Energizers for Virtual Learning!!

A handful of energizer ideas that work virtually- some old favorites with adaptations and others designed specifically for elearning.

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What is an Energizer?

An Energizer is a playful, purposeful way to incorporate physical exercise, and mental stimulation into their day. This quick whole-group activity that can be done anywhere and anytime in the school day. They can be lively or calming.They can have an academic component or just be for fun. They can be used to transition children between learning activities, as a pick-me up during long intensive lessons, as a way to keep order during times of waiting, and a focusing tool to use when students are outside the classroom (hallway, ex), and in many other ways. Energizers can be in a circle, at desks, tables, waiting in line, or digitally. Using Energizers doesn't take much time, but it makes a big impact on learning.

Teachers know it instinctively, and see it everyday. The misbehaviors, the talking, wandering around the room. Research supports that kids need to move. To feel well and learn well, kids need to move. And they need to move at regular intervals throughout the school day. Not just at recess, or after school free-play. Children's movement expert Jean Blaydes Madigan offers these thoughts on movement and learning:

Daily exercise cements the details learned in the previous 48 hours. If that physical activity doesn't take place, anywhere from 20% - 80% of that learned cognitive information is lost . . . When you sit longer than 17 minutes . . . your brain essentially tells your body, "You can go to sleep because no movement occurred." (Madigin, nd.)

Yet even when we know how important movement is for children, our packed school schedules. Often has us feeling that we can't spare any time away from lessons. These Energizers below can be done in a few playful minutes, get children moving, breathing deeply, laughing, singing, or chanting. Then, with spirits refreshed, bodies relaxed, and minds clear, they are ready to refocus on more, and more productive learning.

Energizers are even more important now more than ever, since you are starting virtually and are working on building relationships with the children. These types of activities help build relationships and community. Not just for you and the kids, but the kids with each other's relationships as well. Doing these together makes your time together more valuable, and fun. Do them with the kids, laugh with them. Show them that you are in this together. This is the perfect way to start this year, getting to know each other. Using collaboration, empathy, self-control, perseverance, assertiveness. All while real-life problem solving. Since you already started school, you can act like it is the new first day if needed! There are tips at the bottom of this.

One thing that helps get this going smoothly is Interactive Modeling. Interactive modeling is a simple, quickly paced way of teaching that can lead students a stronger mastery of skills than traditional modeling. It's effective for teaching any skill or procedure that students need to do in a specific way, such as filling out an answer sheet or talking with a partner about a reading selection. Interactive Modeling works because instead of lecturing or traditional modeling, it creates a clear mental image of the expected behavior for students, fully engages them in noticing details about it, and immediately gives them a chance to practice and receive teacher feedback. Interactive Modeling works for older and younger ages and for all academic subjects. For steps, tips, and a blank Interactive Modeling Guide look at the end of the activities.

My Bonny

Grades K–2

An old favorite song with a twist.

For the first few times, simply teach the words and tune of the song. (Remember, just singing together can be very energizing!) Once the students are comfortable with the song, introduce the challenge of this song-game. You can also do some teaching on the meaning of the word "bonny."

The Words

<div align="center">

My Bonny lies over the ocean

My Bonny lies over the sea

My Bonny lies over the ocean

So bring back my Bonny to me.

Bring back,

Bring back,

Oh bring back my Bonny to me, to me.

Bring back,

Bring back,

Oh bring back my Bonny to me.

</div>

The Actions

Begin by sitting and singing the song together. Whenever you sing a word in the song that begins with the letter "B", alternate your position from sitting to standing, and remain in that new position until the next "B" word comes along.

Continue as much as desired, speeding up the song for an extra fun challenge.

Variation

Count off by 2s. Have the 1s begin by sitting, and the 2s begin by standing. Then watch and enjoy as the children bob up and down opposite one another.

Adaption for elearning: They can sit on their own chair at home.

Source: From Roser, Susan Lattinzi *Energizers!* for Center for Responsive School © 2009

Aroostasha [ah-ROOS-ta-sha]

Grades K–6

This silly movement chant will get everyone giggling. It's most often taught in a circle, but it can be done anywhere. Students will need space to move their arms from left to right, and space to bend forward. Discuss and practice how to do this safely and still have fun.

The Words

The group starts off chanting these words together, and then repeats the words together after each movement instruction from the leader.

<div align="center">

Aroostasha! Aroostasha!

Aroostasha-sha!

Aroostasha! Aroostasha!

Aroostasha-sha!

