VISUAL SUPPORT WEBINAR SERIES:
DEVELOPING A VISUAL SCHEDULE

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OBJECTIVES

• To learn the steps to creating a visual schedule.

• To learn how to implement a visual schedule for individual students.
What is an individual schedule?

A visual representation of planned activities in the order in which they will occur, using symbols, words, pictures, photographs, icons, or actual objects.
“Real World” Schedules

Why use a visual schedule?

Visual schedules provide:

- Predictability
- A visual portrayal of information that is normally presented through an auditory mode.
- Increases independence
- A means to teach flexibility and routine
- A means to show progression through time
- Clear direction adapted to individual’s communication or language skills.
A series of assessments need to take place to ensure that the appropriate schedule is developed for each student.

When assessing the student, consider the following:

- Student’s comprehension level
- Attention span
- Sequencing abilities

Levels of Abstractness
Types of schedules

**Functional Object**

– Functional objects are used to represent the activity in the student’s day and is used by the student during those portions of the day.

**Example:**

Spoon = lunch  
Diaper = bathroom  
Toothbrush = Brush Teeth
First-Then object schedule with “Then” as a reinforcer or break item.

Representational Object

– Representational objects are used to represent (but not actually be used during) the activity in the student’s day.

Example:
Plastic sandwich = lunch
Toy Tree = outside
Miniature table = work time
This is a symbolic object schedule. For example, the pen signifies desk work, toy car is break (child loves cars), etc. Three to five items at a time, left to right, object is carried and deposited into a clearly marked “target” at the destination.
True Object Based Icons (T.O.B.I.)

This picture shows a schedule for a student who is in between an object and a picture schedule. The schedule is made up of True Object Based Icons (T.O.B.I.s). It is a picture cut out in the shape of the object and helps the student transition between 3 dimensional objects to a 2 dimensional object.

When using TOBI’s with students on the spectrum, you should assess to determine if the student can differentiate the icons in a generalized manner. For example, if using the hamburger to represent lunch, does the student expect to get a hamburger, or, does he understand it is a transition to the cafeteria?

Types of schedules

Photograph

– Photographs are used to represent activities scheduled in the student’s day.

Example:

Photograph of the student’s lunch box = lunch
Photograph of swing set = Recess
Photo of the student at the work table = Instruction time
Photograph First-Then

Types of schedules

**Picture/line drawing**

– Cartoon pictures or 2-D drawings are used to represent portions of the student’s day.

**Examples:**
- Boardmaker picture of student eating = lunch
- Stick figure of swinging = Recess
- Icon of student sitting at a desk = Instruction time
Picture and Word check-off schedule

Types of schedules

Written

- Words or brief statements spell out portions of the student’s day
Check-off schedules:
Use of words, times and pictures

Types of schedules

**Combination**

- Any combination of the above visual schedule types. This type of schedule is especially appropriate for students transitioning between two schedule types such as photograph and icon.
Combination Schedule

How to further individualize the schedule

Portability – Does the schedule need to travel with the student across environments or classrooms?

Layout – Does the student respond best to information presented left-to-right, or top to bottom?

Length – small chunks of the day or full-day?
Portable Schedule

Simple Mobile Schedule

- 3 x 5 index card notebook
- 4 x 6 photo album
Different Levels of Schedule Identification

- The student does not go to a schedule area to check a schedule. The visual cue is delivered by an adult to the student at the time of transition.

- Student finds her schedule which is located in a separate location, away from other student schedules.

- Student’s schedule is in the same area as other schedules but highlighted to attract her attention and give it more meaning.

- Student schedule is located in central, neutral location with other student schedules.

- The schedule is mobile, the student carries it with him throughout the day.
Levels of Initiation

How does the student know when to check his/her schedule?

- Student does not go to the schedule, the teacher takes a visual cue to the student at the time of each transition to indicate the upcoming activity.

- Student is given a visual cue for transition which prompts him/her to go to his/her schedule.

- Student determines when to check his/her schedule throughout the day.

Why does the student need to be cued?

1. To teach the student the meaning of the visual cue so eventually, it can be incorporated into work systems and build independence.

2. To give the student purpose to get from point A to point B without depending on staff verbalization.
A clear sense of closure or finished must be provided for all transitions.

- A receptacle or jig can be used for the object level
- A pocket or identical photograph/icon is provided for matching levels.
- A means of crossing out, or checking off items is used at the list level.
Transition Receptacle for Object Schedule

Representational schedule item

Receptacles for Matching Levels
Transitional Cue Receptacle for Matching with motor difficulties

Receptacles for matching schedule icons
Summary of steps the student needs to learn:

Teach the student the schedule and practice with consistent and specific reinforcement. Initially, if needed, use graduated guidance. Be sure to fade those prompts!

Initiation: For students accepting a transition cue, it should be presented to the student when it is time for the schedule to be checked. For the first day or two, present the transition cue and say “check schedule”. After those two days, simply present the cue and provide wait time to respond. If needed, provide least-to-most levels of prompting to assist.

What students need to learn: Cont’d

Locate the schedule
- If they do not accept or locate, maybe cue needs changed?
- Is the schedule at student’s eye level?
- Are too many schedules grouped together?
- What other environmental factors could be causing the student not to respond?

Pull the next item in sequence
- If they “shop” maybe they need a shorter schedule.

Student goes to the correct area.
- If they don’t go to the area, are expectations unclear?
- Are areas clearly marked and easily accessible by the student?

Stays on track throughout transitions.
- Does the student stay on track during transition?
Assessment

Observe the student using the schedule throughout the day. Note any physical, verbal, or gestural help needed to transition, no matter how minimal.

What to take data on:

1. Initiation
2. Identifies own schedule
3. Identifies which schedule icon is next
4. Understands the meaning of the schedule icon
5. Stays on track throughout transition

• Restructure
Collecting Data on Schedules

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<th>Activity</th>
<th>Initiation</th>
<th>Identifies own schedule</th>
<th>Follows Sequence</th>
<th>Understands Meaning of the Cue</th>
<th>Stays on Track</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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1 = fail  2 = physical prompt  3 = verbal prompt  4 = gestural prompt  5 = material prompt  6 = independent

Restructure and Reassess

- After making all the changes indicated by the assessment, teach your student to use the newly restructured schedule.
- After a short period of time, reassess following the same process as your initial assessment/restructure.
- Restructure as needed, start assessment over again.
- After 6 months or more of independence, consider making a change, one skill at a time.
Summary

- Determine the schedule type
- Determine length, portability and layout of schedule
- Determine the initiation cue
- Create transition receptacles to indicate the end of the transition
- Teach the process to the student
- Assess, take data, restructure and reteach if needed.