Along the Spectrum

Tazewell Mason Counties Special Education Association

"Thinking in Pictures"

I THINK IN PICTURES. Words are like a second language to me. I translate both spoken and written words into full-color movies, complete with sound, which run like a VCR tape in my head. When somebody speaks to me, his words are instantly translated into pictures." -Temple Grandin

Visual supports are concrete cues that provide information about an activity, routine or expectation. Visual supports can provide assistance across activity and setting, and can take on various forms and functions. For example, photographs, icons, drawings, written words, objects, schedules, graphic organizers, and video. When we provide visual supports to students it is important to take in account age, skill level, interests and needs.

Why use visual supports?
- Meet a specific need
- Teach a specific skill
- Provide support to accomplish a task or routine
- Give information
- Prompt behavior
- Demonstrate how to do something
- And more...

How to use visual supports?
- Use visual supports that match developmental and learning needs
- Model the use of visual supports
- Pair visual supports with verbal instruction
- All staff need to be familiar with the visual supports of the students
- Use only relevant language and help student participate in the activity or routine.
- In the beginning prompts might be needed but those prompts should be lessened as time goes
- Visual supports must be used consistently
- Visual supports for an activity or routine should be used across different settings.

Helpful hints when making visuals:
- Standardize the Velcro
- Design formats: small clip board, belt loop ring, mini photo album, 3 ring notebook, shelf, poster board or strips
- Orientation: left to right or top to bottom
- All Done/Finished - durable envelope or pouch

Study of 200 children with ASD

55% no obvious understanding of simple verbal communication

41% intermittent ability to understand single words and follow simple spoken directions

4% follow two-step commands, but inconsistently

From Greenspan and Wieder Journal of Developmental Learning Disorders 1997

Useful Links to Visual Support Apps

Visual Schedule Apps   Ten Great Visual Support Apps   Visual Support Apps

4 Easy Ways to Use Visuals in the Classroom

Visual Schedule:

A visual schedule is a visual representation of what is going to happen throughout the day or within a task or activity. A visual schedule is helpful for breaking down a task that has multiple steps to ensure the teaching and compliance of those steps. It is also helpful in decreasing anxiety and rigidity surrounding transitions by communicating when certain activities will occur throughout the day or part of the day.
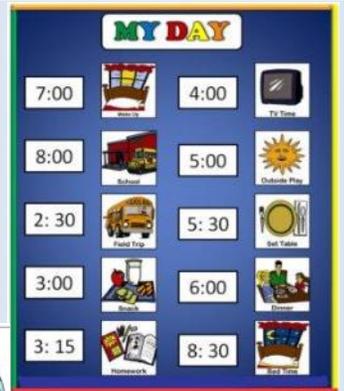
First -Then Board:

A First-Then Board is a visual display of something your child prefers that will happen after completing a task that is less preferred. A First-Then Board is helpful in teaching students to follow directions and learn new skills. It motivates students to do activities that they do not like and clarifies when they can do what they like.
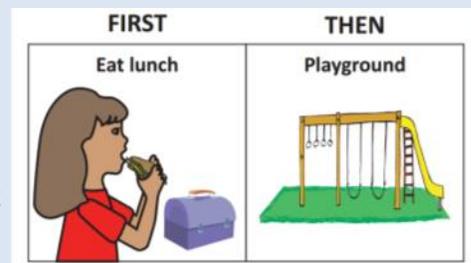
Timers:

You can signal to a student how much time is left in an activity or routine by using a timer. Timers may be used in conjunction with now and then cards or visual schedules.

Choice Board:

Choice boards provide students with different options of what they would like to do within activities and routines. Choice boards help students focus on appropriate options while giving them the opportunity to communicate what they would like to do, either verbally or by pointing, depending on functional level.

helpful **RESOURCES**

Visual Support Checklist   **TMCSEA Visual Supports**

The Incredible 5-Point Scale

Visual Supports for All Occasions

Overview Of Visual Supports