

## STRUCTURED BREAK PLANS 2023-2024

Chris McEvoy, Consultant mcevoyc@resa.net Wayne **RESA** 

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 I AND TIER 2 BREAKS**

- At a Tier I 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



### CALMING BREAKS

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

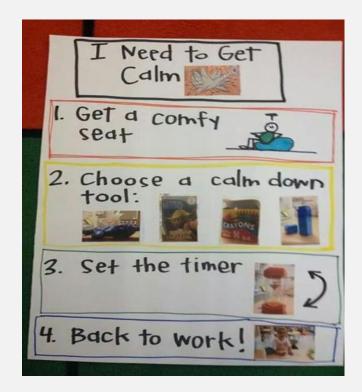




#### TEACH AND PRACTICE HOW TO TAKE A BREAK



- 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

- Cook, C.R., Collins, T., Dart, E, Vance, M.J., McIntosh, K., Grady, E.A., & DeCano, P. (2014) Evaluation of the Class Pass Intervention for Typically Developing Students with Hypothesized Escape-Motivated Disruptive Classroom Behavior. *Psychology in the Schools*, 51, 107-125.
- Narozanick, T., & Blair, K. C. (2018). Evaluation of the Class Pass Intervention: An Application to Improve Classroom Behavior in Children With Disabilities. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 21(3), 159-170
- Teaching Students with Behavior Problems to Take a Break, 2016 <u>http://isc.sagepub.com/content/51/5/301.abstract</u>
- Breaks are Better: A Tier II Social Behavior Intervention, 2013 <u>http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10864-013-9184-2</u>