



# Tennessee Behavior Supports Project

at Vanderbilt University

## Breaks Are Better (BrB): A Tier II Intervention for Schools Implementing RTI<sup>2</sup>-B

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Every teacher has had students who get out of their seats without permission, distract classmates during work time, and doodle instead of paying attention to the lesson. Every teacher has also heard the common explanation that such students "just want attention." Although this may sometimes be the motivation, it isn't always the case. There may be other reasons students disrupt the class and are not completing their work.



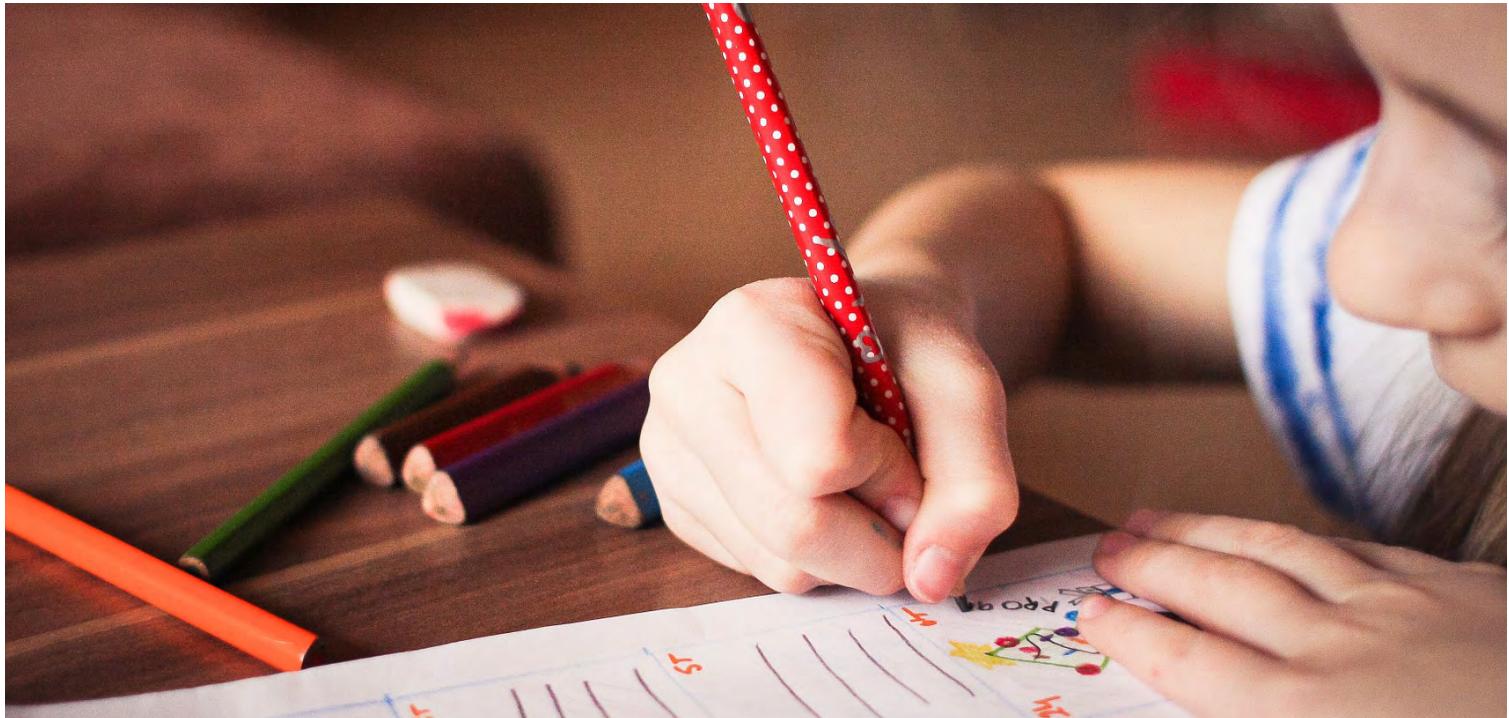
### Using BrB to Target Escape- and Avoidance-Motivated Behaviors

Although interventions such as Check-In/Check-Out can be very effective for students whose behavior is motivated by adult attention, they may not address the needs of students whose behavior is motivated by escaping or avoiding task demands. This need for other approaches led to the development of a new Tier II intervention called Breaks are Better (BrB).

