isometrics
15. Touch right elbow to right knee, reverse
    1. Add counting by threes
    2. Add humming