

# The Southeast ASD Scoop

February 2010  
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## Visual Schedules...Why Are They So Important?

### Don't Forget!!

Register for the  
Nebraska ASD  
Conference on or  
before March 15 to  
receive the Early  
Bird Discount!!

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Throughout my time observing in schools, one of the most frequent questions I receive revolves around visual schedules. I'm often asked "Why do I need a visual schedule? My student knows his routine, what's next and where to go."

So...what is my answer to this question?

First of all, think about some of the characteristics of students on the autism spectrum. These students do well with routines, can be very rigid and if their routine is interrupted or changed, it causes stress and anxiety for the student.

We use visual schedules to help create a routine, eliminate unpredictability and teach flexibility to students. They also help with communication and increase independence, which is typically our main goal for students on the

spectrum.

Students on the spectrum have slower processing time and have difficulty processing a lot of language at one time. Visual schedules provide a permanent visual that students can refer back to if needed; if given a verbal direction, it's gone the moment that you stop speaking and the student has no way to review the information.

Our student's aren't going to walk up to us and say, "I don't understand what you mean. Please give me a visual to help me understand."

Signs that your student may display that means he or she needs a visual are:

- \* Not following directions
- \* Just standing and looking at you

- \* Walking away
- \* Having meltdowns
- \* Continues to do the activity he or she was asked to stop
- \* Engage in other behavior other than meltdowns

If your student is displaying any of these signs, you need to start considering how you can incorporate more visuals into their day.

### Visual Schedules

The purpose of a visual schedule is to show a student what is happening that day, which helps the students decrease their anxiety because they are prepared for the change.

Start by writing down everything

Continued on page 2

## Please Welcome to the 2010 State Conference...

For the next couple of months, we will be featuring an upcoming speaker for the 2010 State ASD Conference in Kearney, NE on April 8th and 9th.

**James Emmett** is a national leader in development of employment services for persons with

autism spectrum disorders. He is an individual with a disability and a parent with three daughters with disabilities. He serves as Chief Operating Officer of Integrated Behavioral Systems and is a partner in the consulting firm *Two Steps Forward*.

Be sure to check out the vocational rehab strand on Friday, April 9th!

## Visual Schedules...Why Are They So Important?<sup>9</sup> (continued from page 1)



**Reference used:** *Making Visual Supports Work in the Home and Community* by Jennifer L. Savner and Brenda Smith

that your student does during the day. Find pictures (real or line drawings) that show the activity. Real pictures are typically used for younger children or students that are lower functioning. Line drawing pictures are used for students that understand what the symbol means and can relate that symbol to an activity. Words should be included on a schedule, even if you are using pictures.

Older students who are fluent in reading and have good comprehension skills can have a schedule of just words, instead of pictures.

### Tips for making a Visual Schedule

- \* Velcro is something that you might think of investing in when creating schedules. It's a good idea to use Velcro to attach pictures to a schedule so you are able to switch pictures or change the order if needed.
- \* Some students may be overwhelmed with their schedule if you present the entire day. If they are, break the schedule in smaller parts or cover up part of the day so they can't see it.
- \* If your student stays in one main classroom and doesn't

transition to other rooms a lot, you can think about using a stationary schedule that is posted somewhere in the room.

- \* If your student has multiple places to go throughout the day, it's a good idea to make the schedule portable, so the student can take it with them.

### Tips for using a Visual Schedule

- \* Once an activity is completed, have the student take off the picture or cross of the word, so they know what has been completed and what comes next.
- \* Teach flexibility by using a "change" card or a symbol that means something new is happening in their day. This new activity may be taking something to the office, going for a walk down the hall, or going to a different room for instruction. This change card or symbol will help teach students how to be flexible with changes in their day.
- \* Be consistent with the schedule. Every adult that works

with the student should know how to use the schedule.

- \* Use one common phrase when directing your student to check their schedule. It can be a simple "check your schedule" or another phrase that works for your team. You can also use a symbol of the phrase, like a picture of a checkmark, that you give your student that tells them to check their schedule.
- \* When working with your student, limit the use of words. It's better to point to a picture instead of using a lot of language. Talking to the student when they are using the visual schedule teaches them that an adult has to tell them where they are going all the time. If you limit the amount of words, you can fade the words out and the student becomes more independent in using their schedule.
- \* Prepare your schedule and use it **every single day**. You are teaching your students a routine, so if they are having trouble during a specific time, the schedule helps calm them since it's a routine they are used to.

## Data, Data, Data!

When developing a program for your student on the autism spectrum, one of the most important components is data.

The data that you collect tells you if you need to stop an intervention, change parts of the intervention, or start a new intervention. Behavioral data is especially important to show you the behavioral patterns that your student may exhibit.

You might have been told to take A-B-C data, but you are unsure of how to take it. A-B-C data is typically taken on behaviors that a student exhibits.

"A" stands for antecedent. An antecedent is what happens immediately before the behavior. This needs to be very detailed—exactly what you said or what the student was doing at that time.