BrB is a Tier II intervention designed to address problem behaviors maintained by escaping or avoiding task demands. In other words, BrB is designed to help students who frequently avoid completing activities they find difficult or unpleasant. BrB is similar in format to Check-In/Check-Out (CICO), but includes built-in breaks to encourage and reward

students for taking breaks appropriately when needed, instead of engaging in problem behaviors to avoid doing work. This helps students learn how to meet behavioral expectations and access breaks appropriately. Results of initial studies evaluating BrB and function-based modifications of CICO have shown positive effects for students with escape-motivated problem behavior.<sup>1,2</sup>

Although BrB requires moderate preparatory work for the first student, it requires little time, energy, and resources to implement with additional students. It is especially easy to implement in schools already familiar with Check-In/Check-Out. In fact, BrB may be a good fit for schools with a substantial number of students who are not responding positively to Check-In/Check-Out but would benefit from an adapted Tier II intervention before moving to Tier III.



## Key Elements of BrB

At the RTI<sup>2</sup>-B Tier II Training, the Tennessee Behavior Supports Project presents a way of delivering Tier II interventions by considering eight key elements: (a) Program Logistics, (b) Daily Progress Reports, (c) Reinforcement System, (d) Identifying Students, (e) Data Management, (f) Evaluate Intervention Outcomes, (g) Plans for Self-Management, Fading, and Graduation, and (h) Training Stakeholders. These eight key elements are critical to effective implementation of BrB. We describe each of these components below.

**1. Program Logistics:** Each Tier II Team implementing BrB needs to have one person, referred to as the BrB Coordinator, who organizes and oversees all elements of the intervention. This includes managing the staff members who have direct daily contact with the students

participating in BrB and explaining the intervention to relevant students and parents/guardians. Much like in the Check-In/Check-Out Intervention, BrB includes a morning check-in and afternoon check-out meeting with a preferred adult who is known as the BrB Mentor. During these short meetings, the student and BrB Mentor review goals for the day, appropriate behaviors, the break routine, and the Daily Progress Report (DPR). Students are allotted three 2-minute breaks for each class period or subject block. Students must follow the break routine when requesting a break. After being asked, the teacher then determines if it is an appropriate time for the student to take a break. When students are not allowed to take a break, they must set their timer and wait at least two minutes before asking again. When students are allowed to take a break, they can stop working and engage in

their choice of a pre-approved break activity such as doodling, looking at a book, or putting their head down. Students are given a timer each day to monitor the duration of their breaks. This allows them to know when the break is over and it is time to return to their work. After each class period or subject block, the student meets with the teacher to receive feedback about his or her behavior.

- 1. Program Logistics**
- 2. Daily Progress Reports**
- 3. Reinforcement System**
- 4. Identifying Students**
- 5. Data Management**
- 6. Evaluate Intervention Outcomes**
- 7. Plans for Self-Management, Fading, and Graduation**
- 8. Training Stakeholders**



2. **Daily Progress Report (DPR):** The BrB Daily Progress Report is a point card that can be adapted from the Check-In/Check-Out DPR. The DPR is used to track points earned and encourage positive interactions with teachers at the beginning and end of each class period. The DPR is also used to track the number of breaks each student uses during each class period.

3. **Reinforcement System:** At the end of each class period or subject block, the teacher awards points on the DPR based on whether the student met each of the behavioral expectations during that time. In addition to points earned for behavior, points can also be earned for either taking breaks appropriately or not taking a break at all during each time period. The

student can then use the points to earn rewards. The BrB Mentor is in charge of implementing the reward component of the program. In addition to earning points or rewards for meeting their daily or weekly point goals, students can also earn rewards for attending check-in and check-out meetings with their BrB Mentor.

## Example Daily Point Card (DPR)

Name	Date				
	Safe	Respectful	Responsible	Breaks taken the right way (if needed) OR not taken	2-minute Breaks Left
	Keep your hands to yourself	Raise your hand if you have something to say	Follow directions the first time		
<b>Targeted Reading</b>	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1	<b>B B B</b>
<b>Core Literacy</b>	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1	<b>B B B</b>
<b>Writing</b>	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1	<b>B B B</b>
<b>Core Math</b>	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1	<b>B B B</b>
<b>Sci/SS/Mus/Lib/PE</b>	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1	<b>B B B</b>
<b>Workshop</b>	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1	<b>B B B</b>
<b>Sci/SS/Mus/Lib/PE</b>	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1 2	0 1	<b>B B B</b>
Points					
2	Met expectations (Great job!)				
1	Met some expectations (Good work!)				
0	Met few or no expectations (Room for improvement)				
<b>Check-In Points</b>	Attended check-in	0 1			
	Was prepared	0 1			
<b>Check-Out Points</b>	Attended check-out	0 1			
	Teacher completed ratings	0 1			
Today's Goal _____	Today's Total _____	Goal Met? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Parent Signature	All work due is complete _____				
	All work due is not complete _____				



