



Today we will talk about the impact of the learning environment on effectively teaching new skills. We will dive into 5 strategies for establishing a setting that promotes independence, communication, and engagement.



- Read of the Room**
- 1 – teacher
 - 2 – clinician
 - 3 – parent

Let's play a game...

The best part of my job is _____.

The hardest part of my job is

_____.

If I could wave a magic wand and change one thing about my job it would be _____.

“If you’ve met one person with autism, you’ve met one person with autism.”

- Dr. Stephen Shore

Unique Differences lead to Unique Differences in the Way Each Student Learns

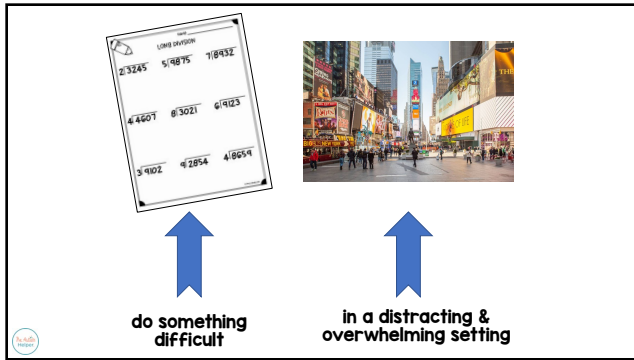
Where You Work

can be as important as *What You Work On*

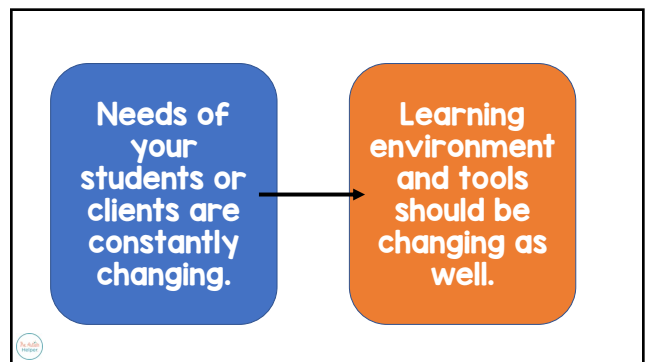
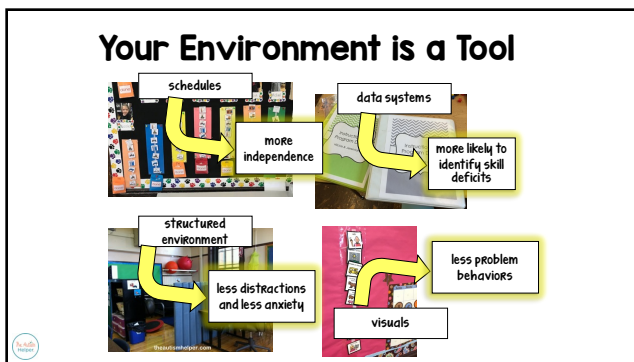
often this a secondary thought or even not considered

Where You Work

obstacle or block learning opportunities



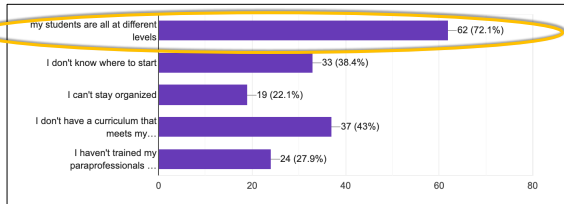
Is this helping or hurting?



- ## 5 Strategies to Embed into The Environment
1. Organization
 2. Predictable sequences
 3. Mini Schedules
 4. Distraction Removal
 5. Accessible Communication Tools

I. Organization

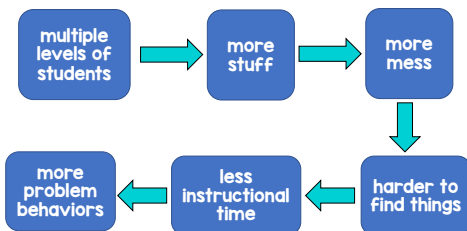
Biggest Challenge within a Special Education Classroom:



Solution to the struggle of students being on different levels?