"B" stands for behavior. The behavior that you want to write down is exactly what the student says and does, without the interpretation of what we think he or she is doing.

"C" stands for consequences. The consequence is what happened after the behavior. Write down exactly what you say and do after the behavior.

After documenting the A-B-C of each behavior, you may start seeing a pattern of times the student has difficulties or consequences you are giving that may be increasing the behavior.

Data collection forms need to be useful to the staff that work with the student on the autism spectrum.

Several A-B-C data collection forms are posted on the Southeast ASD Network blog and website for your use.

## I Wasn't Able to Catch It Before it Started!!

You have tried everything that you could think of to help your student out of the rumbling stage and now, you're in the middle of a meltdown, or the rage stage.

The rage stage is when the child is physically, emotionally, and mentally not engaged with you.

This stage can look different for each student. Some students may exhibit physical aggression, throw items, yell and use inappropriate language and/or leave the classroom.

Other students may withdraw and refuse to complete anything or listen to adults. They may put

their head on the desk and refuse to move or they may leave their assigned seat and sit in a corner or another area of the room. These students typically do not exhibit physical aggression, yell and use inappropriate language. They just completely shut down.

The key to this stage is to remember that the student is not thinking rationally and typically can not control their behavior.

Here are some tips to help deal with the rage stage for students on the autism spectrum.

1. Do not try to reason and talk to the student at this time.

2. Take a look at the environment and remove items or other people that might escalate the situation.
3. Be non-confrontational.
4. Protect the student, the environment and others involved in the situation.
5. Disengage your emotions at this stage.

Restraint at this stage is not recommended. It typically escalates the situation, instead of calming the student down. If your student is physically aggressive, as a team, discuss the procedures all staff will follow at that time.



Next month we will look at ways to help your student during the recovery stage.

## Question of the Month

Any time there is a change in my students schedule or routine, her behavior escalates to a meltdown. How can I help prepare her for the changes?

From,

I Hate Changes!

In the main article on visual supports, I've discussed how to introduce flexibility into your student's

schedule.

Another way you can help is to prime your student for the upcoming changes.

Priming is a strategy where adults help students know what is coming up ahead of time.

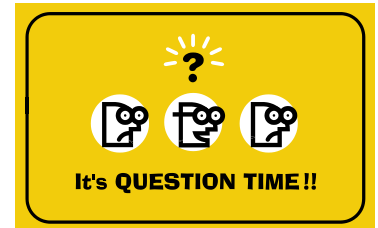
An example of priming is telling your student in the morning that they have a substitute teacher or that there will be a fire drill later that day. Priming can be done the

day of or if you can do it earlier than that, you will be able to give your student time to adjust to the change.

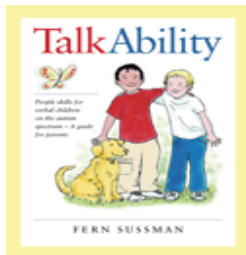
Priming can be used for student's schedule, but it can also be used in a variety of other situations that may occur.

You can use priming in academics, behavioral expectations and social situations. I've also used it for field trips and changes in the lunchroom.

If you use priming consistently, you'll be able to see the decrease in their anxiety and hopefully a decrease in behaviors.



## Resources



Check out *TalkAbility: People skills for Verbal Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders* and *More Than Words: Helping Parents Promote Communication Skills and Social Skills in Children with Autism Spec-*

*trum Disorders*, both written by Fern Sussman. Fern will be our first keynote speaker on April 8th at the Nebraska ASD Conference. She will also have a couple of breakout sessions during the conference.

Both books are available for checkout through the ESU 6 Autism Library.

### **Websites**

<http://www.dotolearn.com> - Do To Learn is a website where you can access free pictures for your visual schedule. It also includes games, songs, and other printable resources.

<http://www.education.com/reference/article/visual-schedule-classroom-autism-ASD/> -

This is a more in depth article on visual schedules and how it applies to students on the autism spectrum.

<http://www.usevisualstrategies.com> -

Another great website on visual strategies and other information on autism spectrum disorders.

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## Check Us Out on the Web!

[http://www.esu6.org/services/asd\\_home.htm](http://www.esu6.org/services/asd_home.htm)

<http://seasdnetwork.wordpress.com>

<http://unl.edu/asdnetwork> (The NEW Updated Website!)

### **Register Now—Don't Miss out on the Early Bird Discount!**

2010 Nebraska ASD Conference

Date: April 8th and 9th, 2010

Location: Holiday Inn and Convention Center,  
Kearney, NE

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN! EARLY BIRD  
DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE JANUARY 19TH—  
MARCH 15TH.

This year's registration is online. Please go to

<http://asdconference2010.eventbrite.com>

to register. Purchase orders are accepted online.

### **Southeast ASD Region Training Survey**

A short survey has been developed to allow staff in the Southeast Region provide input on trainings and workshops that will be available over the summer and the 2010-2011 school year.

Please go to

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/QYYSQKS>

to access the survey.