</div>

The Actions

Start with hands clasped in front of you. As you chant, move your hands from right to left, pulsing them to the beat.

<div align="center">

Repeat, and add another movement:

Leader(s): Thumbs up! *Group echoes: Thumbs up!*

Repeat Aroostasha chorus

Continue, each time adding another movement:

Leader(s): Thumbs up! *Group echoes: Thumbs up!*

Leader(s): Wrists together! *Group echoes: Wrists together!*

Repeat Aroostasha chorus

Possible movements to add on:

Elbows in!   Knees together!

Toes together!   Bottoms up!

Tongue out!

</div>

Variations

Divide the class into two groups. One group can be the "Aroostasha Leaders," deciding together beforehand what actions they will demonstrate. Be sure to first brainstorm appropriate motions that the group can do safely yet creatively. Children can also be invited to be individual leaders. You might choose to eliminate the "tongue out" motion if you have speech impaired children in your class.

Adaption for elearning: You can group and pair by using names in a chat box.

Source: From Roser, Susan Lattinzi *Energizers!* for Center for Responsive School © 2009

Do What I said, Not what I Say

Grades 4–6

The Actions

Teacher (or student) stands facing classmates. This leader calls out a command. Students must follow the previously given command, not the immediate one.

The Words

Leader says: "Stand on one foot!"

Students do nothing.

Leader says: "Hop on one foot!"

Students stand on one foot.

Leader says: "Flap your arms!"

Students hop on one foot.

Leader says: "Pat your head!"

Students flap their arms.

Leader says: "Sit down!"

Students pat their heads.

Leader says: "Fold your hands on your desks!"

Students sit down.

Leader says: "Fold your hands on your desks!"

Students fold their hands on their desks and are ready for the next lesson or activity of the day.

Variation

To add more challenge, the leader may pantomime the motion as well as say it.

Adaption for elearning: Make sure the caller is on Presenter View.

Source: From Roser, Susan Lattinzi _Energizers!_ for Center for Responsive School © 2009

Virtual Scavenger Hunt

Grades 4-6

Do you remember doing scavenger hunts as a kid during hot summers? We loved them too! While you can't replicate the feeling of finding an object up a tree or buried in the dirt, you can get an online team working together and having fun trying to find the items on a list.For this task, prepare a list of things you want people to find online. You can see an example of such a list in the instructions for this method. You can make the list purely fun – where people have to collect GIF or Youtube video responses to the scavenger hunt, or make it tailored to your work. Split your group into teams and set up a timer depending on the size of your list. This online energizer works best if people are under pressure and are then encouraged to share what they found!

Step 1:

Prepare a list of things you want people to find online or in their home. You can make the list purely fun - where people have to collect GIF or Youtube video responses to the scavenger hunt or make it tailored to your organization and team. Here's some of the things you might have on your list:

- Find the most popular song for the year of each person in your team's birth and find the official music video on Youtube.
- Recreate the name of your school with each person on your team recreating a letter with a
- Find an image for a celebrity lookalike for each member of your group.
- Each person finds an ingredient for a cake in their house and takes a photograph so collectively, you have all the ingredients. Each group chooses their cake, though the more complex or interesting, the better.
- Each person recreates a famous painting using objects in their house. Bonus points for including family members, kids or pets.
- Anything you and/or the kids would think was fun!

Note that depending on the time you'd like to allocate to this exercise, you may want to limit the list, though equally, having a large list that is hard to complete can help groups work together and prioritize.

Step 2:

Break everyone into groups. If running with a small team, you may want to keep everyone together. If using Zoom, set everyone into breakout rooms, alternatively, have each group go into separate meetings for this session.

Have each group use a collaborative tool such as Google Docs or an online whiteboard to collect their items.

Step 3:

Set the timer and get everyone started! If a team gets finished first, have them shout out in the main room! You will want to adjust based on your list, though we recommend running this for **20 minutes or so.**

Step 4:

Bring the group back together to share and debrief. Have each team bring their collected items into a shared Google Doc or preferably, an online whiteboard and present them to the group in turn.
Timebox this so each team has 3 minutes to present.

Adaption for elearning: By grouping them with names in the chat box.

