



*Thank you*

FOR YOUR  
INTEREST IN  
CORWIN

Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Answers to Your Biggest Questions About Creating a Dynamic Classroom*.

[LEARN MORE](#) about this title!

# How Do I Energize a Sleepy Class or Calm Down a Wound-Up Class?



Students of any age are unpredictable balls of energy. Their minds and bodies are going through intense changes, they may have consumed a handful of sugar for breakfast, or perhaps they had trouble sleeping the night before because their younger sibling kept them awake. As strange as it seems, one day they can be bouncing off the walls as they walk into your classroom, and the next day they can be asleep on their desk before class starts. However, the learning must go on!

Use your discretion to determine which of the activities can be tweaked for your grade level and for the learners in your class. Have fun with it!

If your students are too wound up to start the class (after PE, lunch, etc.), you can try the following:

- 1 Play relaxing music and start the class with a few minutes of independent reading.
- 2 Start class with a 4-7-8 breathing exercise. This breathing exercise has been proven to calm and clear the mind. Close your mouth and inhale for four seconds. Hold your breath for seven seconds, then exhale out of your mouth for eight seconds. Repeat a few times.
- 3 A simple game of Simon Says can redirect a bit of the energy so they become focused on you and burn off some steam.
- 4 Place a visually appealing treat (cookie, candy, etc.) on the document camera, and zoom in really close. Take the treat off of the camera and hide it in your desk. Calmly give the class directions on how they can “win” the treat if they follow all the beginning-of-class procedures. Perhaps they get a ticket of some sort when you see they are ready to learn, meaning they’ve written down their homework, they are quiet and focused, and they have their notebooks out, ready to go, and are waiting patiently. Students can write their names on the tickets and give them back to you. Then draw a name from your pile of tickets, and that student can have a treat. This will focus them quickly, as they will want to earn that ticket!
- 5 Make sure your voice is calm, and speak a little slower than usual. If you have a microphone, try using that instead of raising your voice. A screaming teacher creates an anxious class.
- 6 Instead of starting class by raising your voice, simply have the start-of-class directions written large enough for the class to see, or have it projected, and point to it. Be one step ahead of your class when they arrive.
- 7 Read a picture book or, even better, play an audio chapter of a book (almost any chapter of a book being read aloud can be found on YouTube). There is something really soothing about listening to a book being read by somebody other than their teacher. This also gives you a bit of a vocal break so you can put your full self into the lesson.



## Keep in Mind

It’s helpful to keep this list of strategies (and your own strategies you’ll discover and add to it) taped somewhere near your desk so you can pull an idea quickly on the fly. If you keep it at eye level or higher, it can’t get covered by papers on your desk.

If your students are dragging their feet or half asleep as you are starting class, you can try the following:

- 1 Play upbeat music softly as the students are entering class or as they are working independently. You may see students start to bob their heads a bit and perk up.
- 2 Depending on the grade level, a simple game of Simon Says can get students up and moving (yes, it can work both ways).
- 3 Try a game called Stand if You. It's simple: The teacher makes a statement, and students stand if it applies to them. This will get the blood flowing and also works as a movement activity during a natural transition in a long lesson. Weave in personal and academic material you just taught, if you feel like it. Examples:
  - ☺ Stand if you have more than one brother.
  - ☺ Stand if you know the difference between a simile and a metaphor.
  - ☺ Stand if you have ever fallen off a skateboard.
- 4 If a class repeatedly comes to you sleepy (e.g., Period 1 at 7:30 a.m.), try starting the class with an on-your-feet engaging activity, like visiting stations all around your room or doing a quick trivia challenge on your content (perhaps for a small treat). It's helpful to have these materials (debate questions, etc.) ready to grab from somewhere in your desk or an area of your room so you can wake the class up with little delay!
- 5 Try a debate or "would you rather" activity (pop culture or current events make engaging topics) to get students moving and talking to one another. The more students on their feet, the better. Perhaps have a running list of engaging debate or "would you rather" questions ready to go and taped near your desk to use quickly if needed. If you can tie the questions into what you are teaching, even better.

An engagement trick is if students come in wound up, you could say, "Okay, we can either go right into the learning or play a game first." Students will (almost) always choose the game option. Little do they know it's actually an activity to get them ready for learning. Then you can do Simon Says, Stand if You, or the like, and they will think it was their idea. This is also empowering for students and will either wake them up or calm them down, depending on what they need. In elementary and middle, you can call it a game. In high school, you can do a debate (pop culture or current events) or some other engaging activity that gets them moving and talking to one another.

It is helpful to keep a list of both energizing and calming activities hung up (so it doesn't get lost in the shuffle of papers) near your desk to refer to quickly if needed. Our minds become so full of everything we have to remember during the day that the list can remind you of all the tools you have in your teacher toolbox.

Helpful tips for those one to two students who seem to never come into class ready to learn:

### \* Tip #1

If one student in particular is "bouncing off the walls," send them on a five-minute walk around campus or give them an errand, like delivering a note to another teacher or walking something to the office. Set a timer so they are accountable for coming back quickly.



### Equity and Access

If you have students who are in a wheelchair in your class, adjust the Stand if You game to Raise Your Hand if You or Clap Twice if You.



### Keep in Mind

There may be a deeper issue as to why a student is falling asleep in your Period 1 class every day. Check in with a counselor to see what other supports a student can receive.

**Tip #2**

If one to two students consistently come into the classroom not ready to learn, consider starting them on a behavior contract.

**Tip #3**

Schedule a 1:1 with these students individually during a lunch meeting or other set time. If the students do redirect their behavior, praise them for it with private words or a short note. Plan to check in regularly to build a relationship; positive relationships go a long way toward engagement, positive behavior, and learning.

You may feel the impulse to . . .	Take a deep breath, and try this instead.
Raise your voice at the class to startle them or shame them into being quiet.	Start class with a calming voice, and write out directions on the document camera so students can redirect themselves. Have a calm talk with the class a few minutes after they have quieted down about your expectations for how they enter class.
Keep teaching even when students are about to fall asleep at their desks (or perhaps even are sleeping on their desks).	If it is one or two students, gently tap their desks as you walk by them while teaching. If it is most of the class, do an activity that requires them to move (see suggestions above) when there is a natural break in the lesson to get that blood flowing! This also shows you value that they are learning, not just getting through the information.

**Ask Yourself:**

- (In the beginning of a class) Is my classroom of students ready to learn for the day, or should I do one of the above strategies?
- (In the middle of a class, especially a long block period) Does my class of students need a boost of energy? If so, try one of the strategies above and see the difference it can make!

Notes

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---