



# **5 PRACTICES TO SUPPORT SCHOOL-DAY TRANSITIONS**



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## AN INTRODUCTION

It's the end of a very long school day. You sign-off with your remote students, then help your in-person students pack up, before gathering your own belongings, and walking out the door.

On the drive home, you spend the entire time reeling through your day (tried to get to school early to catch up, barely sat down before you had to immediately administer that assessment, skipped lunch to grade assignments), AND thinking about what you have to do when you get home (homework with the kids, cook dinner, plan for the next day).

You turn the door knob hoping this will be your moment to arrive, but instead are met with, "Mom can you help me with..." You suddenly raise your voice and shout, "Give me one moment to walk into the door, I haven't even had a moment to disconnect from my day!"

Transitions. They happen all of the time, but how often are we actually aware of them? Aware of

how they influence the way we are in relationship with ourselves and with others. Do we make them meaningful, or in our humanness, are we simply passengers on a speeding train, oblivious to the multiple stops along the way? Stops, that if we had taken the time to be present to, could significantly alter our journeys. A breath to come back into connection with our body, a yoga pose to bring a sense of focus to our mind, or a quick moment to rest in order to cultivate calm.

Transitions are key to the overall successful flow in our day, as well as how engaged we are with our day-to-day tasks and responsibilities as educators. The same goes for our students.

Transitions happen when our students arrive in our spaces, be they physical, hybrid, or remote. They occur anytime a switch is made from one learning activity to the next, or in tandem with breaks such as lunch, specialists classes, or recess.



The long and short of it is: **Meaningful and seamless transitions help students stay engaged.**

When students are engaged, not only do they learn more productively, but they are less likely to fall into patterns of disengagement. Our goal then is to intentionally create these smooth transitions in order to boost student engagement, efficiency, and even community. When we become present to the thoughts, feelings, and sensations within ourselves, we naturally are kinder, more understanding, and more willing to connect empathetically with others. This then leads to a heightened sense of community, collaboration, and an overall strengthening of social emotional skills.

By utilizing these 5 yoga practices, you will learn to recognize transitions as moments of opportunity; to intentionally become part of your school day, and thus meaningful to you and your students. For your Kindergarteners, waking up from naptime and getting ready for a reading activity will become a moment to activate the mind and energize the body with breathwork. For your 5th graders, who will be taking a standardized test after lunch, they'll first refocus by moving their bodies and tapping into their creative problem solving during a Brain Break.

This toolkit highlights the following benefits of School-Day Transitions

- Increased self-awareness;
- Improved focus and attention;
- Decreased levels of disengagement;
- Strengthened integration of body and mind;
- Students develop effective self-management (self-regulation) skills;
- Students are more empathetic and act more conscientiously towards others (social awareness).

The tools herein are organized by times of day where transitions are crucial.

1. Start of the Day
2. Before the First Break
3. After a Break
4. Afternoon Lull
5. End of the Day

Given that we currently work in many types of learning environments, the following yoga tools also offer specific options in order to support remote, hybrid, or in-person settings. The purpose is to offer a range of modifications for which you can adapt as needed to fit your unique community of learners.



## Time of Day:

It's Time for School!  
(Start of the Day)

## Tool: Hissing Breath

**Transitional Purpose:** To increase focus at the very beginning of the day, Hissing Breath focuses the mind, while also increasing relaxation. This gives students time to tune in and calm their nervous system as they anticipate their school day.

**Remote** - Have one student unmute and guide Hissing Breath for all. Repeat 3-4x with different student leaders as time allows.

**Hybrid** - Play with the idea of having everyone conclude the hissing sound at the same time, perhaps establishing a signal, or brainstorming with students how this might be achieved.

**In-person** - Vary the quality of hissing such as strong vs. soft.





## BREATHING

# Hissing Breath

## BENEFITS

- Focuses the mind
- Increases relaxation

## MODIFICATION

- Adjust the duration of counting on the inhale as needed to support your students' comfort.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Let students know how many rounds of breath you will practice.
2. Begin by sitting up tall.
3. Inhale deeply for three to five counts.
4. Exhale slowly and steadily, making a “S” or hissing sound.
5. At the bottom of your exhale, close your mouth and inhale again through your nose.



## Time of Day:

I'm Hangry! (Right before the first break)

## Tool: Helicopter Arms

**Transitional Purpose:** Twists give the body a quick stretch while stimulating the mind, especially after long periods of concentration. Helicopter Arms in particular offers variations that spark playfulness, curiosity, and body-safe choices.

**Remote** - Invite students to keep their arms within their video frames (i.e., zoom box) for added challenge.

**Hybrid** - Ask students who are in-person to guide remote learners through one side, and then switch; remote learners guide those in-person for the second side.

**In-person** - Have students turn so that they face at least one other person to wave hello. Maybe they check-in with one another: How are you feeling today?



## YOGA POSE

# Helicopter Arms with Arm Variation

## PHYSICAL BENEFIT

- Strengthens the back
- Stretches the groin, chest, spine, and shoulders

## MENTAL BENEFIT

- Stimulates the mind

## GAZE POINT

- Over the shoulder

## INSTRUCTIONS | VARIATION 1 - STRAIGHT ARMS

1. Begin seated in your chair with your feet on the floor.
2. Inhale, reach your arms out to your side like a “T”.
3. Exhale, turn your arms and middle to the right.
4. Inhale, sit up tall in your body.
5. Exhale, turn your gaze over your shoulder.
6. Breathe.
7. Inhale, come back to center.
8. Repeat on the other side.

