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# The Week Before Winter Break Doesn't Have to Be a Nightmare



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by Shawnta S. Barnes



One of the hardest weeks of the school year is the week before winter break. The turn up is real. Students start acting as if you didn't spend the first few weeks of the school year forcing them to internalize routines and procedures. And it's like they forgot you reviewed these routines and procedures after fall break and again after Thanksgiving break.

Trust and believe that you will be tested, but you can prevail. You can overcome and you most definitely can survive. However, you must be prepared. Here are three tips to survive the last week of school before winter break.

## **Don't let up on routines and procedures.**

Once you slide off of your routines and procedures, students will start testing the boundaries. If students are supposed to walk silently in the hallways and some students are talking, don't ignore it.

I know you are tired. I know you just want to drop them off to the special area or elective teacher so you can have your prep, but don't give in. If that means, turning around and going back to your room to do the procedure 100% correctly, do it. [pullquote]Let them know that you are running a tight ship, even until the last minute of the last day before that final bell sounds.[/pullquote]

## **Teach the entire block.**

This is not the time to slide in some random winter craft. Don't do it! If you are an elementary teacher, they are already going to have a winter party. That's enough festivities for the week. You know you are only pulling out that random activity that is mentioned nowhere in your lesson plans because you are tired.

Also, don't show a movie just because you just want to sit in the back of the room and chill for a minute. You also know the administration will be checking to see if you are teaching, so don't put yourself in a position to have some explaining to do.

## **Show compassion and empathy.**

School is a predictable place for children. Too many students we serve will be in unpredictable environments for two weeks over break. As each day of this week passes,

anxiety and even fear might build up inside of these children.

Some may shut down and some may act out. If you have strong relationships with students, you should know who might not have three meals to eat when school is out for the break or which students might not have electricity. [pullquote]If a student is checked out and not participating or is acting out unexpectedly or more than before, remember the why behind the actions.[/pullquote]

This week will not be easy, but you can endure. Have a plan and stick to it. Keep a positive spirit even if that one student has tested your patience for the tenth time. Keep your eye on the finish line because the break is coming. You will have freedom. There is an escape, but you have to make it through this week.

*A version of this post originally appeared on Indy K12 as "[3 Tips to Finish Strong as Winter Break Approaches](#)".*

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Shawnta (Shawn-tay) S. Barnes, also known as Educator Barnes, is a married mother of identical twin boys. She navigates education from not only the educator's perspective but also the parent's perspective. She has been an educator for nearly two decades. Shawnta works with K-12 schools, universities, &

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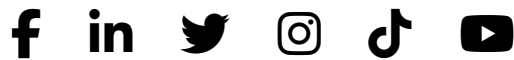
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