Visual Strategies in the Classroom

See What I Mean!

Presented by Robyn Henderson, SLP

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Do we need them?

- What were you doing last Wednesday at 2pm? Be exact
- What are your plans next Saturday night?
- How do you know that?

Long Story Shortz video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1eZ7h6u3JM&t=14s

What are visual supports

- Anything that we see that enhances communication
  - Body language
  - Natural environmental cues
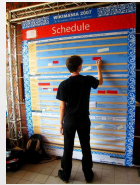 - Traditional tools
  - Specialized / individualized tools

Who can benefit?

- All students can benefit
- We all use them!
- Helps enhance understanding
- In particular:
  - Processing difficulties
  - Language delays
  - Autism & other delays / disorders
  - Attention challenges
  - English Language Learners
  - Self-regulation

Why do we use visuals?

- To communicate
- Improve understanding
- Simplify information
- Understand auditory information
- Assist with processing time
- Makes verbal information visual
- Helps with focus and attention
- Reduces distraction, block out background noise
- Universally understood

More reasons to use visuals…

- Supports sequencing and time skills
- Lesson anxiety
- Reduce challenging behaviors
- Independent transitions
- Increase motivation (know what's coming next)
- Incorporate social interaction

What visuals do you use?

- Your phone
- Calendar
- List of "things to do"
- Magazine picture of a new hairstyle?
- Grocery list
- Recipes / cookbooks
- Reminder notes
- Menus
- Ikea "easy to follow" instructions
- Daytimer
- Public washrooms signs
- Road signs
- Google maps

When do we use them?

- ALL THE TIME
- Even when you think a child has achieved mastery. Visuals still supports them
- Do you only use your phone when you're anxious or having trouble?

Many people use a few visual tools

Few people use many

Imagine…..

- You are on a European tour and you will be visiting 10 cities in only 7 days. You realize that your travel agent did not give you a schedule or itinerary.
- How would you feel?
- Which cities will you visit?
- What attractions will you see?
- Where will you eat?
- How will you get there?

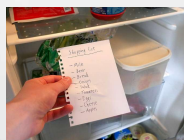- This is how these students feel daily.
- This is the reason students need a ritual and routine.
- What would you do if you didn't have your:
  - Phone
  - Daytimer
  - Email
  - Calendar
  - Sticky notes
  - Shopping list

Our goal is to:

- **Maximize** their **independence**
- Teach skills to **communicate effectively, efficiently, universally**, and be **socially acceptable**
- Teach compensatory strategies to increase **participation** & independence
- Modify environments to **maximize learning** & take advantage of teaching opportunities for learning

Getting started

- Give students the information…

"They **want to know**

In a **form**

They **understand**'

Linda Hodgdon – Solving Behavior Problems in Autism

Types of Visual Tools

1. Tools that give information
2. Give Directions
3. Organize the environment
4. Communicate between environments

1. Tools to Give information

- Group schedules
- Individual schedules
- Mini-schedules
- Calendars
- Choice boards
- "No/Stop" – not allowed
- Social stories

Why?

- Clarify where an activity begins and ends
- Provides specific information to students
- Concrete support that can be referred to regularly as needed
- Provide support through transitions

Why use schedules cont'd

- Provides structure and routine
- Helps a student see the logic and order in their day
- Serves as an aid to discuss and share daily events
- Improves vocabulary and language skills
- Teaches sequence (before/after, first/then)
- Supports transitions & predicability

General Strategies for Visual Schedules

- Arrange in top/bottom or left/right
- Minimum of 2 items (in sequence not isolation)
- Consider the length of schedule (not too long)
  - Break into smaller schedules
- Consider one activity per page
- Include a "finished" or "all done" method
  - Remove item, check it off, show an ending

When making a schedule

- Match the student's ability level
- Easy to understand by the student and others
  - Check – does your spouse understand it?
- Easy to use by the student
- Easy to create
- Model for the student how to use it
- Repetition, repetition, repetition

Now use it!

