CREATING SCHEDULES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM TO PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE

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We all use calendars, memos, recipes, to do lists, and shopping lists; these environmental supports help us to plan our time, organize our tasks, and better understand what is expected of us. **Teachers and parents can make use of environmental supports to help persons with autism become more independent** (Quill, 1995). Schedules are one type of environmental support that can be used to present information to persons with autism. Schedules provide the following:

• Sequence of events

• Alert changes in routine

• Redirects the learner back to an activity

• Outlines expectations

There are many types of schedules, ranging from daily schedules to mini-schedules that break down an activity into parts. This article details the use of daily schedules.

A daily schedule gives individuals information about major events and activities of the day. Daily schedules can be printed, pictorial or a combination of the two. Daily schedules can be posted in the classroom or home, or carried in a notebook or clipboard.

One type of schedule is designed as a check-off system. The student should check off each activity as he completes it. By using this type of schedule, the student can predict the upcoming activities. The adults can alter the schedule by marking changes in events, thus alerting the student of any upcoming changes. By using a sheet of paper that has been laminated, and marking completed tasks with a grease pencil or dry erase marker, the student can use the schedule anywhere.

Davey's Schedule

____Arrival	____Music
____Daily Oral Language	____Outside
____Math	____Social Studies
____Reading Group	____Science
____Lunch	____Home
____Spelling	

The below schedule is an example of a stationary picture schedule posted in the classroom. This type of schedule was developed and used with a preschool student during a school-based consultation.

Schedule process is as follows:

• The child is prompted to check his schedule by the teacher or assistantt

• He pulls off the picture representing the upcoming activity

• He takes the picture of the upcoming activity to that area of the classroom and matches it to a picture in that area.

• When the activity is complete, the child takes the picture of the completed activity, places it in the finished pocket and pulls off the picture representing the next activity.

By using pictures velcroed to a strip, the teachers were able to alert the child of changes in his schedule when needed. This eased anxiety in the classroom for the child. Initially, the child required physical prompts to check his schedule. As time progressed, however, he was able to check his schedule independently and transition from one activity to another occurred with little difficulty. His teacher remarked, "I am using picture schedules with several of my students now. It helps keep them connected with what is going on in the real world."

Daily schedules may be used at home as well. These provide persons with autism information about upcoming events at home. As with school schedules, home schedules could be used with pictures or print, depending on the individual. A printed example of a home schedule could be:

Davey's Schedule

____Homework	____Shower
____X-Box	____Read
____Dinner	____Bed
____TV	

The same schedule could be made with pictures to assist the emerging reader in predicting events at home. **This could aid the individual in understanding the events that are coming up at home, making the routine predictable.**

The primary function of daily schedules is to clarify the sequence of daily events. They specify where to go, what to do, and what comes next (Quill, 2000). They should be presented in the communication mode of the individual. Creators may use print, blackline pictures, color drawings, photographs or even concrete objects.
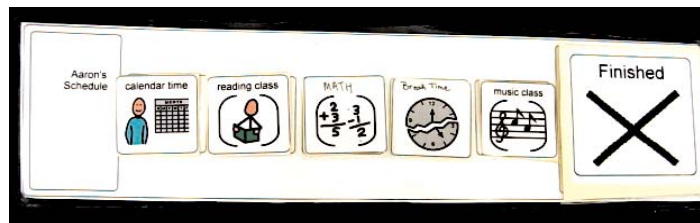
RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING VISUAL SUPPORTS AND SCHEDULES

Do-Watch-Listen-Say: Social and Communication Intervention for Children With Autism, Kathleen Ann Quill. (Paul H Brookes Pub, 2000).

Teaching Children with Autism: Strategies to Enhance Communication and Socialization, Kathleen Ann Quill, ed. (Delmar, 1995).

Visual Strategies for Improving Communication: Practical Supports for School and Home, Linda A. Hodgdon. (Qurke, 1995).

Different Roads to Learning (Time-Timers, PECS Products, Videos and Software), 1-800-853-1057, http://www.difflearn.com

Boardmaker is a graphics database containing over 3,000 Picture Communication Symbols. To order contact t Mayer-Johnson, Inc., 800-588-4548, www.mayer-johnson.com

Visual Schedule Systems, http://www.setbc.org/projects/vss/default.html. Online information about how to develop and use visual schedules. Downloadable pdf files are also available at this site.

See it, Say it, Write it, http://www.seeitsayitwriteit.com. To provide educators (K-12) with simple innovative methods for creating adaptive materials (using familiar computer software, scanners, and digital cameras) which will enhance the writing skills for all students including diverse learners.

do2learn, www.dotolearn.com,. Products and software to develop schedules and visual supports with free examples of activities.