Organization!

Organization is Key



Organization is Key



- In order to accomplish a lot in short amounts of time, we need to be efficient.
- We need to be able to find resources, data sheets, and activities right away.
- We need systems!

Organization is Key

Another reason organization is key is to help our students focus.

Minimize distractions.

When we have multiple levels of students (aka more stuff), distractions can come easily.

Organization helps us accomplish more in less time AND helps our students focus on something hard.

Easier to start out organized and maintain the system.

Doesn't need to be laminated, matching, pretty, etc. It just needs to work.

Organization Strategies

Store things where you will be using them.

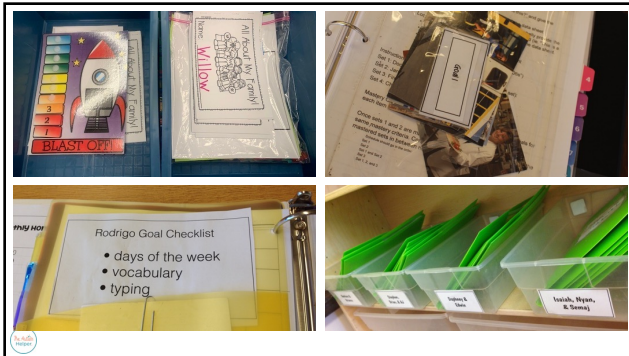
Label.

Make sure everything has a home.

Purge regularly.

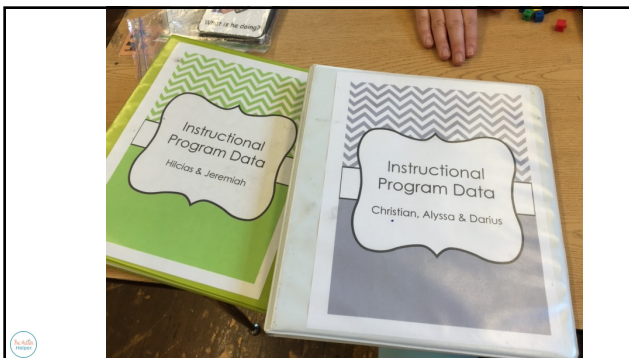
Store Things Where You Will be Using Them

- By each center:
 1. instructional materials



Store Things Where You Will be Using Them

- By each center:
 1. instructional materials
 2. data & lesson plan binder



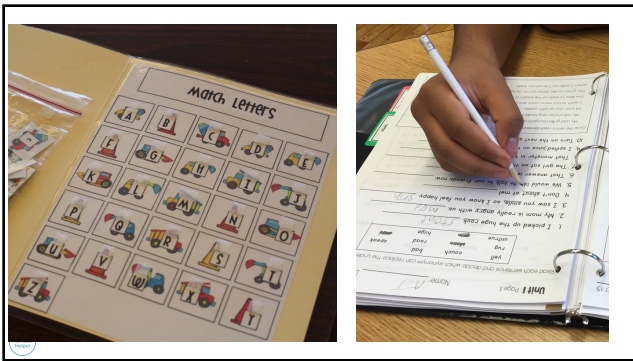
Store Things Where You Will be Using Them

- By each center:
 1. instructional materials
 2. data & lesson plan binder
 3. supplies



Store Things Where You Will be Using Them

- By each center:
 1. instructional materials
 2. data & lesson plan binder
 3. supplies
 4. extra work



Label Everything

- Your students know where everything goes and helps them follow common classroom directives.
- Classrooms are a revolving door of adults – make sure the ADULTS also know where everything goes



Give Everything a Home

- Make sure everything has a place.
- If you don't have a closet or large cabinet – store items you aren't using at the moment in large bins out of sight.
- Only keep out the materials you are using.



