



Structured Break Areas (Homebase)

WHAT

Structured break areas, formerly referred to as homebase, are a proactive Tier 1/Tier 2 support within a PBIS/MTSS framework designed to prevent escalation by supporting student self-regulation. These designated spaces within the classroom or school environment provide predictable access to regulation supports, allowing students to de-escalate and return to instruction with minimal disruption.

SETTING UP THE ENVIRONMENT

1. **Physical Boundaries:** Establish a clearly defined area using furniture, rugs, or visual markers to communicate the intended function of the space and support student understanding of expectations.
2. **Lighting and Sound:** When feasible, reduce sensory triggers by minimizing buzzing or flickering fluorescent lighting and using blue light filters to soften harsh illumination.
3. **Sensory Supports:** Stock the area with developmentally appropriate sensory tools selected to support regulation rather than serve as toys.
4. **Noise Management:** Provide noise-reducing or noise-canceling headphones for students with auditory sensitivities.
5. **Tactile and Oral Input:** Offer appropriate tactile supports, such as hand fidgets or chewable items, to meet sensory-seeking needs and promote regulation.
6. **Movement Opportunities:** Incorporate safe movement options (e.g., inflatable seat cushions, chair bands, or brief gross-motor tools such as a mini-trampoline when appropriate) to allow controlled movement without disrupting instruction.





BENEFITS

- Prevents escalation by providing predictable, proactive access to regulation supports before behavior intensifies.
- Preserves instructional time by reducing disruptions and supporting faster return to learning.
- Builds self-regulation and independence by teaching students to appropriately access supports within the classroom system.



TEACHING THE LEARNER

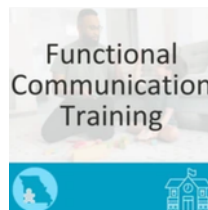
The goal is to move from teacher-led intervention to student self-advocacy.

- Label and Model: When a student is struggling, label the behavior (e.g., "I see you are covering your ears") and model the appropriate request for Homebase.
- Visual Requests: Use choice boards or "First/Then" visuals to help students request the sensory breaks they need.
- The "Request" Rule: Avoid simply "throwing" the intervention at a student; they must be taught to request it so they can generalize this skill to other environments.
- Functional Communication: Teach students to say "Break please" or "I need my headphones" instead of relying on maladaptive behaviors like screaming or biting to get their needs met.

REMINDERS

- Homebase is a tool for regulation, not a punishment.
- If a student is screaming and a teacher simply hands them a sensory tool without a request, it may inadvertently reinforce the crying behavior. Always pair the tool with a taught communication skill.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



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