Source: James Smart, SessionLab, Virtual Scavenger Hunt:
https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/virtual-scavenger-hunt

Eyeball Yoga

Grades K-6

[Video: Eyeball yoga, and other body movements to stretch - virtually](#)

Double This, double that

Grades 2-6

1. Partners begin facing each other with hands in loose fists held up at about chin level.
2. Say "*This This*" and tap palms twice against partner's palms.
3. Say "*Double Double*" and tap pinkie side of fists twice against same side of partner's fists.
4. Say "*That That*" and tap back of hands twice against backs of partner's hands.
5. Say "*Double This*" and tap fists and then palms once against partner's palms.
6. Say "*Double That*" and tap fists and then back of hands once against back of partner's hands.
7. Say "*Double Double*" and tap pinkie side of fists twice against same side of partner's fists.
8. Say "*This That*" and tap palms once against partner's palms and then once against backs of partner's hands

Variations:
- Play without sound when you need a quiet waiting game.
- Math connection: Change words to Double Double, Two Two, Equals Equals, Four Four, Double Two, Equals Four, Double Double, Two Four (repeat with 3, 4, 5, 6, etc.)

Adaption for elearning: You can partner up by using names in the chat box. Do movements to the computer screen area NOT the screen, as their partner does the motions back.

Source: From Roser, Susan Lattinzi *Energizers!* for Center for Responsive School © 2009

6 Free things to do during virtual meetings

Grades 1-5

Free Games & Activities for Virtual Class Meetings

Spelling Stroll

Grades 1-6

1. Before you begin, establish what "strolling" will look like and talk about what to do if two people reach a chair at the same time.

2. Choose a spelling or sight word with which all students are familiar, and tell the class which word you have selected.

3. Together, you and the students spell the word aloud, taking one step for each letter as you move about the room.

4. At the last letter, each person quickly and carefully sits down at the seat they're nearest to.

5. One person will be left standing. That person becomes the caller and chooses the next word for the group to spell together. He or she rejoins the stroll as the word is spelled.

6. Repeat as many times as you'd like.

Variations:

- You can do this energizer with skip-counting and math facts, too! For example, the caller says "7×12!" The group then skip-counts by 12's as they take 7 steps: 12, 24, 36, 48, 60, 72, 94.

Adaption for elearning: You can get them ordered by names in the chat box. A stroll can be around their chair or desk. Still want to be close enough to hear the words.

Source: From Roser, Susan Lattinzi *Energizers!* for Center for Responsive School © 2009

Dum Dum, Da Da

Grades K-6

1. If necessary, discuss the meaning of the word "echo."

2. Share ways to maintain self-control while staying in one place.

3. Now begin. Children simply repeat your words and actions, like this:

 Leader says:

- *Dum Dum* and claps thighs twice, then *Dah Dah* and claps hands twice.
- Group echoes leader, saying:
- *Dum Dum* while clapping thighs twice, then *Dah Dah* and clapping hands twice.

4. Repeat, varying movements and pace as you wish. Try starting off at a low energy level, moving up to medium, and then on to high. Then, transition back down through the energy levels in reverse, ending with very calm movements. During the last round, whispering the words or softly saying "Shh Shh shh shh!" works well.

Movement ideas: Touching toes, reaching far to right and then left, nodding head up and down or side to side, snapping fingers, reaching forwards and then behind back, reaching up high, bending at waist, moving knees up and down as if marching, doing jumping jacks, making large arms circles, jumping high and then touching ground.

Adaption for elearning: Make sure you talk about having enough room to move safely.

Source: From Roser, Susan Lattinzi *Energizers!* for Center for Responsive School © 2009

Touch Blue

Grades K-6

The way to play is simple: the facilitator calls out something to touch, for example: "Touch blue!" Each person then has to move and touch something with that colour (a blue marker, a co-worker with a blue shirt, etc).

The facilitator continues, "touch red... yellow... something fluffy..."

This is great with video teleconferences as you see your colleagues stretching and moving around together—but the laughter is also rewarding.

For the advanced group, you can get more complex: "With your left foot, touch something on your desk... while doing that, with your right elbow, touch something yellow...) Or rotate it with students that get to call.

Adaption for elearning: Make sure you talk about enough space to move safely.

Source: Laila Von Alvensleben, Mural, Online Warm-ups & Energizers, Touch Blue

https://www.mural.co/blog/online-warm-ups-energizers

Doodling Together

Grades K-5

Drawing under pressure is a fun and engaging way to energize a group, allowing creativity to take precedence and provide counterpoint to the other exercises in a session. Doodling together in an online setting requires some creativity too, but can be very effective and fun. We recommend using an online whiteboard and setting up a virtual table where each participant is sat in groups of five – and have each participant put a post-it note with their name on and arrange them in circles large enough to support moving pictures around.

