



Winter Break Is Coming!

5 Tips for Teachers to Make It to Winter Break

By Shawnta S. Barnes – November 23, 2018

Right now, teachers and students are enjoying the rest of Thanksgiving break. When school resumes on Monday, it is one of the biggest countdowns of the school year, the countdown to the start of winter break. I assert there is no need to become stressed and bent out of shape. You just need to be prepared. Here are five tips to get you through school until winter break.

1. Keep your expectations high.

This is a great time to remind students of your expectations and procedures. Actually right before Thanksgiving break, I had to check a class. They came to the library and thought they were going to act foolishly. They found out quickly that I was not the one for that. You have to make it clear that you are not the one either.

2. Do not threaten to take away rewards or parties from students.

What??? I know what you are thinking. I need to hold the winter party over my students' head so they will behave. This is my fourth year working in an elementary school. I don't like winter parties. It is a time for icing and sprinkles to get everywhere and for kids to get too hyped, but I know students need time to socialize and be kids. The kids who get on your nerves the most are the kids who need this the most. If you hang a party over their heads and then take it away, you have no leverage. Honestly, if you have to stoop to this low, you might need to re-evaluate your classroom management skills.

3. Plan engaging, well-structured lessons.

Students should be engaged in academics until the final bell sounds. When I was a literacy coach, I had my crew of students. These were students who were kicked out of class who ended up with me. I blamed their teachers. I'm all about getting students right back to class. When I would go investigate, I would find that the teacher was showing another movie or there was an open-ended assignment the teacher was monitoring from her desk. The quality of assignments and activities should not drop because you are ready for winter break.

4. Take students on a field trip.

I know it might be too late to schedule one now, but you can think ahead for the next school year. I notice a drop in field trips when the weather gets colder. When the weather is colder, especially here in the Midwest, that means indoor recess. Students are cooped up all day during the colder months. Giving them opportunities to get off campus and learn will benefit both you and the students.

5. Involve parents in the classroom.

At the beginning of the year, teachers can be really good at including parents. As the year continues, we fall off track. This is a great time to utilize parents. You might have a parent come in and help with a group. I know there are some parents that volunteer and work with students in my twin sons' classroom. Use parents to help you complete other tasks. There is always something that needs to get done in the classroom. Let a parent volunteer take some of that weight off of your shoulders.

Hopefully, you find these tips helpful. What would you add to the list?