- Use it consistently
- Part of the daily routine
- Predicts what will happen
- Refer to for transitions
- Refer to it to keep the child engaged and focused
- Model the use of the schedule for the child
- Should indicate the ending of the activity

Where do you keep them?

- Wear them
  - Lanyard
  - Aprons
  - Satchel
- Easily accessible
- Near the activity

Classroom visuals – for everyone!

- Classroom routine
- Indicate choices
- Indicate change
- Helpful for visitors
- Helpful for teachers too!

Classroom schedule with a task box

Daily Schedule : **Wednesday**

🕐	8:45	Play time
🕐	9:00	Circle time
🕐	9:20	Center time
🕐	10:00	Library
🕐	10:30	Bathroom
🕐	10:45	Snack time
🕐	11:00	Gym time
🕐	11:35	Circle time
🕐	11:50	Home

Classroom schedules

Mini Schedule ideas

Line drawings
Real pictures

Going outside

look out window · shoes on · coat on · hat on? · mitts on? · go outside

Getting Dressed

pajamas off · underwear on · pants on · shirt on · socks on · shoes on · all dressed!

What Should You Wear Today?

Things to Do | All Done

Individual schedule

- Creates independence
- Predictability
- Incorporate change
- Routine

Sample schedule books

Choiceworks app

Flap Book

https://www.teach123school.com/2012/09/small-bites-and-movement.html?m=1

Pictures on a key ring or lanyard for easy reference
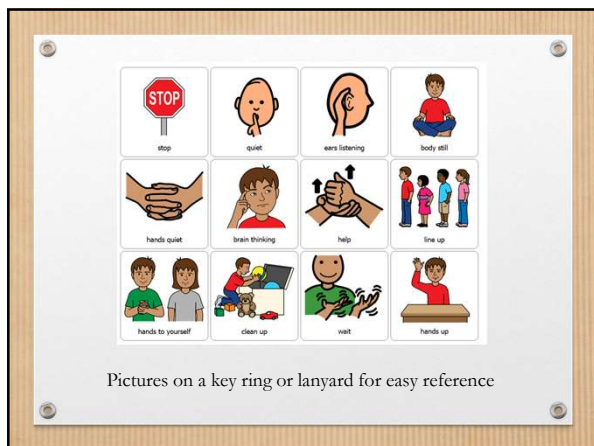
Visual calendars

- Large or small group
- Individual

Getting dressed visual – in action!

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
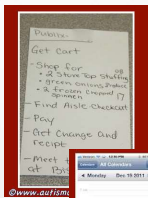
Simple & functional
- Whiteboards
- Note paper
- Phone notes / calendar

1. iPad
2. Picture game
3. iPad
4. Cards
5. iPad

1. Get materials for work
2. Wait for bus
3. Check in with supervisor
4. Remove packaging from stock
5. Hang clothing on correct hangers and put on rack
6. Move rack to correct department and put clothing on rack by size
7. Put rack back in work area
8. Check out with supervisor
9. Wait for bus

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First-then boards

- Targets sequencing
- Concepts: first/then, before/after, first/next
- Non-preferred before pre-ferred
- Keep it simple

Visual timers

Time Timers

Timer apps

- Makes time visible
- Holds us accountable to "in one minute"
- Warns of upcoming change

Communication Mat

Classroom CORE Board

- Assists with communication for everyone
- Slows down rate
- Provides visual support
- Focuses on key vocabulary
- Fringe for "extra" vocabulary
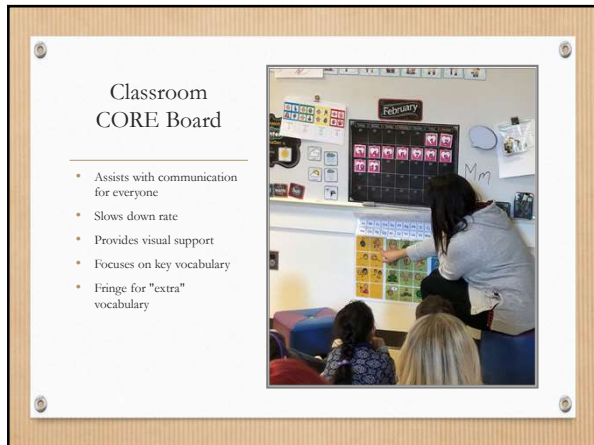
Individual use of CORE boards