First, everyone draws the first image and puts it underneath their name tag in the online whiteboard.

Then, when the time comes to pass the drawing on, pass it along to the next person in the circle.

Rinse and repeat!

By the end of the five steps, each person will have the original image back.

Don't have an online whiteboard? You can use Google Docs or Slack to pass your image to the next person and can even upload images drawn on paper or in digital drawing tools if you wish! Or just doodle on paper and show the image.

Source: Anja Ebers, Session Lab, Doodling Together

https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/doodling-together

Sketch your neighbor

Grades 1-5

1. Assign each team member with another person's name and send them a direct message to let them know—it's important to send it privately so the others can't see the names.

2. Share the mural link with the participants on the call. Give everyone 1 minute to silently draw the person they identified in the mural (tip: play music during the silent moment in the background and make sure the sound can be heard by the participants through your microphone).

3. When everyone has finished drawing, take turns guessing who drew who.

   Create a mural from the Sketch Your Neighbor template for this activity.

Alternative: You can also do the exercises using pen and paper, and then share your drawings by showing them on the webcam. The facilitator should make sure everyone has pen and paper ahead of the session.

Source: Laila Von Alvensleben, Mural, Online Warm-ups & Energizers, Sketch your Neighbor
https://www.mural.co/blog/online-warm-ups-energizers

Hello kitty

Grades 1-5

Some of the most effective energizers are also the most fun. We love this energizer as it's really simple, generates laughter and can help equalise a room of people instantly. Running this in your online meeting or workshop whether people are strangers or long term colleagues can be really effective when it comes to bringing up the energy levels!

First, separate the room into two groups: puppies and kitties.

You can have the groups either use nonverbal feedback icons or put their hands up to delineate which team they're on. If you're being particularly creative, have them change their background image to either a puppy or kitten!

This game works well on an honour system. The aim of the game is for the puppies, one at a time, to say hello to the kittens in any way possible and try to make any of them smile or laugh.

Use speaker view in Zoom so that each puppy is seen and heard clearly when it's their turn.

Whenever a kitten smiles or laughs, they join the puppy team. Continue until only one kitten remains or everyone becomes a puppy!

This online energizer is quick and easy and encourages people to overcome their shyness and be silly: particularly useful for remote teams that may be stressed or anxious over current world events.

Source: Hyper Island, Session Lab, Hello Kitty

   https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/hello-kitty

One, two, ping, four, pong

Grades 2-5

Here are the rules of the game:

1. Get in a circle.

2. Someone starts by saying any positive number which is not multiple of 3 or 5.

3. The next person mentally increments the number by one, then:
    If the number is not multiple of 3 or 5
       Says the number
    If the number is multiple of 3
       Says ping and clap
    If the number is multiple of 5
       Says pong and jump

Adaption for elearning: Instead of being in a circle. Follow the order from the top to the bottom (after the last name at the bottom, go back to the top). Or ordering names in the chat box.

Source: FUNRETROSPECTIVES, One, Two, Ping, Four, Pong

https://www.funretrospectives.com/one-two-ping-four-pong/
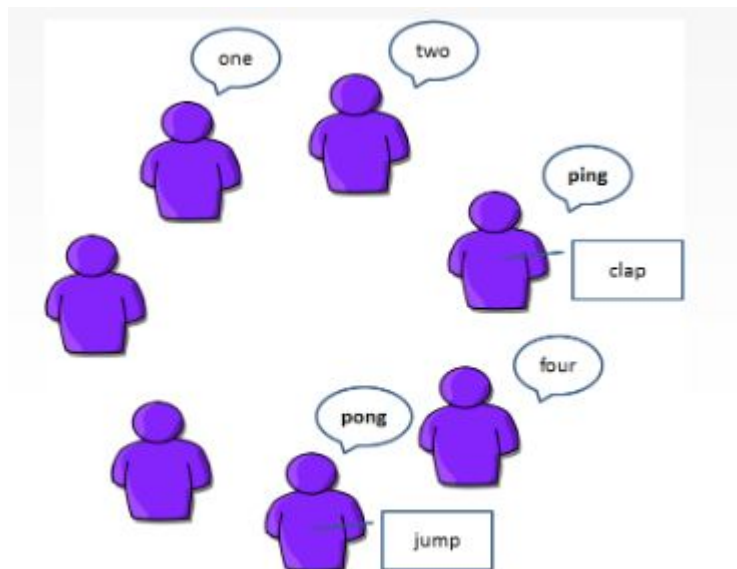
Isn't that crazy?

