Introducing Breaks are Better to Students

Adapted from the “Breaks are Better Implementation Manual” by

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**Overview:**

You get to be part of a program in the school called Breaks are Better. This is a plan for us to help you do better in school by helping you remember the school expectations and being sure you can take breaks when you need them. You will have the chance to earn points during the day for being **respectful, responsible, and safe**. Then you can use those points for **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(insert incentive system).** On top of getting to earn points, you will get something else that is pretty special. You’re going to be allowed to ask for short breaks during class time. During these breaks, you get to stop the work that you’re doing and do something else instead, like draw or put your head down. No one will be upset with you or bother you to keep working. These breaks are to help you do better because we all get frustrated sometimes and need to take a break.

**Daily Point Card**

To help you keep track of your points, you will get a Point Card each morning. It looks like this [show student point card]. At the start of each day you will check-in with **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(insert BrB coordinator)**, and **he/she** will give you your card for the day. Then, at the end of each class you will meet with the teacher so **he/she** can give you points for meeting expectations and for taking breaks the right way. At the end of the day you will check-out with **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(insert coordinator)** so you can turn in your points for the day. Finally, you will take the point card home to show your parents, and they will sign it for you to return the next morning.

**Daily Schedule and Earning Points:**

So the first part of each day is for you to go to **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(insert check-in location)** to check-in with **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (insert coordinator)**. You will already earn your first points just for checking in with **him/her.** When you get there, you will turn in your Point Card from the day before and show that you had your parents sign it. Then **\_\_\_\_\_\_ (insert coordinator)** will give you your timer and your new Point Card for the day. You can also earn points for being prepared. You are considered prepared if you show that your parents signed your Point Card from the day before and by having your homework completed. You and **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(insert coordinator)** will talk about your goal for the day, and then you will be ready to start your school day!

You can earn points during your classes by meeting the expectations on your card and by taking breaks the right way. We will talk more about how to do that in a minute. We especially want you to focus on meeting **(insert school-wide expectation 1)** by doing **(insert academic behavior 1)** [Introduce, explain, and give examples for each expectation]. So when you are in class, you can earn up to two points for meeting our school-wide expectations. That means that if you do a good job **[insert academic behaviors]**, you can get two points for each expectation. If you sort of meet an expectation but need a bit of reminding, you can still earn one point for that expectation. If you have a rough class and don’t meet your expectations, you might not earn any points, so you want to make sure you are paying attention to your behavior. And don’t get discouraged; you can do better in the next class! You can also earn a point by taking breaks the right way. At the end of each class, you will bring your Point Card to the teacher, and **he/she** will mark down how many points you earned and let you know how you did in class.

At the end of the day, you will go back to **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(insert check-out location)** to check-out with **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(insert coordinator)**. **He/She** will give you a point just for showing up to check-out, and you can also earn another point if you had all of your teachers fill out your Point Card that day. You and **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(insert coordinator)** will count up your points, and if you reached your point goal for the day, you will get to use your points for **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(insert incentive system)!**

To get started earning points for the next day, you will take your Point Card home and show it to your parents. After you do your homework, they can sign it to prove that they saw the card. Then, when you get to school the next day, you can show your signed card to **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(insert coordinator)**, and you will have already earned two points for the day!

**Breaks**

I mentioned that you can earn points for taking breaks the right way, so now I want to talk about what that means. We want you to be able to take breaks when you need them so that you can do you best work in school. That means that you get to take 3 breaks during each class period. Each break is two minutes long, and you will have a timer with you to keep track of how long your break has been.

First let’s talk about good times to ask for breaks. Your teacher will try to give you breaks whenever you need them, but there are some times when your teacher will need you to wait to take your break. It is best to ask for a break when you are working quietly on an assignment in class. If the break will only affect you and your work, then it is probably an appropriate time to ask for a break. But if the teacher is talking or teaching new material, you should try to wait to take your break. You don’t want to miss important information.

Now that we know WHEN to ask for a break, let’s talk about HOW to ask for a break. It is important to ask for breaks the “right way.” If you don’t ask the right way,

* The teacher won’t know that you need a break
* The teacher probably won’t let you have the break then
* You might not earn as many points

But if you DO ask the right way,

* The teacher will be more likely to let you take a break
* You will be showing how you can be responsible and respectful
* You will get to earn points for your Point Card

So to take a break the right way, you follow the steps on this card [show student the Break Protocol Card; point to steps on card as you explain each one].

* First, you raise your hand with a #1 [model action]**/hold up your laminated “B” card [model action]**
* Then you wait for the teacher to see you and give you a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down”
* If the teacher gives you a “thumbs up” [model action], that means you can take your break. If the teacher gives you a “thumbs down” [model action], it isn’t a big deal! It just means that now isn’t a good time to take a break, so you should keep working and following directions. You can ask for a break again later. If you think you will want the break very soon, start your timer for two minutes and go back to doing your work. When the two minutes is done, you can try asking for a break again.