4. **Identifying Students:** The Tier II team should use multiple sources of data to identify students for BrB. Options for these data sources include, but are not limited to, office discipline referrals, screening tools, attendance records, and teacher nomination forms. BrB is an appropriate intervention for students who are unresponsive to Tier I supports and who engage in mild problem behavior throughout the day that is maintained by escape or avoidance. Tier II teams should use the data flags chart they developed with the Tennessee Behavior Supports Project at the Tier II training to help identify students for additional support.

5. **Data Management:** Data collected from the Daily Progress Report (DPR) can be used to monitor student progress. Freely available tools called the Advanced Tiers Spreadsheet or the Progress Monitoring Tool can be used to help teams review student DPR data.<sup>3</sup> The BrB Mentor should enter the DPR data into this spreadsheet daily, and the BrB Coordinator and Tier II team members should use this spreadsheet to monitor progress and make intervention decisions.

6. **Evaluate Intervention Outcomes:** For BrB to be an effective intervention, it must be implemented with fidelity, or in the way it was intended. Tier II teams can use DPR review forms and fidelity checklists to make sure that teachers and BrB Mentors are implementing the intervention as planned. After assessing fidelity, it is important for Tier II teams to use progress monitoring data to see if students enrolled in BrB are responding positively to the intervention. Tier



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II teams can use the progress monitoring flowchart they developed with the Tennessee Behavior Supports Project at the Tier II training as a guide to discuss next steps for students based on how they are responding to the intervention.

7. **Plans for Self-Management, Fading, and Graduation:** BrB is not designed to be a permanent intervention for students. Once students become successful in consistently meeting their goals, the Tier II team should develop a plan to gradually fade out the intervention. The goal of BrB is to teach students how to appropriately access a break so that eventually they can manage their own behavior. Tier II teams should create a way to systematically remove supports to help prepare students to be successful on their

own. This might include gradually reducing the number of breaks available to students or asking students to rate their own behavior on their DPR.

8. **Training Stakeholders:** The Tier II team should provide an overview of BrB to the entire staff at the beginning of the year, ideally at the same time they explain Check-In/Check-Out. Then, as students are identified for BrB, the BrB Coordinator should contact parents/guardians to share information about the intervention, answer questions, and obtain permission for implementation. The students' teachers should be reminded of their role in the intervention and the BrB Coordinator should explain all components of the intervention to each student. Tier II teams can



determine if their BrB program should include daily or weekly communication with parents/guardians of enrolled students. Parents/guardians can also help support the intervention by giving their child positive feedback or encouragement at home based on progress updates they receive from the school team. It is important that parents/guardians avoid giving negative feedback or reprimands, as this intervention is meant to be a positive experience for the student.

## Implementation

It is best for teams to have experience implementing Check-In/Check-Out before starting BrB at their school. Even though many components of BrB can be adapted from Check-In/Check-Out, it still requires planning and preparation by the Tier II team. The Tier II team should work together to organize the necessary materials required for BrB prior to implementation.

## Summary

BrB is a Tier II intervention that helps students learn to appropriately take a break instead of engaging in problem behavior to avoid work. Schools interested in considering BrB for their students and staff should gather more detailed information about implementation from their region's Tennessee Behavior Supports Project team.