Purge Regularly

regularly get rid of puzzles with missing pieces, broken toys, trashed file folder activities, etc.

If this is your struggle...



focus on this



make sure everything has a home



keep it simple



focus on the why



2. Predictable Sequences

Predictability

It's all about the ability to sequence and anticipate what is coming next.



Let's say - we are all abducted by aliens.



Which would you prefer?

1

same every day

2

unpredictable

Predictable Sequences:

- decreased negative behaviors
- lessen student anxiety
- increase independence
- increase efficiency

Remember...

Since verbal language and social cues can be difficult for some children, when the same physical areas are used for the same types of tasks – students know what is expected of them and what they will be doing when they arrive at a center.

Create that Consistency

- ✓ Keep the schedule similar each day.
- ✓ Use the same areas of the room or tables for the same activities each day.
- ✓ Rotate between activities or centers in the same order.

Application to General Education Room

- ✓ set up separate areas based on type of academics
 - ✓ For example, for math we sit at your desk and for reading we sit at this table.

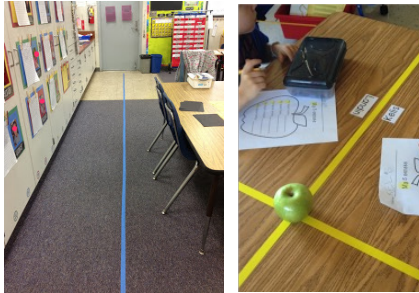


- ✓ assign a specific spot for carpet time activities
 - ✓ that way they always know where to go and know when they are sitting there what they will do
 - ✓ assign different spots for different activities

"You always sit on letter C."



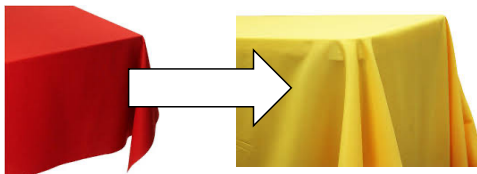
- ✓ Colored tape on the floor or desk for clear boundaries.



- ✓ Use visuals to "switch out" areas



- ✓ color code
 - ✓ use color coded visuals, table cloths, or worksheets
 - ✓ great accommodation for students with visual impairments is using different colored table cloths for each subject/activity





3. Mini Schedules


After you create that consistency - communicate that consistency.


Use schedules (pictures or text) to show those routines and daily schedules.

Do you want to try a strategy that...?

 builds independence

 increases self-autonomy and problem solving

 reduces negative behaviors and anxiety

 builds executive functions

Schedules Build Independence

show where and when each child is working throughout the whole day

Schedules decrease prompt dependence because they don't need us to tell them what's next!

theautismhelper.com



Schedules Reduce Negative Behaviors and Anxiety

- Schedules show what is coming next
- no surprises
- know when preferred activities are coming
- helps with difficult transitions

theautismhelper.com

Staff Meeting 1

- Principal starts talking
- Gives no agenda
- Gives no indication of how long the meeting will go
- Does not say what will be discussed



Staff Meeting 2

- Principal gives an agenda of topics to discuss
- Tells you when lunch is
- Lets you know when teacher directed time will be



Staff Meeting 1



Staff Meeting 2



theautismhelper.com

We all rely on schedules.

Schedules are Important for Everyone

Schedules are functional.

theautismhelper.com



theautismhelper.com

Why are schedules so important?

Many children (with and without disabilities) struggle with receptive language (understand what is said to them).

First we are going to the gym, then we have homework, then we love the calendar, then do reading, then a math quiz, then go to class, then we have

Our kids are lost!



theautismhelper.com

You ask a student to pick up his piece of paper, throw it in the garbage, push in his chair, and line up for lunch. A few minutes later you look over and feel frustrated because he is standing there looking lost holding the piece of paper. He was so focused on processing the first step in your list that he was not able to comprehend anything else you asked.

