

Breaks and transitions in the academic year can be very challenging for Oregon students and school staff. Many families face loss, uncertainty, and turmoil. Making time and space for care, connection, grace and patience are vitally important to nurturing health and well-being now, and throughout the school year.

Children, adolescents and adults often find comfort in predictable routines. So interruptions to regular activities during holidays and breaks can be anxiety-provoking. Reactions to these types of stressors can take many forms such as frustration, anger, irritability, sadness, and withdrawal. These typical human stress responses may be particularly evident before, during and after time away from school.

This means that students and staff may need greater emotional support during transitional times. That is why we are continuing to encourage schools and districts to prioritize care, connection and community, and dedicate time and space in the school day for students and staff to make meaning of their experience through structured and unstructured tasks. This may include individual or group expressive activities like writing, art, music, movement, experiential learning opportunities, silence, and time for individuals to connect with their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

The most important thing that we can do to support each other is to **be mindful that breaks and holidays can be difficult, and hold space for all experiences and reactions.**

Resources to promote and support health and well-being

School staff and administrators are encouraged to make use of the following suggestions and resources to continue to promote school and classroom care and connection.

	Before Break	After Break
Foundation	<i>Be mindful that breaks and holidays can be difficult, and hold space for different experiences and reactions.</i>	<i>Transitions back to structured environments may be challenging. Provide space and grace for difficult emotions and behaviors.</i>
Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize regular, brief individual check-ins with students and staff. • Ask students/staff how school, teachers, friends, and/or family can support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize regular, brief individual check-ins with students and staff. • Ask students/staff how school, teachers, friends, and/or family can support them in transitioning back from a break.

	<p>them in transitioning into a break.</p>	
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunities for students, staff and administrators to express gratitude to/for each other. • Provide art supplies and time for students and staff to make cards for people they are grateful for, and deliver them as health protocols permit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try bringing students into a community circle. (Example) • Gently remind students of routines, expectations and daily practices.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorm healthy, nurturing activities students, staff and administrators can do alone, with friends, and/or with family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a calm room or space. Give students and staff explicit permission and time to use the space when needed.
Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students and staff to write themselves a note of encouragement. Pass these notes back upon return for them to read. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicate time and space each school day for individual or group expressive activities like writing, art, music, movement, experiential learning opportunities, silence, and unstructured time for students and staff to connect with their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, and each other.
Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a class or school feel-good playlist of positive, encouraging songs. Share the link so school community members can play it any time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide time and space for students to set intentions for the new year. • Encourage intentions that are positive, nurturing, and not necessarily tied to academics or achievement. • Advise students to focus on positive aspirations, not “don’ts”. • Have students celebrate their efforts.

<p>Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile a list of optional resources for students to explore over break. This might include videos or readings relevant to course material, fun, experiential activities, or short writing prompts for students to use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease into academics by reviewing pre-break lessons and slowly introducing new concepts.
<p>Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind students and staff that transitions can be challenging, and it is OK to reach out to others. • Provide all students, families and staff a list of community/local resources that students, staff and families may access over breaks, like food pantries, free counseling services, or shelters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind students and staff that transitions can be challenging, and it is OK to reach out to others. • Provide all students, families and staff a list of community/local resources that students, staff and families may access, like food pantries, free counseling services, or shelters.

Tools and resources:

- [Easing the Transition Back to School after Break](#) (We Are Teachers)
- [Supporting Students before and after Breaks](#) (We Are Teachers)
- [How to Make this Hard Transition Back to School with Your Students](#) (Greater Good Magazine)
- [How to Help Students Own the Transition Back to School](#) (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching)
- [Don't Assume that Every Student Had a Fun or Warm Holiday Break](#) (PBS NewsHour)
- [How to Fend Off Educational Numbness with Experiential Learning](#) (KQED)