## For Further Reading

Anderson, C., & Boyd, J. (n.d.). *Breaks are better: Implementation manual*. Eugene, OR: University of Oregon. Retrieved from <http://www.warrencountyschools.org/userfiles/1410/my%20files/breaks%20are%20better%20manual.pdf?id=525179>

### Steps for the Tier II Team to Implement BrB

1. Determine if BrB is an appropriate intervention for your school and assess staff buy-in.
2. Assign role of BrB Coordinator within the Tier II team and BrB Mentors within the building.
3. Select your break routine template and customize the BrB Daily Progress Report to include your school's behavioral expectations and to match your school's schedule.
4. Define the behavioral expectations, such as "Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible," in terms of concrete academic behaviors.
5. Develop a BrB reward system or consider how to use your school's current acknowledgement system to reward students when goals are met.
6. Train all staff on BrB, explain the similarities to Check-In/Check-Out, and promote program buy-in.
7. Use school data sources to identify students who need Tier II supports and who would be a good fit for the BrB intervention.
8. Explain the intervention to identified students and their parents/guardians and remind the students' teachers of their role in the intervention.
9. Pilot the intervention with a small number of students and slowly add more students to the program as appropriate.
10. Determine how Daily Progress Report data will be collected and how the Tier II team will use the progress monitoring system to track student outcomes.

Tennessee Behavior Supports Project (2018). *What is breaks are better?* [PDF document]. Retrieved from [tennesseebsp.org](http://tennesseebsp.org).

Tennessee Behavior Supports Project (2018). *Individualizing breaks are better for your school* [Word document]. Retrieved from [tennesseebsp.org](http://tennesseebsp.org).

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Boyd, R. J., & Anderson, C. M. (2013). Breaks are better: A tier II social behavior intervention. *Journal of Behavioral Education*, 22(4), 348-365. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10864-013-9184-2>

<sup>2</sup>Kilgus, S. P., Fallon, L. M., & Feinberg, A. B. (2016). Function-based modification of check-in/check-out to influence escape-maintained behavior. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, 32, 24-45.

<sup>3</sup>Way, Gordon. *MO SW-PBS free data tools* [PDF document]. Retrieved from <http://apbs.org/conference>



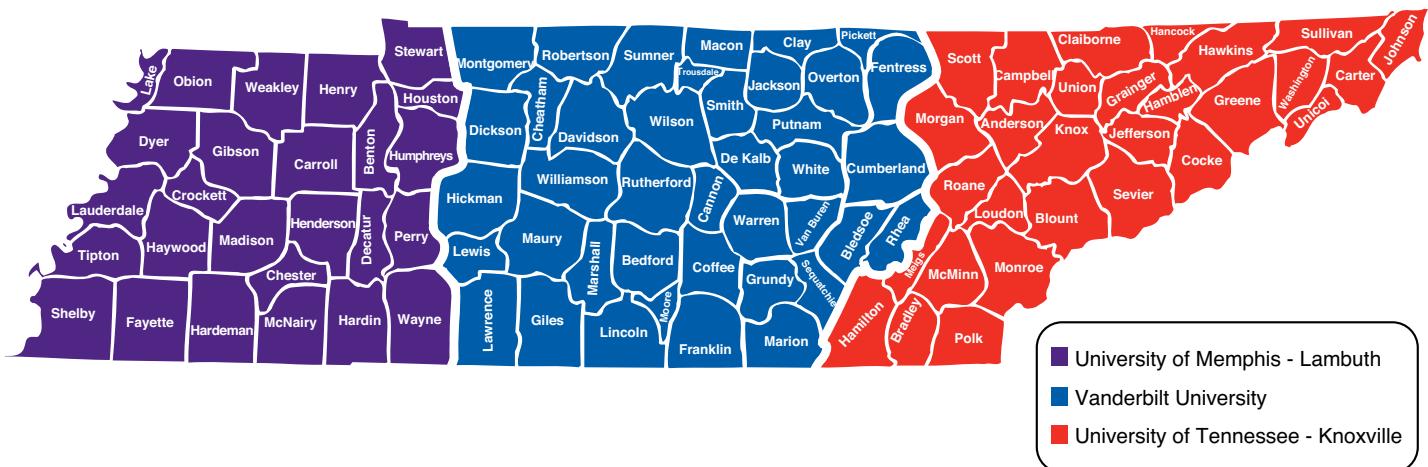
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## Tennessee Behavior Supports Project by Region: 2016-2020



The Tennessee Behavior Supports Project (TBSP) is funded by the Tennessee Department of Education and consists of three regional support contracts: University of Memphis – Lambuth Campus, Vanderbilt University, and University of Tennessee – Knoxville. TBSP is responsible for providing training and technical assistance to schools as they address the behavioral needs of students through Response to Instruction and Intervention for Behavior (RTI<sup>2</sup>-B).

To locate the project assigned to your region, see below.



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