

Visual Schedules

The use of visual supports helps students understand what to expect in the classroom. They also assist the student in making transitions from one activity to another. When students understand what is expected of them, behaviour difficulties are reduced and independence increases. Before creating and using a visual schedule it is important to spend some time with the student in order to understand their individual needs and determine the best way to present information to them.

Visual schedules should provide the following *information* to the student:

- What is happening today - *regular activities; something new, different, unusual*
- What is not happening today
- What is the sequence of events
- What is changing that I normally expect
- When it is time to stop one activity and move onto another one

Before creating the schedule:

- Decide on the amount of time to display - *one activity at a time, first-then card, half day, full day*
- Decide on the type and size of symbols - *see list of symbols below*
- Decide on the format for displaying symbols on the schedule - *top to bottom (preferred), left to right, etc.*
- Decide how the student will know when an event or activity is over – *checking off a done column, turning the symbol over, putting the symbol in pocket, etc.*
- Determine whether a transition object is required to bring the student back to the schedule after each activity
- Decide on the location of the schedule – *In transition area, on a wall, on the student's desk or in a portable agenda, iPad, etc.*

It is important that the student is able to derive meaning from the symbols used:

The list of symbols from most concrete to abstract include:

- real objects (keys mean a car ride)
- parts of real objects (part of a chain to indicate swing)
- miniatures of real objects (toys)
- photographs

- abstract pictures (line drawings)-pictograms
- a combination of symbols(example-pictures and words)
- printed and written words

Introducing symbols to the student:

- Begin by introducing each symbol individually to ensure the student derives meaning from it
- Have the student transport the symbol to the area of the activity to support their ability to associate the symbol with the activity
- Use the first – then card to begin the process of understanding the sequence of events
- As the student becomes familiar with the symbols, use a visual schedule and increase the number of symbols displayed to promote predictability throughout their day.

Using a daily schedule:

Place the symbols in the order that the activities are to be followed in the morning. The amount of time spent on each activity does not matter. It is the **sequence** of events that is important. Review all of the symbols on the schedule with the student at the beginning of the day by pointing to each one and labeling each activity. Use sequence words such as “First it’s time for _____, then you will _____, after its _____ etc.” Don’t ask your student to label or to point to the symbols. The symbols are there to provide important information to your student about their day.

After lunch repeat the process for the afternoon schedule.

General tips for using daily schedules:

- FOLLOW IT!
- Make it an essential part of the daily routine-visual schedules can be modified to meet student needs but should rarely be eliminated
- Always refer back to it when communicating about its information
- Once the schedule is in place and the student understands the system, he/ she should be able to refer to it and follow it without prompting.

Visual Supports in this kit

This kindergarten kit is to be used with students who are able to derive meaning from pictogram symbols. If you have questions about how to introduce and use visual supports, please contact your school's speech & language pathologist, special needs consultant or consultant for autism.

The pictures included in this kit:

This kit contains 16, 2x2 pictures that show activities that may occur throughout a typical Kindergarten day. These pictures are used to assist the student in understanding the routine and knowing when an activity will occur. They will also assist in transitioning from one activity to another.

These 2X2 pictures will be used in conjunction with the morning/afternoon schedule and the first/then card.

The first/then card:

The first/then card can be used as the first step when introducing the schedule or as a motivational tool in collaboration with the daily schedule. Place the activity picture in the box labeled "first" followed by what will happen after the activity, in the box labeled "then". Sometimes the second symbol might be a reward for completing a particular activity or may simply be the next classroom activity such as recess or snack time.

Cue cards:

This kit also contains 4, 4x4 cue cards that show a directive. These are helpful in teaching basic directions and will then serve as a visual reminder for classroom expectations. When giving a verbal direction, pair it with the picture. Once the student understands the picture you can show the picture to the student without providing a verbal cue.

The international "no" symbol (red diagonal stripe) is useful for visually showing the student activities or objects which are not available. It can be used on symbols in a variety of formats such as the schedule, choice board, consequence maps, etc.

As you become familiar with the classroom routine and what motivates your particular student, more pictures can be added to the kit by consulting with a resource teacher. Additional visual materials can be found on our website at <http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/asdn>