



## What is the Difference Between a ‘State Change’ and a ‘Brain Break’?

**When I think of state change** I think of Multiple Intelligences (Howard Gardner) -engaging a different intelligence — and/or different teaching a different way to engage a different part of the brain. For example: In class, I may have talked about something, then, to create a state change I might have the students use Kineasthetic Symbols (a Kagan MI Structure). If I did a PET scan, while *I* was *talking* about the content the student’s temporal lobe would have been more active than base rate; when I switched structures from ‘Teacher Talk’ to ‘Kineasthetic Symbols’, on the PET scan I would have observed that the motor cortex is now more active. A different part of the brain got more engaged. We had a state change.

**When I think of a brain break**, I think of an energiser. The students may have been taking in a lot of information and are feeling tired. At this point I have a choice: continue battling away trying to ‘teach’ or I might choose to have the class take part in a SillySport or some other energiser —literally they take a break. For me I choose the latter.

Now the tricky part: Most ‘state changes’ are brain breaks (When I engage a different part of the brain, it gives a rest to the part I had been using). Further, most ‘brain breaks’ involve a state change (doing a SillySport or energiser engages a different part of the brain).

Should we use the terms interchangeably? Probably not. Sometimes we want to talk about a state change (engaging a different part of the brain; Teaching with a different intelligence; placing our content in more parts of the brain) and sometimes we want to talk about a brain break (giving a rest to a part of the brain, e.g. stop using the prefrontal cortex —thinking— and take a break by doing a SillySport or energiser).

When my goal is to put the information in a different part of the brain, I think in terms of a state change; when my goal is to energise the class or take a break after a lot of input, I think of a brain break.

Confused? Just take a brain break and when you come back to thinking about this, it will all be clear!

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Ref: Jensen E. 1998 ‘Teaching with the Brain in Mind’ ISBN: 9780871202994