the educator's edge
best practices for your classroom

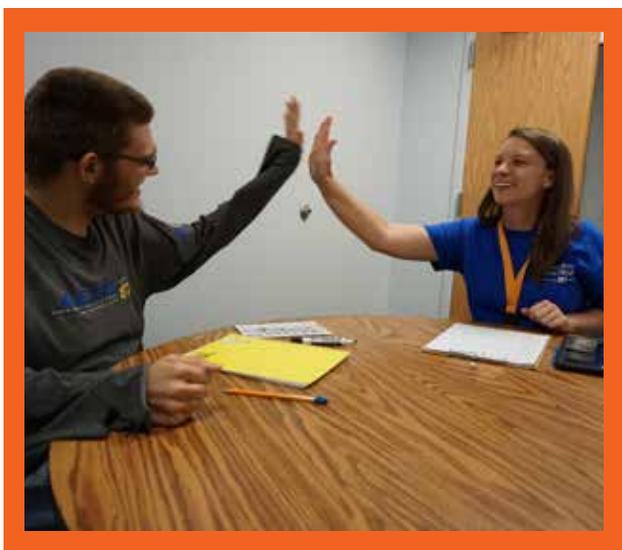

Universal Break Request Protocol- PDF

Self-Management Strategies

Nick Miles, Autism Specialist

The ability to request a break is one of the most critical aspects of communication in the classroom. As an adult, you (almost) always have the option to terminate a particular activity, take a rest, or move to another environment, and there is no reason that our students should not have this same level of autonomy and self-determination. At Easterseals, we believe that every single student should have an effective and efficient means of requesting a break, irrespective of age, grade, setting, or form of communication. As an added bonus for educators, giving students an easy way to communicate this need can not only increase engagement (Kreibich et al., 2015), but is one of the best ways to eliminate a wide range of disruptive behaviors in the classroom!

This month's tool is the Universal Break Request Protocol pdf guide. The guide's framework will describe some basic steps for introducing a break request for students that do not currently have an effective, consistent means of doing so. Please note that while this guide is a good starting point, it may need to be adapted to your particular student(s) based on communication skills or environment. Most of this protocol will focus on the utilization of a picture exchange communication system, which may not be the most effective mode of communication for all students (though it does include some unique benefits for teaching this type of skill). Different modes of communication, such as vocal speech, AAC devices, or ASL can absolutely be accommodated, but be sure to build in some form of visual support that will indicate when the break is/is not available during later phases of the teaching and fading protocol.

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