



STRUCTURED BREAK PLANS 2023-2024

Wayne RESA

Chris McEvoy, Consultant
mcevoyc@resa.net

Kayrl Reynoso, Consultant
reynosk@resa.net

STRUCTURED BREAKS

- **A number of students can benefit from being able to take a break.**
- **Benefits:**
 - **Defuse potentially explosive situations**
 - **Intervene effectively before behaviors escalate to major infractions**
 - **Calm down, think clearly**
 - **Refocus**
 - **Some students need more movement**
 - **Teach important coping skills**
 - **Keep students in school**

WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?

- Take a break is typically used for escape-motivated behavior that is severe enough to disrupt the class or that may result in harm to the student or others.
- A long-term goal may be to teach the student to request and receive help.
- Another option is to provide intensive practice in the work or situation the student seeks to avoid, so as to decrease frustration with it.

TIER 1 AND TIER 2 BREAKS

- At a Tier 1 level, classroom breaks are part of the classroom management procedures. Students may utilize break areas and calming kits in the classroom when they become agitated.
- A Tier 2 break plan is more formalized. It is a plan with defined procedures and may take place outside of the classroom.
- Documentation for Tier 2: How often does the student take a break? How much instructional time is being missed?
- Be careful that the breaks are not reinforcing.

ARE STRUCTURED BREAKS EFFECTIVE?

- A 2014 study found that providing break passes to typically developing students demonstrating escape-motivated disruptive behavior reduced the disruptive behavior and increased academic engagement.
- A similar 2018 study found that providing break passes to students with disabilities who presented escape-motivated disruptive behaviors also greatly reduced disruptive classroom behaviors and increased academic engagement.
- Students and teachers rated the break intervention as effective and acceptable.



DOESN'T IT REWARD THE NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR?

- Breaks should not be confused with reward activities. They should be “neutral” in terms of reward value - not a punishment, not a reward.
- It is a time to calm down, re-focus, and get back on track.
- Monitor how often it is used. If necessary, limit the number of breaks the student can take in a day. Don't allow breaks to be used to completely avoid demand situations. Have the student return to the demand when calm.
- Consider conducting a functional behavior assessment.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A BREAK AND A REWARD?

Calming Break

Neutral (not reinforcing)
Preventative
Student or staff directed
Access to calming tools
Teaches self-regulation

Reward

Reinforces behavior
Earned privilege
Highly desirable activities
May include peers and/or adults

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A BREAK AND RESET TIME-OUT?

Calming Break

Neutral (not reinforcing)
Preventative
Student or staff directed
Access to calming tools
Teaches self-regulation

Reset Time-Out

Response to a problem behavior
Reduces reinforcement
Decreases behavior
Reinforces classroom expectations

DIFFERENT BREAK OPTIONS

Examples:

- A quick lap around the school
- 5 minutes on a bench in the hall
- Go talk to a designated adult
 - Calm down before talking
- 5 minutes alone at student's desk
- Get a drink of water; extra bathroom break



KEEP
CALM
AND
TAKE
A BREAK

CALMING BREAKS

- <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/brain-breaks-focused-attention-practices-lori-desautels>
- https://www.gonoodle.com/?ref_id=GNblog2





TEACH AND PRACTICE HOW TO TAKE A BREAK

break

- Teach the break procedure to the student. Practice or review the procedure before using it.
- Establish a signal for requesting a break e.g., break card.
- If the student has a hard time using the procedure when they need it, practice it some more.
- Generally, time limit breaks. Use a timer.
- If the student needs frequent breaks, consider scheduling them proactively, 2-3 times/day.



INFORM THOSE THAT NEED TO KNOW

- If a student has a structured break plan, all staff that work with that student should be aware of it, and follow the plan consistently.
- Effective use of a break strategy can decrease major incidents of problem behavior while working on other replacement behaviors and academic skills.

REFERENCES

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