



## InspiredTeaching

22-23 Inspired Teaching Institutes:  
*USING IMPROV TO GROW RESILIENCE*

# 20 Ways to Start School Days

+ 3 Ways to Check the  
Mood of the Room

[www.inspiredteaching.org](http://www.inspiredteaching.org)

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## CONTENTS

4 Ways to Welcome Students in the Door.....	2
4 Ways to Start Class with Movement.....	3
4 Ways to Start Class with Mindfulness.....	4
4 Ways to Build Community.....	5
4 Ways to Connect Warm-Ups to Content.....	6
3 Ways to Check the Mood of the Room.....	7



### Get #Inspired2Learn!

Please **click on the activity names** throughout this guide, visit <https://bit.ly/3xlmtsd>, or **scan the above QR** code to visit the #Inspired2Learn site. It is filled with full, detailed explanations of each activity, examples, applicable Common Core Standards, and even more resources to help you become an Inspired Teacher!

# 4 Ways to Welcome Students in the Door



The very first thing we say to students as they enter class can set the tone for all that follows.

**Discipline:** The following activities can be applied in any class or subject area though they do not have direct ties to content. With some creative thinking, you can make those connections by choosing prompts or actions related to what you are teaching that day.

**Age level:** All

**Time:** 3-5 minutes (or longer if you build out some of the in-class writing possibilities)

Click on the activity title to be taken to the detailed explanation on the [#Inspired2Learn](#) site.

1.

## Choose One

As students enter, have them pick between two different things with a simple invitation like, “Which would you rather...?” or “What do you like more...?”

2.

## Beyond Handshakes

As students enter class, greet them with a hello using different body parts. For example: try a fist bump, touch elbows, or eyebrow waves.

3.

## Puppet Hellos

The puppet can simply say hello or you might try a question that the students have to answer like: “What do you think my name is?” or “What do you think my laugh sounds like?”

4.

## Word (or Number or Color) of the Day

Many people use interesting tools to help them set intentions for the day or to guide their thinking as they set out on a particular task. What if your students start class with a word that gets them in a particular mindset?



# 4 Ways to Start Class with Movement

Starting class with movement can make a world of difference in focus and attention.



**Discipline:** These activities can be applied in myriad content areas but lend themselves nicely to math since they involve counting and concepts like symmetry. They also can serve as good examples of things we do with movement that are good for our minds, which can tap into social-emotional learning or even brain science.

**Age level:** All

**Time:** 5-20 minutes depending on the activity and what you do with it!

**Materials:** Music can be a nice background for all of these movement activities and is important for 8 Count Dancing.

*We believe the very best way to start any learning experience is with movement. We encourage you to have students at least stretch for a few minutes at the start of class.*

**1.** Count Down Shake Down  
Shaking hands and feet while counting down aloud from 10 gets the blood flowing and the brain-body connection buzzing. If students are able, they should stand for the activity but you can modify the body parts that are shaking depending on ability.

**2.** What's Shaking  
Start by reviewing the right and left sides of the body. Ask students to follow along with your movements as you provide verbal prompts that add and subtract shaking body parts. Every so often, ask "What's shaking?" to help students keep track of what's moving.

**3.** Bilateral Synchronization  
Similar to "What's Shaking," this activity involves doing things on each side of the body. But each side of the body follows its own sequence of movements. Each side operates separately at first, then you put both together.

**4.** 8-Count Dancing  
Play a song and encourage students to move their bodies in time with the music. Demonstrate your own simple move, then call on a student to share theirs. Keep adding to the dance by learning new moves and compiling them together into a full routine.

# 4 Ways to Start Class with Mindfulness



Starting class with stillness, attention, and deep breathing can set a peaceful tone for your day.

**Discipline:** These activities can be applied in any class or subject area though they do not have direct ties to content. With some creative thinking, you can make those connections - the activities involving senses work well with science and descriptive writing, and those with breathing can also be tied to science and even math in their sequencing and counting properties.

**Age level:** All

**Time:** 3-5 minutes

Click on the activity title to be taken to the detailed explanation on the [#Inspired2Learn site](#).

**1. Box Breathing**  
Box breathing can help sharpen focus, and reduce anxiety and heart rate. It can be especially useful before a test or after a stressful time on the playground. While guiding students, pay attention to their body language. For younger children, keep the 4-counts shorter since their lungs are small.

**2. Metta Practice**  
This activity encourages students to notice how kind thoughts toward others can have a positive effect on ourselves. Guide your students through the provided prompts, inviting them to focus on their breath and let the words fill their minds.

**3. 4 Elements Grounding**  
Similar to Box Breathing, this activity can be particularly helpful when you notice students are coming into class agitated, or there have been interpersonal clashes. This opportunity to pause and re-center can be very effective at lowering the temperature in the room. Through verbal prompts, you lead students on a mental journey related to the properties of earth, air, water, and fire.