## VARIATION 2 - BENT ARMS

1. Begin seated in your chair with your feet on the floor
2. Inhale, reach your arms out to your side like a “T”.
3. Exhale, bend your elbows making a “field goal or cactus” shape with your arms
4. Inhale, sit up tall in your body
5. Exhale, turn your arms and middle to the right.
6. Inhale, sit up tall in your body.
7. Exhale, turn your gaze over your shoulder.
8. Breathe.
9. Inhale, come back to center.
10. Repeat on the other side.

## YOGA POSE

# Helicopter Arms with Arm Variation



Variation 1 - Straight Arms - 1



Variation 1 - Straight Arms - 2



Variation 1 - Straight Arms - 3



Variation 2 - Bent Arms - 1



Variation 2 - Bent Arms - 2



Variation 2 - Bent Arms - 3



## Time of Day:

That Break Was Too Short! (Refocusing After Break)

## Tool: Wind Breath

**Transitional Purpose:** When we purposefully connect with our breath, we strengthen the integration between our bodies and our minds. Wind Breath grants us the ability to refocus and regain self-control in order to ease into the next activity.

**Remote** - For fun, have everyone unmute and try to exhale with as little to no sound as possible!

**Hybrid** - Have students mirror the teacher, trying to stay in sync. If appropriate, or if inspired, the teacher can also create some gentle movements to go along with Wind Breath for students to mirror.

**In-person** - Get creative and invest in different qualities of sound: soft breeze, trade wind, gust, whistle.



## BREATHING

# Wind Breath

## BENEFITS

- Focuses the mind
- Releases tension in the jaw and lower face
- Increases physical connection with the breath

## MODIFICATION

- Invite students to play with the speed and pressure of their breath as it relates to “wind.”
- Breath could be a soft, slow breeze or a stronger wind.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Let students know how many rounds of breath you will practice.
2. Begin by sitting up tall.
3. Inhale through the nose.
4. Exhale through your mouth, making an “O” shape with the lips. (Imagine blowing a whistle without the whistle sound).



## Time of Day:

Are We There Yet?  
(That Afternoon Dip  
in Energy)

## Tool: Echo Yoga

**Transitional Purpose:** When students are given the freedom and flexibility to interact and express themselves, learning naturally takes place. Brain Breaks such as Echo Yoga encourage students to participate in creative play, increasing the brain's flexibility and potential for learning by developing problem solving, cooperation, imagination, and social emotional skills.

**Remote** - Spotlight one student at a time to lead the others for 20-30 seconds.

**Hybrid** - If Breakout Rooms are appropriate and available, have students partner up (both in breakout rooms and those in-person). One person leads while the other follows. Switch leaders after 1-2 minutes.

**In-person** - Include music with this brain break. Use music as cue for when to start, pause, and switch leaders. Encourage students to share their music choices with you; option to create a student playlist.





## BRAIN BREAK

## Echo Yoga

## SKILLS

- Community
- Creativity
- Focus

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. One student volunteers to be the leader.
2. This student playfully moves into a couple yoga poses, changing pacing and facial expressions, without talking.
3. Students follow the leader's movement and expression choices.
4. Repeat with a new leader.

# Time of Day:

## Time to Head Out!

### (School Day is Ending)

## Tool: Rainbow Spine

**Transitional Purpose:** This tool activates the spine through dynamic movement, countering static sitting that students may have been doing for much of the day. Even though Rainbow Spine energizes the body, the coinciding breathwork calms and restores, once again meeting anticipation with ease.

**Remote** - If accessible, share your screen to include images of rainbows in nature. This will strengthen the visual component of this activity while also giving students something to focus on if they are restless.

**Hybrid** - Prior to this practice, check in with all students: If you were to choose a color of the rainbow to represent how you feel right now, which would it be? After moving through this practice, check in again: Has your color changed? Approach from a place of curiosity, emphasizing non-judgment. Encourage students to share their responses via chat, out-loud, and using a physical or virtual whiteboard to capture their thoughts and feelings.

**In-person** - If appropriate, have students discover where their spines are, perhaps offering some gentle self-tapping at the back of the neck (cervical spine), and lower back (lumbar). Precede Rainbow Spine with this mini spine locator activity.



## YOGA POSE

# Rainbow Spine with Affirmations

## PHYSICAL BENEFIT

- Warms up the spine

## MENTAL BENEFIT

- Integrates the mind, body and breath

## GAZE POINT

- Down the nose

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Begin seated in your chair with your feet on the floor.
2. Place your hands on your knees. Inhale and rock forward, pressing your knees against your hands and arching your back like a rainbow.
3. Exhale and rock backward, pressing your hands into your knees and rounding your back.

## AFFIRMATIONS

The following phrases can be combined with the forward and backward movements of Rainbow Spine. Each phrase will coincide with an inhale or exhale.

*Red, I'm strong (inhale)*

*Blue, I tell the truth (inhale)*

*Orange, I'm joyful (exhale)*

*Indigo, I'm smart (exhale)*

*Yellow, I'm confident (inhale)*

*Violet, I'm understanding (inhale)*

*Green, I'm caring (exhale)*

*I'm a rainbow (exhale).*



Rainbow Spine 1



Rainbow Spine 2



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