Grades K-5

Step by step:

1. Instruct the participants to form a circle.

2. Identify the order in which the communication will flow

3. One person starts by saying "isn't that crazy?"

4. The next person has to continue the story by adding 3 words

5. Then the next and so forth until the story ends.

It can go like this:

"isn't that crazy?"

"That birds fly"

"But I know"

"a flying cat"

"That has superpowers"

"And laser eyes"

"Freezes mobile apps"

"but not ours"

"Because of kryptonite"

This is a really fun and simple activity. Another variation is to start with ˜Once upon a time"and ask each person to add four words.

Adaption for elearning: Instead of moving in a circle. Follow the order from the top to the bottom (after the last name at the bottom, go back to the top). Or order by chat box.

Source: FUNRETROSPECTIVES, Isn't that crazy?

 https://www.funretrospectives.com/isnt-that-crazy/

Human rock, paper, scissors

Grades 2-5

Running the activity:

1. As a group, decide a full-body pose that will signify each element (e.g. Rock – each person of one group will bend down and hug their knees and curl into a ball so they look like a rock, Scissors – each person of one group will stand with legs shoulder-width apart and both arms up and hands behind the head so they look like a scissor).

2. After the poses are decided, break participants into two groups. For each round, each group will need to do one of the poses (everyone in each group will need to do the same pose). Each group will have 5 minutes to strategize.

3. Once all of the groups have their poses ready, a facilitator will have the two groups face each other and count down from 3 (i.e. 3….2…1….SHOOT). On "SHOOT" each group will need to strike one of the three poses. Rock beats Scissors, Scissors beat Paper, and Paper beats Rock.

4. Best out of 5 rounds wins.

I have learned the Human Rock Paper Scissors from Charles Du. This activity is especially fun because it can be modified to many different themes and variations. If the group is larger than 5 participants, split it into smaller groups (minimum 3, maximum 5), then run the activity, group by group

1. Instruct everyone on the group to open the remote board.

2. Each person should decide his/her personal selection: rock, paper or scissor. Write his/her name under the respective column, but do not hit "Enter"

3. Count down…3, 2, 1 and say SHOOT (Everyone should hit "Enter:"at the same time).

4. Check the result, then repeat (delete the items and go back to step 2) until there is one group winner.

Adaption for elearning: Group by name, or order names in the chat box.

Source: FUNRETROSPECTIVES, Charles Du, Human Rock, Scissors, and Paper

https://www.funretrospectives.com/human-rock-paper-scissors/

Guess my favorite song

Grades 1-5

Music has been with humans as long as we can collectively remember. Song sharing is a great team building tool. Music foster group interactions; music brings good memories and get people talking about something beyond work activities. It´s a great and simple team building activity.

Running the activity:

1. Give one post-it and a sharpie to each participant

2. Ask each participant to write their favorite song (please ask then to use uppercase and good handwriting to keep it anonymous).

3. Collect the notes using a hat (or a bag).

4. Shake it and leave the hat on the center of the room.

5. Ask one participant to walk to the hat, collect a note, read the song name out loudly and try guessing whose favorite song it is.

6. Optionally, the facilitator should find the song (spotify or similar) and play it for the group.

7. Is there a dance that goes with it? Or a dance that doesn't, but would be fun?

Variations: Guess my favorite movie? (youtube trailer?) Instead of writing the song names on post-it, ask people to add their favorite song (as a youtube link). Then follow the same steps: someone clicks on the video clip and makes a guess while everyone enjoys (or laughs about) the video clip.

Adaption for elearning: Have kids private message (in chat box) instead of post-its, so no one else knows.

Source: FUNRETROSPECTIVES, Gabriel Sixel, Guess My Favorite Song

   https://www.funretrospectives.com/guess-my-favorite-song/

Shape up

Grades K-5

Call out a shape (for example: triangle, heart, square, the letter "A", tree, house, …)
1. **Call out a shape (for example: triangle, heart, square, the letter "A", tree, house, …)**
2. **Ask people to move their arms and hands up/down or left/right to recreate the shape in the gallery mode you're viewing.**
3. **When the team has managed to make the shape, ask them to hold it so you can take a screenshot. Share it with the team and try to do another shape, progressively making them more complicated.**

Adaption for elearning: Before you start, select 'gallery mode' for your video conference tool so you can view everyone's thumbnails in a grid format (all thumbnails should be the same size).

