

AFTER HOLIDAY BREAK

for school staff supporting students

A

As was mentioned in B-HERO's Trauma-Informed Back-to-School Tips, not all students have happy experiences when staying at home for extended amounts of time. Questions like “What did you do over winter break?” or “What gifts did you receive over the holidays?” can perpetuate disconnection, trigger flashbacks, or create unintended hierarchies based on what students did or received over break.

- Here are some alternative questions, focused on the new year, that can foster connection:
 - What are you most looking forward to in this new year?
 - What are you excited to keep learning about, or start learning about?

B

After an extended break from school, students may need to be reminded of classroom norms, procedures, and practices. Here are a few strategies to make this review fun, engaging, and productive:

1

Consider making review of general class norms, like respecting the speaker, fun and interactive by using a digital platform like Kahoot! or by asking students to act out Classroom Dos and Don'ts in small groups.

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2 Help students experience focused attention by utilizing strategies that can build connection and camaraderie listed in [this Edutopia article](#):

- “Sharing Worries or Celebrations: Students write down or draw a worry, problem, or even a celebration they want to share. Folding up the paper, they hand it off to a partner. Partners then respond to one another with an image or words. Before implementing this practice, discuss agreements and trust within the classroom, and doing the activity should always be a choice.
- Coregulating with Partners: Have a student choose a partner. Without talking, one student should find a rhythm in their breathing, body percussion, or drumming on the desk, and see if their partner can match the pattern. Then they change it up as the other person takes the lead.
- Mirror me: In this coregulatory practice, one partner creates a pattern of body movements – such as a jumping jack followed by squatting and arm movements – that the other person will mirror back. It’s fun for students to speed up and slow down these movements to see how closely their partner can follow. Students in each pair take turns leading.”

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Ask open-ended questions that provide multiple opportunities to respond:

- What does cooperation look like in our classroom?
- How do we disagree?
- What are the best ways to move between tasks or stations?
- We want to do our best, but we focus on working as a team rather than winning in the end. What does that look like? How can we be good teammates, even if we don't win?
- How do we support our classmates when we express ourselves creatively? How do we support each other when we share our cultures, beliefs, and learned experiences?