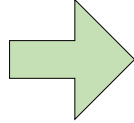


Schedules & Executive Functions

- Schedules helps students build:
 - response inhibition
 - emotional control
 - working memory
 - task initiation
 - time management
 - organization
 - flexibility
 - metacognition

theautismhelper.com

goal of
schedule
use



student
uses the
schedule
without a
teacher



Mini Schedules

within each activity and throughout the day there are TONS of mini sequences of steps we expect our students to complete.

Mini schedules show embedded steps and routines.

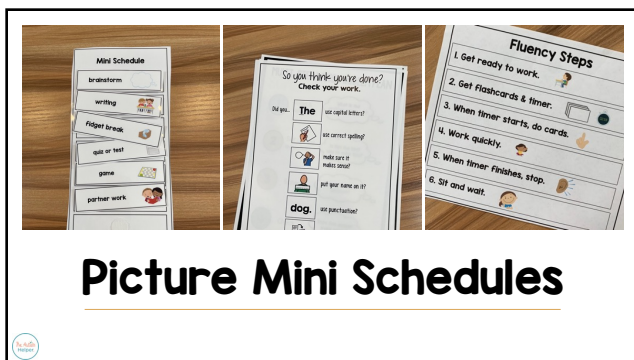
Helps students be more independent.

Great for inclusion



Mini Schedules

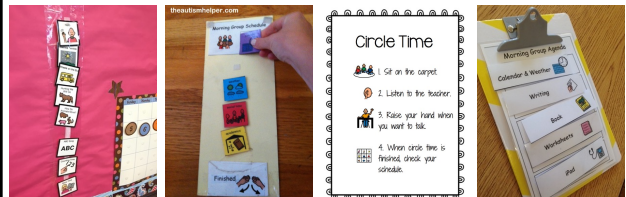
- should follow the skill set up the learner
 - if he or she is a reader – use only text
 - if he or she can match pictures – use visuals



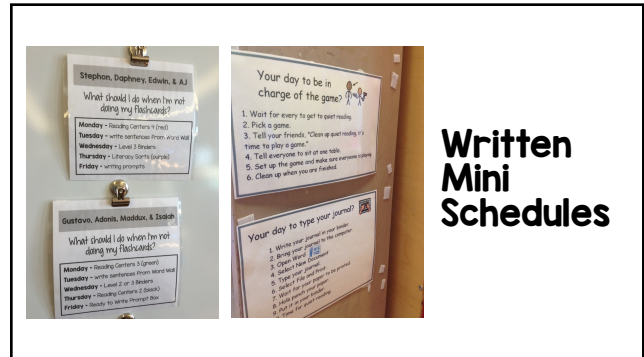
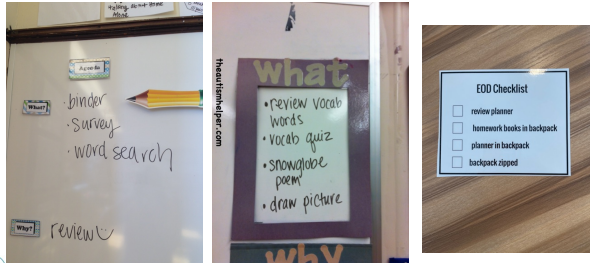
Picture Mini Schedules



Picture Mini Schedules



Written Mini Schedules

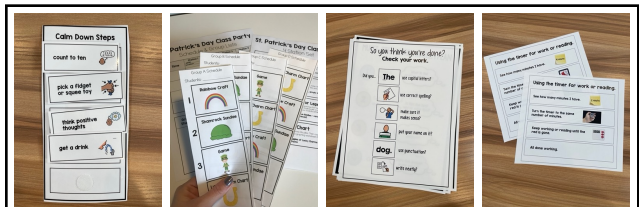


Written Mini Schedules

Using the Mini Schedule

review the mini schedule at the start of each center, activity, or class period

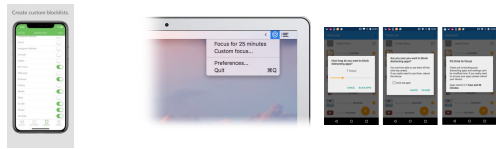
check in with the mini schedule throughout the activity



Important times to consider using mini schedules:

4. Distraction Removal

How well do you work when you are distracted?