Source: Laila Von Alvensleben, Mural, Online Warm-ups & Energizers, Shape Up
  https://www.mural.co/blog/online-warm-ups-energizers

Virtual charades

Grades 1-5

1. Pair each participant with someone else.

2. Ask each person to choose a title of a book, movie, TV show or song that their partner will have to imitate in front of the webcam to the rest of the group.

3. Tell participants to send the title they chose in a direct message to their partner.

4. In pairs, take turns acting out what your partner sent you. The rest of the group has 1 minute to guess what you're mimicking.

Adaption for elearning: Use the chat box for name pairing and clues.

Variation: *Play emoji charades. Choose an emoji and act it out in front of the webcam. Everyone else has to guess which emoji you're trying to be.*

Source: Sieger Groups, Virtual Charades

   https://www.siegergroups.com/virtual-team-activities/virtual-charades

Gif tournament

Grades 2-5

Facilitator: Prepare some phrases before the session. These can be expressions, quotes or any short phrase which can be described visually later.

1. Pick a phrase (for example: "Actions speak louder than words") and add it to a mural.
2. Ask everyone to find the best GIF to represent this phrase and add it in the mural beneath the phrase (tip: GIPHY has a great selection of GIFs).
3. Once everyone has added a GIF, start a voting session in the mural so people can vote for their favorite one.
4. Do several rounds to turn it into a GIF tournament.

Source: Laila Von Alvensleben, Mural, Online Warm-ups & Energizers, GIF Tournament

   https://www.mural.co/blog/online-warm-ups-energizers

General Energizer tips

1. **Know your students—and yourself**. Pay attention to what your students need by asking yourself:
   a. What is the overall mood and energy level of my class? Do they need an activity that will raise the energy level, or lower it?
   b. Does the energizer I have in mind fit the developmental level of my class?
   c. What is the risk-level involved in the energizer and is my class ready for it? Am I ready for it?

2. **Model how to do each energizer**. Plan ahead by considering the skills involved and how you will teach them.

3. **Take your time**. When teaching more complex energizers, scaffold by introducing the components slowly.

4. **Make each energizer your own**. Once you have learned and taught an energizer, have fun with it by making it your own. Give yourself permission to be innovative and creative by making adaptations that fit your class.

5. **Invite the children's ideas**. Inviting children's suggestions increases the level of fun and also communicates that you value their ideas.

6. **Repeat the children's favorites**. The key here is to stay in touch with children's interest level and know when it's time for a familiar favorite—or when it's time to move onto something new.

7. **Find ways to include reluctant students.** Make sure that all students have an opportunity to participate. This may require making accommodations for those students who are shy or reluctant.

8. **Write out songs and chants**. Providing lyrics helps all children feel comfortable and successful.

9. **Join in and SING.** Participating in energizers with students helps to build a strong sense of community in your classroom. Since children's voices are naturally about an octave or two higher than adults, you may want to use your highest voice.

10. **Plan how to end lively energizers.** Consider using quiet signals, quiet countdowns, or a rhyming chant to settle children back down. If you anticipate that students may struggle with settling down, use reminding language to prompt them beforehand. (For example, "What will it look like when we move back to our seats?") Also, be prepared to use calm but firm redirecting language when students aren't able to settle themselves. (For example, "Freeze! Return to your seats quietly. We'll try this again tomorrow.") And most importantly, use reinforcing language to name positive behaviors that you see when children regroup quickly following an energizer. (For example, "You returned to your seats so quickly and quietly! I saw you using the strategies we've practiced for moving safely in our classroom." Get more tips for teaching and using energizers in Susan Roser's book, *Energizers! 88 Quick Movement Activities That Refresh and Refocus.*

Source: From Roser, Susan Lattinzi *Energizers!* for Center for Responsive School © 2009

Who needs extra movement breaks?

Movement breaks are important for all children, but giving additional movement breaks to some may be just the thing to help them through a challenging part of their day.

Children learn better when we give them mental and physical breaks from intensive instruction. Just two or three playful minutes of moving, breathing deeply, laughing together, and singing or chanting relaxes children's bodies and clears their minds for more learning.

Try them:

- Before or after tests
- Between long lesson blocks
- While waiting for a special, an all-school meeting, or dismissal
- Transitions between contents
- **Helps to do deep calming breaths when done with Energizer!!**

Interactive Modeling

[Interacting Modeling Intro and Planning Guide 1](#) With steps, tips, and a blank Interactive Modeling Guide.

Adaption for elearning: It does work virtually, for some things it is nice to know ahead of time if you were going to be the student helper. Not always. Do what works best for you and your class.