- Makes language visible
- Targets vocabulary
- Build sentences
- Slows rate of understanding and use to help with processing
- Allows individualization

Small group use

- Discussion between peers
- Asking questions
- Answering questions
- Comparing answers

PODD Books

- Pragmatic Organization Dynamic Display
- Support communication
- Between communication partners

Social Stories

Stay In Your
Bubble
Social Story

When it is and isn't okay to
give my friends a hug.

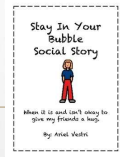By: Ariel Vestri

- Created by Carol Gray
- Describe:
  - the details of a situation (where, who, when, what)
  - what to try to do in the situation,
  - how other people feel in the situation (perspective) and
  - what values or opinions are relevant to the situation.

Suggestions:

- Use words like "I will try to…"
- Use words like: sometimes, usually
- Use positive language and statements
- Use concrete, simple language
- Write your story at the level of the child

Formula:

- 0-1 directive sentences (telling the child what to try to do)
- 2-5 statements that describe the situation, others' perspectives and values

Consider:

- Your audience, who is it for?
- Level of comprehension and expression
- Format: pictures, logos photographs, objects, written words
- How much information to include
- BE SIMPLE, BE SPECIFIC
- Involve the student in the process
- Starting with a question

Caution:

- Don't add too much information
- Don't use too many symbols, pictures or words
- Don't give up, it takes time
- Don't use language that is too complicated
- Remember to review it during times when the student is regulated
- Ask for help!

2. Tools to Give Directions

- Classroom rules
- Individual rules
- Recipe / Directions
- Task organizers

Road signs... give directions!

Classroom rules

Our Class Rules

Kind Words
- Use manners- please, thank you
- Quit volume

Listening Ears
- Follow directions
- Answer peers

Safe Body
- Walking feet
- Hands to self
- Body in open spaces

"Be Good"

Classroom rules
1. Keep your hands to yourself
2. walk   NO running
3. Listen to the teacher
4. Stay in the classroom

Chair on floor
Quiet mouth
Raise your hand
Listen to the teacher
Keep working

Give Me Five

1. Eyes are watching.
2. Ears are listening.
3. Lips are zipped.
4. Hands are still.
5. Feet are quiet.

https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/
Product/Give-Me-Five-Behavior-
Management-Posters-94675

Whole Body Listening

https://www.pinterest.com/pin/2640235968819
69013/?nic_v2=1a3I77QZR

http://preschoolwondersblog.blogspot.com/201
3/06/classroom-management-and-freebie.html

Visuals
Recipes /
Instructions

- Small or Large Group
- Sequencing
- Helps with order of
  the instruction
- Provides reference if
  student doesn't
  understand

Make it visible & accessible
- On the fridge
- Beside the activity
- Not on the shelf!

Making Lunch
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Crack the Egg   Pull Shell Apart

Put Egg into Bowl   Egg Is Cracked

Visual recipes – Free!

http://teachinglearnerswithmultipleneeds.blogspot.com/2011/01/updated-free-visual-recipes.html

THINGS TO DO:

What I Need To Do After School

How many of these do
you use yourself?

