

BEFORE HOLIDAY BREAK

for school staff supporting students

1

For students who have experienced trauma, maintaining predictability in routines helps to support psychological safety. Keeping school-wide and classroom routines as consistent as possible throughout the holiday transition is best-practice. However, when schedules must change, informing students of the change, and letting them know why, can help learners build the life skill of adaptability and responding to change in a productive way. Surprises are fun for some children, but they can eliminate predictability for others, which may lead to maladaptive behaviors.

2

To help students with the transition to winter break, consider reminding them that they will have time away from the classroom to take a break from learning all day, every day – but they will return in January. A question to foreshadow the return to learn might sound like, “What will you look forward to the most when we come back from winter break?”

3

Should students choose to extend their academic learning over the break, consider highlighting the skills taught leading up to holiday break that can be generalized outside of school. Provide students with a heads up for practice opportunities – “And you can practice or use this skill over winter break by doing/saying/reading/etc ...”

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To emphasize non-academic essential skill development, consider creating a list of healthy activities that students can choose to engage in during their time away. This list may include activities like exercise, connecting safely with family or friends, reading a book that students are interested in, practicing skills online using sites like Khan Academy or IXL, or working on a craft. It may also be beneficial to provide students with time to access the school library or other resource centers to find materials to take home with them.

5

Maintaining classroom engagement may be a challenge in the days leading up to winter break. Consider incorporating thematic instruction centered around the holidays to incentivize students to engage in meaningful content while still looking forward to the season. [This article from Edutopia](#) provides some fun examples for thematic units.

6

Practicing gratitude is a great strategy to manage stress and anxiety, as well as to potentially give back time or talent in a meaningful way. Consider taking time at the start or end of class each day for students to log 3 things they are thankful for. This could be used as a bell ringer or conclusion activity that helps promote gratitude as a daily, healthy practice.