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# *Top 10 Ways to Wake-up Students in Class*

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The following is written by Michelle Doman, a 7th and 8th grade Language Arts teacher at Brandon Middle School in Wisconsin.

### Top 10 Ways to Wake-up Students in Class



Many people get a little squeamish, wiggly, and offer a scrunched expression when I respond to the question, “What grades do you teach?” I teach middle school, and with heart and honesty, I find great joys (and challenges) in teaching the group referred to as “tweens” and adolescents.

So, I invite you into the quirky world of middle school. Do not fear...you will become comfortable in a beanbag, find a new young-at-heart-love-for reading air, and (at times chuckle) as I give you a sneak-peek into the crevices (oh, look out for that dirty sock) of the teenage minds.

Here are the Top 10 Ways to Wake-up Students in Class...

## Top 10 Ways to Wake-up Students in Class

**10**

As you are teaching, you notice many blank stares, open-mouths, and droopy heads. (Either A. Your lesson has fallen into the rabbit hole, or B. You have lost them.) Quick, have them stand up and give you ten jumping jacks or push-ups.



**9**

Require students to give answers in their best British accent. (Ok, we have heard enough about the Royal Wedding, but the students love it!)

**8**

When responding to a writing prompt, have the students drop their pencils on the ground when they have completed the task. You won't believe how MANY giggles and guilty looks you will get.





**7**

Have Chuck Norris randomly appear in one of your Power Points roundhouse kicking a wolf. For some reason, students are obsessed with him. See, it got your attention, didn't it?

**6**

Play a sound clip of the Mission Impossible theme, have them act as 007 until the music stops. Then, whoever they end up next to, that is their partner for the activity, or that is the person that they share their Think-pair-share answer with.

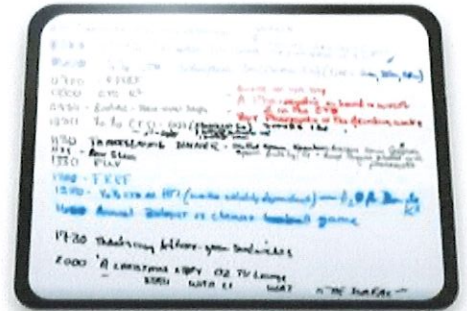


**5**

Place random discussion or reading comprehension questions on sticky notes underneath a handful of desks. When you are ready to ask questions, ask them to peek and read-aloud the questions. This works really well for introverted or shy students. Plus, they LOVE secret note passing.

**4**

Gift of a lifetime. On a large piece of tag board, find a snappy, powerful verb and write it down. Wrap it like a present. Set it in the middle of the room, and ask the students if they know what it is all about. Tell them that it is a gift-of-a-lifetime, a powerful verb they can add to their vocabularies. Give them twenty questions to figure it out. (I cannot take credit for this activity. I learned it at a seminar for Interactive Writing Lessons to Teach With the Smart Board.)

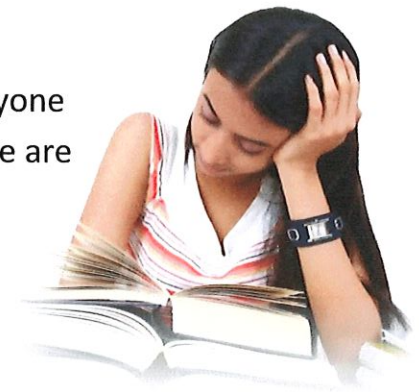


**3**

Have each student call on the next student to answer your lesson questions. This motivates them to stay focused, and they enjoy calling on others! (Inspired by my student teacher)

**2**

At the beginning of class on Mondays, ask if anyone has any crazy stories to share from the weekend. Explain that these are important narratives that need to be told!



**1**

Paste Calvin and Hobbs comics on tests or quizzes. Even though they are ridiculous, students look forward to, and sometimes ask, for them.



## BONUS:

# 10 MORE Ways to Wake-up Students in Class

# 1

Twinkie Tangents: All teachers have the “tangent” student. The one who always has his or her hand up, but not necessarily biting at the bit to answer your questions. You may be amid the best mythology lesson about the rage of Poseidon when a student shares with the class, “Twinkies were actually first banana flavored!” To curb the tangents while encouraging knowledge of tidbit facts, create a “Fact Fury” poster. Prior to the bell, the students are allowed to write down true (correctly spelled) facts and list the source. These facts can be incorporated into grammar or daily lessons!



# 2

When creating a test, instead of just leaving a space for them to put their names, format it in this way...

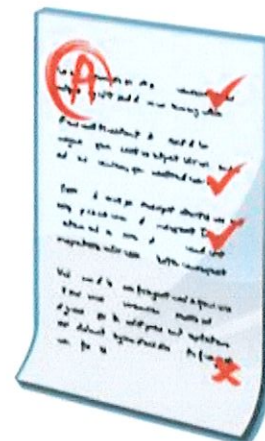
\_\_\_\_\_ will rock the test!

**Hour:**

**Date:**

**Or**

\_\_\_\_\_ is filled with knowledge nuggets!



**3**

To make moving into groups quick and sufficient, have the students do what I call “baseball signs.” Using sign language, or facial/hand movements without speaking, the students figure out where their group is going to gather. Students love it, and it creates quicker transitions into groups

**4**

Air-guitar spelling or vocabulary:  
Students pair up and practice spelling their words, or review vocabulary by spelling it in the air as the other guesses it. Once the word is guessed, the students end with a encore of air guitar! [Click here for the lesson.](#)



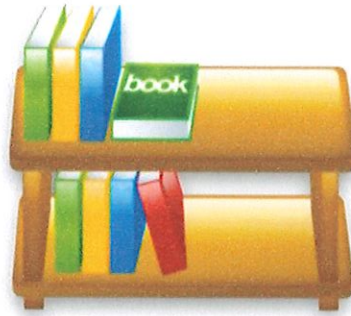
**5**

Limerick Guess Who’s? Create a witty limerick about each student in the class without giving away names, or have students pick a name of a student from a hat to write one about, and display one each day on the Smart Board as they enter. As a competition, they are to write down their guess each day and turn it in for a drawing. Limericks can also be used to have students review ideas or previous lessons.



# 6

Free Bird! I mean Free Verse! Have the class take a goofy class picture and photo shop crop their heads on various stick people. Give each student a speech bubble, and have them copy down one of the best lines from their favorite poem. Post these together on a bulletin board with quotes about poetry. Teachers can also place the stick people around the school, and their speech conversation bubbles can have science facts, or math vocabulary.



# 7

Book Frenzy Pocket Recommendations - As a way to promote reading, take the back of jean pockets and staple them on a bulletin board. Each pocket represents a genre, and students write down book recommendations on note cards and stick them in the back pockets.

# 8

Randomly give encouraging or endearing nicknames to each student in class throughout the second semester. Students feel privileged and love the idea.





# 9

Locker Grammar Jam- On each of the students' lockers, post Latin and Greet roots, prefixes, and suffixes. As a competition, students are to see how many words they can record on one another's lockers with the root, prefix, and suffix.



# 10

Engage in hip-hop dance while students learn how to write comparison paragraphs. After having taught a lesson on the structure and cue words used when comparing or contrasting major ideas, show You Tube videos of Jabberwocky hip-hop champions and classic tap dancing clips. In a Writer's Workshop, students create their own paragraphs, and the last few minutes of class, learn to dance hip-hop themselves. [Click here for the lesson.](#)