Choice Boards

Use words, pictures, objects
- Snack
- Who to work with
- Which job you want to do
- Which song to sing
- Which assignment to start with
- Who gets a turn

***Provide an "opt out" – none of those

Choice Board

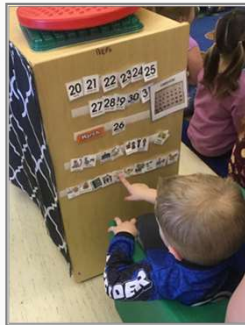- Student chose which song he wanted – and handed it to the teacher

HELPERS TODAY

John	Turn on the lights
Abby	Water the plants
Adam	Snack Helper
Taylor	Calendar helper
Matt	Feed the fish

What Can James Earn?

| Build with Lego | Use the gears | Slide time |
| Dice game | Xtramath.com | Pumpkin drawing |

Choice board templates
https://bookunitsteacher.com/wp/?p=5807

https://sites.google.com/site/keplingerclassdifferentiation/products-services/choice-boards
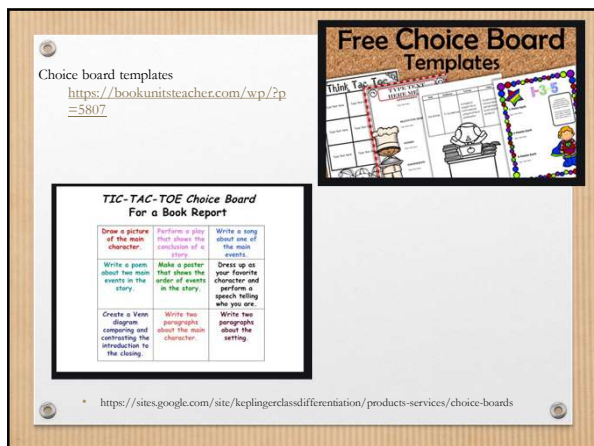
In general choice boards:

- Provide an opportunity request / comment
- Broaden the range of choices (add in preferred and non-preferred activities)
- Helps the student make a variety of selections
- Improve communication effectiveness
- Gives a way to indicate something is not available

Visualize emotions

Self Regulation Visuals

http://chapelhillsnippets.blogspot.com/2012/02/self-regulation-scale.html

https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/FreeDownload/Reading-Strategies-Bookmarks-2353244

Vocal Volume in the classroom

http://ateacherswonderland.blogspot.com/2012/09/evaluations.html?m=1

Student Self-Reflection

Body Break Visuals
- Self regulating
- Independence
- Easily accessible
- Located where they are used

*photo credit to Galbraith Early Education Program

http://rockandteach.blogspot.com/2012/08/monday-made-it-part-4.html?m=1

Mouth & Ears on a teacher's lanyard
(Executive Functioning Skill to inhibit)

3. Tools to Organize the Environment

- Label the environment
- Label personal spaces
- Item location
- Job charts
- Where to stand / where to walk
- Which washroom to use (where to find the key)

PLEASE STAND HERE

Why?

- Creates a sense of stability & predictability
- Increase independence
- Encourage a student's responsibility
- Supports everyone to be prepared & organized

Classroom organization

- Makes it visual
- Words & Pictures
- Helpful for students and adults
- Monitor clutter / Distractions in the environment

Job charts

4. Tools to "Bridge" Environments

- Today at school
- Communication books
- Garbage Book – plant a conversation seed
- Journals

Why?

- Places responsibility on student to share information
  - With parents
  - With multiple communication partners
- Improve teacher – parent communication
- Supports effective communication
- Improve interactions
  - Conversation – ask/answer/ comment
- Highlight special activities
- Summarize the day's events
- Helps with comprehension

At school today I...

water table	house center	sandbox	paint
listening center	playdough	book	blocks
puzzle	math center	number center	building

Comments:

My Day at School

I played with

lego water table crafts play dough action figures

house game blocks painting slide

books puzzles trains cars & trucks

I played with my friend

In gym we played scooters game balls

For snack I had

My favorite part was

School
Home comments:

At school today I...

worksheet

recess

lunchtime

Conversation starters

It's all about communication

Visual - Do's

- Consider your audience – who is it for?
- Consider level of comprehension & expression
- Consider your "medium" – pictures / words / b&w drawings, logos, objects
- Format – portability, size, location
- How many steps (amount of information) to include

