A Protocol for Teaching Take a Break

Positive, Proactive Correction

Effective classroom discipline is consistent and dependent on the teacher being aware of opportunities to reinforce, remind and redirect student behaviors before they become larger problems. This requires keeping a sharp eye and paying close attention to all student behaviors. It is important to use reinforcing language to support appropriate behaviors, to use reminding language to model appropriate behaviors for students and to use redirecting language to help students change inappropriate behaviors. If teachers redirect students in small things early, the students can change the behavior before it escalates.

Take a Break (TAB) is an effective redirection strategy. It is important to note that Take a Break is not punitive in nature. It is designed to help the student refocus her attention. It offers the student an opportunity to regain composure and control of his behavior. TAB is appropriately offered to all students along with effective social/emotional teaching that supports the belief that we all need a chance to regroup at times.

Teaching TAB early in the semester using those small incidents will help students understand what you already know—that Take a Break is not a punishment, but an opportunity available to every student to help them regain composure and preserve dignity.

Because modeling is such a vital element in reinforcing appropriate behavior, It is important that the teacher models what it should look like, sound like, and feel like when a student is given a Take a Break. Prior to teaching TAB, it is essential that the following be established and taught:

- Classroom behavior expectations (in lieu of the creation of the Social Contract*)
- Classroom procedures and routines
- The signal for silence
- The use of the Y-Chart to clarify expectations

*The Social Contract will be established during the 3rd week of school. Take a Break will be introduced during the first week of school.
Teaching Take a Break (TAB)

News and Announcements

Good morning, everyone!

We have talked about the expectations for classroom behavior. Today we are going to discuss what happens when we lose focus and get off track. This is something that happens to everyone – those little moments when we forget the rules or get a little off task. Over the next few days, we will learn how to use a strategy called Take a Break. Look at the expectations that we have in place for our classroom. Use the Post-it note on your chair to list ones that you might have trouble following at times. We will discuss these during our share today.

Have a wonderful day!

Place a tally mark in the column that best represents you.

Times when I tend to lose focus:

| Beginning of Day | Lunch Time | End of the Day |

Greeting:

High Five Greeting (Advisory page 219)

Sharing:

Post-it Share (Advisory page 231)

Materials: Post-its, pencils

Tally the results on the chart to see which time has the most marks. Ask students to think about what this means for the community. How can this information help us as a community?

Explain that in a few weeks they will be creating the Social Contract that be an agreement that they all make for working together as a community; however, until that time, you have created set of classroom expectations or rules for the class to follow to keep order.

Remind them that the rules are to guide everyone; however, you know that no one is perfect and everybody makes mistakes. At times, they may need a little help regaining self-control. Explain that you asked them to look at the rules to see if there are any they might have trouble following, especially during their “difficult” time of the day. Instruct the class to do a quick share of what they wrote on the Post-its. After identifying their High Five partners, students will share with their partner what they recorded on their Post-it note.

After the High Five Share, ask for a few (two or 3) volunteers to share what they heard from their partners. You may notice a trend in their answers that may be used in teaching TAB.
Activity: Teaching Take A Break

Remind students that it is your job to help them follow the rules so that everyone has an opportunity to be successful. You must let them know that when someone messes up, it is your job to help them regain control and figure out what to do to correct that behavior. Please note: the emphasis is on the student regaining control and not on the teacher (assistant principal, etc.) controlling the student behavior. This is very important in meeting the students’ need for autonomy.

Explain that today you are going to teach them how you will be using Take a Break to help them understand how to regain composure for themselves. Let them know that Take a Break is something that everyone in the class will experience at some point in the year, so it is not a punishment, but a gift to help them. Explain some of the strategies that you might use with them:

- Non-verbal signals—I might catch your eye and make the “shhh” sign.
- Proximity Control—I might move closer to you.
- Change of location—I might ask you to switch seats.
- Loss of Privilege—A privilege may have to be removed (like working with a partner or group)
- Take a Break—I may tell you to take a break.

Explain that when someone is given a Take a Break, they will move to another spot in the room for a short time (3 minutes at most) to think about what they were doing and what they should be doing. Take a Break is NOT a punishment. It is a time for them to fix the problem or pull themselves together. Emphasize that Take a Break is something that everybody needs, not just a few. You should convey that sometimes you might need to Take a Break, too!

Activity

Explain that the activity for today will be to model what it should look like, sound like, and feel like when a student gets a Take a Break. You will model it for them first, and then you will have some students demonstrate the appropriate way to Take a Break.

I am going act the part of the student, who would like to act as the teacher? (Pick a volunteer) Instruct the “teacher” to watch you very carefully as you model a slight infraction, like talking to your neighbor while the “teacher” is talking. When the “teacher” gives the TAB, do a think aloud to model to students how they should react to this redirection. Explain to students that the think-aloud will help them understand what they may think about when told to Take a Break.

The student acting as teacher pretends to lead the group. When you display the behavior, she/he says, “________, take a break.” Emphasize the use a very normal,
calm tone of voice. You, acting as the student, take a second to recognize that you have been engaged in something not acceptable and begin a think-aloud of how you will respond to being given the Take a Break.

Think-aloud:  _I was talking when the teacher was giving directions and she saw me._
Move to the seat and think-aloud again. _I should have been listening to the teacher give the directions. I was distracting my friend from listening and keeping her from knowing what we are doing. Next time, I will listen and pay attention so I will not disturb my neighbor._ Quietly get out of the TAB seat and go back to your seat in the circle.

Move back into the circle and lead students in a reflection of what they saw.
- **What did you notice when the teacher gave me the TAB?**
- **How did I (the student) respond?**
- **What did that look like?**

Ask for a volunteer to do a student demo of TAB. When the student has completed the demo, have him/her reflect on what it looked like, sounded like, and felt like as a student.

Complete a Y-Chart for Take a Break using feedback from students’ observations. If time permits, have a few more students demo TAB following the Y-Chart.

**Read and Process the Daily News and Announcements**
Remind students that you will be using TAB in all classes, so they should follow the expectations established on the Y-Chart.

**Extension of Take A Break**
After teaching TAB, be vigilant and look for opportunities to give students a Take a Break at various points throughout the day. Remind students that you will be using this in all of your classes, not just in CPR, so they will understand that this is the strategy for small infractions. The idea must be clearly conveyed that this is not a punishment and that you are not keeping score. It is simply a chance for the student to regroup and regain composure before returning to the task at hand. This will make teaching TAB in the Buddy Room much more effective.