



January 2014

Beating the After Holiday “Blahs”!

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Anyone can teach from August to December, Master Teachers show their stuff from January to May. So what is the stuff and how do they show it? There are many components to teaching for a full academic year. The basics are where we need to start. First, recognize that everyone (teachers, paraeducators and students) has been away more than they have been in attendance over the past six weeks. Think about it: We have had Thanksgiving Break, Winter Break and probably a few absences mixed in! So, what are the steps to getting back into the groove? Let's take a look:

First, be prepared! Be ready to go with a highly motivating activity, don't start with revisiting the holiday, get the students back into a routine and set a pace that keeps them engaged. Remember, students are masterful at getting us off track; you are the person in charge of your classroom environment so set the stage for learning. Have seatwork or sponge activities ready for every student as they enter, show that you expect engagement and build behavioral momentum! Anita Archer, author of *Explicit Instruction*, tells us we need to provide ample opportunities to respond in order to support engagement. After students have arrived and have completed the individual work, it is time to review.

Second, review! I recognize that most of your students have been in your classroom for months (some for years), however, like us, they

have been away from the environment and therefore need to review and re-establish routines. Pull out your lesson plans from the first two weeks of school that outline how you intended to teach expectations and routines. Now, review the plans. Hopefully you have made notes as to what worked and changes you wanted to make. It is time to put those plans to use! Master teachers know we have to reteach our expectations (classroom, hallways, lunchroom, common areas) throughout the year, great Master Teachers plan (yes, on their calendar) to do it! So, what are your expectations? Have they changed? If so, how and why? What is your arrival routine? What is the process for lunch count? Where are students to turn in completed assignments? What is the make-up policy? All of these routines and expectations support student success. Success is easy to reinforce, so now, let's visit reinforcement.

Third, set the tone! In most classrooms, we hope to see a 3-1 ratio of positive comments, since most of you work in classrooms identified with students who need tertiary level (individualized and intense) services, most research ups that ratio to 7-1. (In order to build positive momentum, we have to get kids moving in the *right* direction). the classroom". Creating a positive climate is critical to student success.

In order to hit that kind of mark we (the entire classroom staff) need to start by meeting the kids at the door, greeting them, engaging them and making sure that we establish ourselves as the “biggest reinforcer in the classroom”. Creating a positive climate is critical to student success.

Finally, meet and greet your staff with the same enthusiasm as you do your students. Prepare a brief, bulleted reminder letter to your staff, mail it to them before they come back to school and let them know your plan for the first 3 hours of the day, get them involved and empower them with the expectations that you have. Don't forget to remind them of the importance of setting a positive tone.

So, after we have establish our routines, expectations and gotten back to the business of educating, can we talk about break? Sure, I recommend that the discussion occur just prior to lunch, close the discussion with setting the expectations of what will happen after lunch.

Teaching students with special needs is a fantastic career, as educators we have to recognize that we set the climate and the environment for students and others in our room. With some thoughtful preparation, we can create a place all of us want to be in and one that supports success!

Direct link to our website:

www.KansasASD.com

www.TASNBehaviorSupports.com

JANUARY TRAININGS

January 15, 3:30-4:15

Webinar Series: Mode and Direction Assessment

Link to register: [http://](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/TASN-ATBS-web8)

www.surveymonkey.com/s/TASN-ATBS-web8

January 22, 3:30-4:15

Webinar Series: Assessing Student Schedules and Work Systems

Link to register: [http://](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/TASN-ATBS-web9)

www.surveymonkey.com/s/TASN-ATBS-web9

January 29, 3:30-4:15

Webinar Series: Developing a Visual Schedule

Link to register: [http://](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/TASN-ATBS-web10)

www.surveymonkey.com/s/TASN-ATBS-web10

TIPS FROM THE CORNER:

School time is precious and as teachers we work hard to protect that time and make sure we are maximizing the learning experiences for each student in our classrooms. Even with our best efforts, there will be down time that is created in our day and how we deal with it may mean the difference between a smooth day or one filled with behavior problems for some of our students.

Creating a routine that engages students immediately upon arrival to your class is imperative. Many of the behavior problems are due to students not being actively engaged in an educational activity (or any activity at all). If you have students that exhibit problem behavior or attention issues, then you've seen how fast someone can get off task and into trouble. Having activities ALREADY available that they can transition to immediately may cut down on these issues. While a child is escalating is not the time to “create” an activity for them to do.

When students arrive they should have an activity waiting for them to begin. You can create an “A or F” type assignment that does not create lots of extra grading for you. These activities are either given an “A” for completion or an “F” for failure to do them. They do not have to be heavily weighed when figuring total grades but should have enough benefit to the child so they will continue to engage in them each day. Students should know that learning begins when they walk in the door. These activities are often called sponge activities and may be used for practicing a skill you are currently learning but may also be reinforcing the behavior and academic expectations for the student. They should change often and have some educational relevance to the units you are currently teaching. Time spent upfront creating these activities will pay off in the long run.