Do's cont'd

- Visualize it in your head
- Use universally understood pictures or words
- Be simple, be specific
- Think through the tool first
- Involve student in the process if possible
- Try a rough draft
- Start small, one project at a time

Visual - Don'ts

- Don't add to much information
- Don't use too many symbols
- Don't use language that is too complex (consider age, ability levels)
- Don't give up!
- Don't forget to use it
- Don't put it away when it is working

Don't put it away when it is working

Challenge # 1:

Susan gets to school in the morning and looks in her backpack to find her lunch kit. She opens her lunch and starts to eat her snack. When the teacher tells her to wait for snack time to eat her snack, Susan gets upset and throws her snack. What do you suggest?
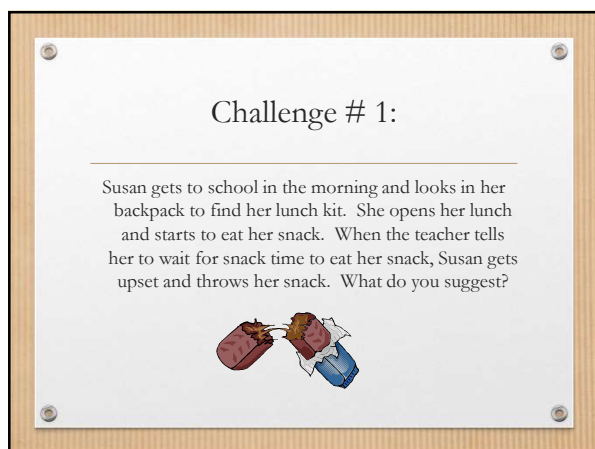
Challenge #2

- Cindy gets off the bus at school, walks inside and goes to her locker. She just stands there.
- The teacher is waiting for her to come to class with her books but Cindy seems lost in space beside her locker.
- What could be done to help Cindy?

Possible Solution
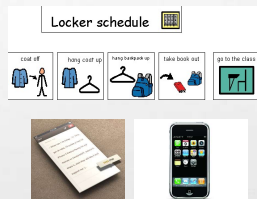

Accommodations for older students

- Less pictures / more words (if able)
- Individualized and not as "visible"
- Digital supports
  - Cell phones
  - iPads etc.
- Circle of peers – less adult intervention
- Socially acceptable

For example:

Schedule for Monday

Time	Class	What to bring
8:35	Home room (102)	Green Binder that says "Home Room"
9:00	Math (room 300)	Blue Binder that says "Math" pencil calculator
9:45	Spare	Go to library or cafeteria
10:30	English (room 200)	Black Binder that says "English" reading book called "Old Dog" pen
11:15	Gym (in the gym)	Backpack with shorts, t-shirt and runners
12:00	Lunch (cafeteria)	brown bag buy hot dog with money in my pack

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For more information:

- K.A. Quill (Ed.), *Teaching children with autism: Strategies to enhance communication and socialization.*
- Hodgdon, L.Q. (1997). *Visual strategies for improving communication: Practical supports for school and home.*
- Gray, Carol. *The new social story book.*
- Freeman, S. & Drake, L., *Teach me language: A language manual for children with autism, Asperger's syndrome, and related developmental disorders.*
- Quill, K. *Teaching children with autism.*
- Boardmaker – www.boardmakeronline.com
- Savner, J & Smith Myles, B., (2000) *Making Visual Supports – Work in the home and community: Strategies for Individuals with Autism and Asperger Syndrome.*
- Smith Myles, B., Adreon D., & Gitlitz D. (2006) *Simple Strategies that Work!*

More information:

- www.usevisualstrategies.com
- www.autism.com
- http://card.ufl.edu/resources/visual-supports/
- www.thegraycenter.org
- www.autism.ca
- https://www.autismgreaterwi.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/4.0_Think-Visual-2.pdf

Questions?