**4. Sensory Walk**  
This activity is easiest in an outdoor space where students can walk freely within earshot as you share the prompts, but it can also be done in a classroom. Following the guided prompts allows students to pay attention to their thoughts and how their body feels.

# 4 Ways to Build Community

The core of community building is about being seen, heard, known, and appreciated for who you are.

**Discipline:** These activities can be applied in any class or subject area though they do not have direct ties to content. With some creative thinking, you can make those connections by choosing prompts or actions related to what you are teaching that day.

**Age level:** All

**Time:** 5-10 minutes (Some of these activities can take longer depending on your goals.)



Click on the activity title to be taken to the detailed explanation on the [#Inspired2Learn](#) site.

## 1. Uncommon Commonalities

In pairs, students take a few minutes to identify things they have in common that it is unlikely anyone else in class will also have in common. Have students share their findings with the rest of the class and invite students to chime in if they share the uncommon commonalities as well. For added challenge, in a future class consider the same activity with trios or groups of four.

## 2. DJ for a Day

Creating a class playlist can be an ongoing project, and music is a great tool for getting to know each other. We offer a few suggestions for how you can do this on [#Inspired2Learn](#).

## 3. 3 Fun Facts

This is a good exercise to build questioning, listening, and retelling skills. In pairs, students interview each other to come up with three fun facts about one another that they're comfortable having shared with the class. The interviewer will then introduce the interviewee.

## 4. Plan a Spontaneous Trip

Students will work in pairs or small groups to explore this prompt: *You have been given an all-expenses paid 3-day trip to anywhere you like and you must figure out where you're going and what you'll do each day.* Groups quickly plan a trip, working together to come up with a location and experiences that address everyone's interests, then share their travel itineraries.

# 4 Ways to Connect Warm-Ups to Content

Connecting your class opener to content creates continuity and initiates flow.

**Discipline:** Class openers don't always have a connection to content if, for example, your goal is to build community, gauge the mood of the room, or get students up and moving. But sometimes you want an opener that can launch you into a course of study right from the start.

**Age level:** All

**Time:** 5-10 minutes (Some of these activities can take longer depending on your goals.)



Click on the activity title to be taken to the detailed explanation on the [#Inspired2Learn site](#).

1.

## Mental Math

In this activity, you will verbally walk students through a math problem step by step and give them time to solve it in their heads. At the end of the problem, invite students to show how they feel about their answer with a thumbs-up approach.

2.

## Visual Thinking Strategies

This flexible activity requires finding a compelling image related to what you are teaching and inviting students to look at it. Visual Thinking Strategies is an approach to inquiry, discussion, and art/imagery appreciation. The point of this is not to “get it right” but to continue to look deeper and deeper at an image building student expertise in their own perceptions.

3.

## Digital Summaries

There is a genre of social media personalities summarizing movie and tv show plot lines and adding commentary unique to their perspectives. You can invite students to do the same by creating plot summaries of what they learned in class the previous day. It's a good way to practice recall and see how well concepts are sinking in.

4.

## Creating a Sensory Teaser

The goal of this activity is to think outside of the usual way we expect students to absorb content by appealing to different senses. For example, how might you inspire your students to write poetry using their sense of smell? Can you dive into an exploration of experimental design using students' sense of touch?

# 3 Ways to Check the Mood of the Room



Gauging the temperature of the room can give you a better idea of what you're working with.

**Discipline:** These activities can be applied in any class or subject area though they do not have direct ties to content. With some creative thinking, you can make those connections by choosing prompts or actions related to what you are teaching that day.

**Age level:** All

**Time:** 3-5 minutes (The Emotion Continuum takes at least one class period to create but after that, it can be used for just a minute a day.)

Click on the activity title to be taken to the detailed explanation on the [#Inspired2Learn](#) site.

1.

## Emotional Metaphor

Start class with a question that asks students to share how they're feeling through a metaphor. For example: If your feelings right now were a \_\_\_\_ what would you be and why? The blank can be filled anything like food, color, season, etc. Students can respond verbally, by writing, by drawing, etc.

2.

## Emotion Continuum

Students work together to create an "emotion continuum": a wall of pictures that represent the wide range of emotions one can feel. Through this challenge, students build their vocabularies and build productive strategies for communicating feelings and needs to adults and to one another.

3.

## How Full is Your Cup?

This wellness checkup provides a simple visual way to reflect on what students have to give and what they need to fill them up.

InspiredTeaching

Join us at our  
October Institute:

## 20 Ways to End School Days

Prepare students to return the  
next day eager for more.

**ONLINE**

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 12 | 7 - 9PM EST

**IN PERSON**

SATURDAY, OCT. 15 | 11:30AM - 1:30PM  
(BOTANICAL GARDEN)

Register at

<https://bit.ly/3SiwkNa>