

What is Breaks are Better?

Breaks are Better (BrB) is an intervention similar to Check-In/Check-Out, but it is designed for students who engage in problem behaviors maintained by escape or avoidance from academic activities, tasks, or assignments. Components of BrB include earning points and incentives for engaging in school-wide expectations, meeting with an intervention facilitator before and after school, receiving feedback on in-class behavior, and having explicit opportunities to take breaks in an appropriate way.

- Find additional information in the Breaks are Better Implementation Manual

http://www.warrencountyschools.org/userfiles/1410/my_files/breaks_are_better_manual.pdf?id=525179

1. How does BrB link directly to our school-wide expectations?

The BrB point cards correspond to the school-wide expectations. Students earn points for meeting each of the school-wide expectations.

- Find additional information on pages 6 and 12 of the implementation manual

2. How is BrB continuously available for student participation?

Available facilitators should be identified prior to the start of implementation. Students should be able to begin the intervention when they are identified, because they do not need to wait for the next “group” of students to begin.

3. How do students receive rapid access to intervention through BrB?

Once the team identifies students for the intervention, each student should be assigned to a facilitator and meet with them to start the intervention. Students should begin the intervention within 3-5 days of identification.

4. How is BrB matched to the function of the student’s behavior?

BrB is specifically designed for students who engage in problem behavior that is maintained by escaping academic activities, tasks, or assignments.

5. How do students receive specific feedback from staff with BrB?

During morning check-ins, students receive brief (1-5 minutes) and positive feedback focused on instruction of desired behaviors. Students’ home notes are checked and appropriate materials are given to students. If necessary, morning check-ins include a review of when and how to request a break. During the school day, students receive feedback on appropriate in-class behaviors and requests for breaks. During the afternoon check-outs, students receive feedback guided by their daily point card, review the points they earned, and complete their home note.

6. How does BrB allow for students to practice new skills daily?

BrB teaches students to request a break, take that break, and then return to work appropriately. Students practice these skills daily and progress is monitored using each student’s point card.

- Find additional information on page 14 of the implementation manual

7. How does BrB teach students what to do in different situations?

Students are taught how to engage in the appropriate behavior both when breaks are available and not available, and they also have an opportunity to practice these skills. For example, a student will hold up a

letter “B” to indicate they need a break, and the teacher will either give the student a thumbs up which allows the student to take a break or a thumbs down which requires the student to return to work. When a student must return to work, he or she must wait at least 2 minutes before asking for another break. Students can use this routine with their teacher in a variety of situations.

- Find additional information on page 13 of the implementation manual

8. How do families, students, and staff become oriented to BrB?

Tier II teams should introduce the program to staff prior to implementing this intervention. The intervention coordinator should train facilitators and teachers in BrB procedures. The coordinator should also call parents and meet with students to explain the goals and benefits of the intervention. Student buy-in is critical, and there are many example resources available to help with this process.

- Find additional information on pages 10-11 and 15-18 of the implementation manual

9. How can the BrB intervention be modified by data?

Progress monitoring occurs for all students receiving the intervention, and each student should have predetermined goals. The objective is for students to eventually “graduate” from the intervention because they have the skills to succeed without the intervention in place. Data evaluation allows staff to modify the intervention to account for students meeting or not meeting their goals. Examples of modification include adjusting the number of breaks allowed, length of breaks, or break options. Additional modifications include using tangible and non-tangible incentives connected to the points students earn, modifying the point goal, and continuing morning and afternoon check-ins without a daily progress report. The team can use data to determine if the intervention was successful.

10. How does BrB account for weekly school to home communication?

A parent note is the primary home communication after the intervention begins. The student brings the note home, shows the parent, and brings back the signed note to the morning check-in. Parents are encouraged to provide positive or neutral feedback based on the parent note.

11. Are there adequate resources available for Breaks are Better?

Cynthia Anderson and Justin Boyd of University of Oregon developed a Breaks are Better Implementation Manual. The implementation manual includes information on planning for BrB, progress monitoring BrB, and implementing BrB including lesson plans and templates. Additional resources can also be found online.

References

- Anderson, C., & Boyd, R.J. *Breaks are Better Implementation Manual*. Retrieved from <http://www.warrencountyschools.org/userfiles/1410/my%20files/breaks%20are%20better%20manual.pdf?id=525179>
- Boyd, R. J., & Anderson, C. M. (2013). Breaks are better: A tier II social behavior intervention. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 22*(4), 348-365.