Let’s review:

* When should you ask for a break? (During quiet work times)
* When should you probably not ask for a break? (During lecture)
* How do you show that you want a break? (Hold up the #1 sign**/hold up “B” card)**
* What do you do once you hold up the #1**/”B” card**? (Wait patiently)
* What does it mean if the teacher gives you a “thumbs up?” (It’s ok to take the break)
* What does it mean if the teacher gives you a “thumbs down?” (Now isn’t a good time to take a break) What should you do? (Go back to work)

**If student seems confused or unsure of how to ask for a break, use the modeling practice below** (Taken directly from “Breaks are Better Implementation Manual” by Dr. Cynthia Anderson and Dr. Justin Boyd)**:**

Let’s practice!

Now watch me carefully. I’m going to pretend to be working and I’m going to show you the right way to ask for a break. I’m even going to let you pretend to be the teacher and you can give me a “thumbs up.”

**Right Way**: *Adult pretends to be working for a few seconds and then models asking for a break the right way, allowing the student to give a “thumbs up.”*

You gave me a “thumbs up,” so can I take a break?

Did I ask for a break the right way?

Let’s try again and you give me a “thumbs down.” *Adult pretends to be working for a few seconds and then models asking for a break the right way, allowing the student to give a “thumbs down.”*

You gave me a “thumbs down,” so can I take a break?

No big deal. So should I just keep working?

**Wrong Way**: *Adult models a non-example (wrong way) such as talking out while they are raising their hand.*

Is this the right way to ask for a break?

Do you think that the teacher would give me a “thumbs up?”

Do you think I would earn lots of points on my card if I asked for breaks the wrong way?

Now it’s your turn to show me that you can ask for a break. I’m going to pretend to be your teacher, and I want you to pretend that you are working (like I did) and then show me how you will ask for a break the right way. [Practice 2-3 times; give a “thumbs up” at least once and a “thumbs down” at least once. Provide praise and neutral feedback. Remind the student to look at the card for help.]

So now we know when and how to ASK for breaks. Next let’s talk about how we TAKE and TRACK our breaks. When you ask for a break and your teacher gives you a “thumbs up,” you want to be sure that you take your break the right way. To take your break the right way, you need to be respectful of others and not disturb them. This means you need to keep your voice quiet and your body calm. Taking your breaks the right way helps you earn points and makes it possible for you to keep taking breaks when you need them!

I’m going to show you what to do to take your break the right way [show student the Break Protocol Card; point to steps on card as you explain each one.]:

* First you need to cross off one of the “B” marks on your point card [show student the break tracker portion of the Point Card]**/give the teacher your laminated “B” card to exchange it for your break time**. This lets you keep track of how many breaks you have left each period.
* Then you start your timer
* Then you take your break by picking one of your break options [point to break option box on Break Protocol Card] and doing that activity quietly for two minutes.
* Once the timer goes off, it is time to get back to your work. Keep doing your best and working to meet your expectations so you can get all of your points for that period!

You don’t earn points for breaks if you take them the wrong way. It would be taking your break the wrong way if you got out of your seat or distracted your peers. You also have to make sure to start your timer and go back to your work when the timer goes off. If you don’t, that is taking your break the wrong way. But when you take your break the right way it helps you learn better, earn points, and show your teacher how good you are at doing the right thing!

**If student seems confused or unsure of how to take a break, model the procedure and then have the student practice.**

**Questions/Comments/Concerns**

Now that we have talked about the Breaks are Better plan, do you have any questions? Do you think you want to give it a try?

**IF YES: Student Agreement Contract**

Great! I think you will really like this program. So before we get started, let’s have you sign the Student Agreement Contract to show that you understand what we talked about and that you are willing to do your best on the program. Here is the Student Agreement Contract [show student the Student Agreement Contract]. You can go ahead and read it, and let me know when you are done [read it aloud to student if he/she can’t read or doesn’t understand the contract]. Ok, so now, if you agree to participate and follow the contract, you just sign here [point to signature line], and you will be good to go!

**IF NO: Student Resistance to Intervention**

**(only if student indicates hesitation about starting BrB)**

I know it can seem kind of weird to start a new program like this, but we think you might really like it, and we are excited that it could help you in class. But we also want you to be excited about it. Do you think you would be willing to give it a try and see if you like it?

* IF YES: Great! I really think it will be better than you expect!
* IF NO: It might surprise you and be better than you think. Would you be willing to give it an honest try for two weeks? And at the end of two weeks we can see if you still don’t like it. If you don’t like it, we can stop. Or maybe we can even work together to come up with some changes that will make you like it more. Do you think you would be willing to try that?
  + IF YES: Great! I think we can definitely work together to make this program work for you! [Complete Student Agreement Contract Section above]
  + IF NO: Ok. I can tell that you don’t like the idea of Breaks are Better. What is it about BrB that you don’t like? Maybe we can think of a way to fix that part of it. [Troubleshoot student concerns to see if modifications are possible. For example, if student doesn’t want to have to carry around the laminated break cards, suggest that the student try asking for breaks by raising his/her break in a #1 sign. Or, if student doesn’t think they can remember their Point Card, consider putting the card in the teachers’ boxes at the start of each day or emailing it to each teacher.]
    - IF STILL NO: [BrB will not be an effective intervention for this student because he/she must be invested in it for it to be effective. You will need to meet with your team to come up with a new plan for this student]. Ok, well I can tell that you are really not interested in this program, and that is ok. We don’t want to force you to do something you don’t like. We will come up with a different plan to help you in your classes.