



## Strategies for Staying Focused

During certain times of the year such as before summer or holiday breaks, excitement, routine changes, and thoughts of future events can make focusing on school work and remembering rules and routines a challenge. This article includes strategies for staying on track during an exciting time of the year.

**1. Keep as Consistent a Schedule as Possible** – Many children depend on a consistent schedule for staying on task. Schools often have events before breaks such as assemblies, field days, or exams, and many children find these schedule changes difficult. Minimize stress and anxiety by altering the schedule as little as possible. Continue with scheduled lessons and regular individual and group instruction so children understand that expectations for learning and behavior are still in place.

**2. Use Exciting Events for Educational Activities** – Trips, activities, and new visitors are exciting events in children's lives. These experiences are opportunities for literacy, communication, and art activities. Have children write about, draw, or discuss their upcoming plans. Sharing these events is a way to think about them, communicate their experiences with peers, and practice writing skills.

**3. Develop Positive Strategies for Using Excess Energy** – Schedule changes and special events can be exciting for children. Provide opportunities for using physical energy such as stress balls, trampolines, or walks so children can positively focus their energy. Let children know energy is a natural response and provide them with good ways to focus their energy.

**4. Plan** – Prepare for downtime before breaks. Although new concepts and skills often are not introduced before breaks, continuing instruction is critical. Schools frequently have assemblies and other activities planned that are fun, but involve short downtimes and breaks in the school schedule. Have a number of literacy activities, art lessons, and games with academic concepts accessible for unexpected downtimes.

**5. Use Visuals as Reminders** – Use visual reminders such as pictures or words to reinforce school and classroom rules. Reviewing the rules reminds children the rules are in place for the duration of the year. If the daily schedule changes, highlight events such as a big test, therapy schedule changes, or art, music, or physical education class ending. For classrooms that discuss the calendar and daily schedule in the morning, be sure to discuss changes and expectations for schedule changes at this time, then remind children as the schedule change approaches.



From *School Rules*

**6. Keep the Physical Environment as Consistent as Possible** – Professionals often move materials and furniture before breaks. Although this is efficient for school staff, changes to the environment may indicate to children that learning time is over. Be sure to minimize changes especially when rules and instructional concepts are posted or when the physical environment is something children depend on for knowing where to be during certain activities.

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