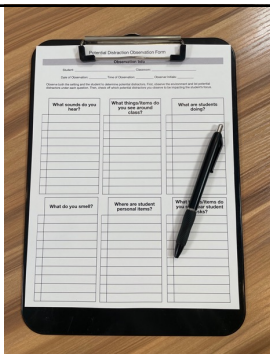


What strategies work for you for staying on task?

Prevent Distractions

- Identify things that are competing with following directions or meeting classroom expectations.
- Limit or remove distraction by changing the environment

Utilize the Potential Distraction Observation Form

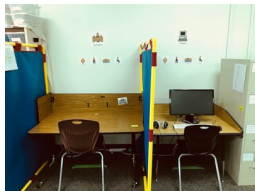


Limit distractions

- ✓ Utilize dividers



Minimize Distractions



Minimize Distraction

- ✓ minimal toys on shelves
- ✓ extra materials packed up



Limit Distractions

- ✓ consider what's going on nearby



Limit Distractions

- ✓ strategically plan the timing

8:00 - 8:15	direct instruction with IM, NM & SD	Archie 3, reading	IEP work in 403
8:15 - 8:30		Archie 3, reading	
8:30 - 8:45		Library with students	
8:45 - 10:00	prep	Library with students	IEP Work & Break (out of room)
10:00 - 10:15			
10:15 - 10:30		English & Semaj language	
10:30 - 10:45			
10:45 - 11:00	direct instruction with RR, DS, FA, GS, SD, AC, & Ben	Semaj Reading	
11:00 - 11:15		English Reading	
11:15 - 11:30		group reading with NM, SD, & SD	recess and lunch
11:30 - 11:45			
11:45 - 12:00			
12:00 - 12:15	lunch	lunch with kids	recess and lunch IEP Work (out of room)
12:15 - 12:30			
12:30 - 12:45	group time	recess table time & work with AQ	
12:45 - 1:00			
1:00 - 1:15	group time		
1:15 - 1:30			
1:30 - 1:45			
1:45 - 2:00	inference	inclusion	
2:00 - 2:15		Library (IEP)	
2:15 - 2:30	bring kids to bus door duty		IEP Work (403)

Limit Distractions

- ✓ peer distractions



Limit Distractions

- ✓ technology distractions



5. Communication tools readily accessible.

Consider all the tools that your learners may need for communication...

visuals

AAC systems

questions

prompts

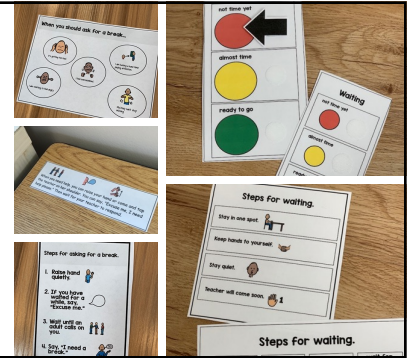
Embed These Into The Environment...

keep on the table

offer breaks

verbal check-ins

Embed these into the environment

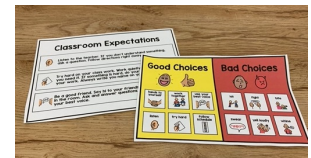
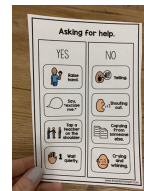


Set Up Back Up Communication Systems

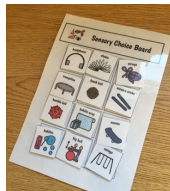
Have simple core boards ready in case high tech systems are unavailable



Use Tools to Show Rules



Use Tools to Give Choices



Use Tools to Show Changes



Wrapping Up



Make changes to your learning environment now



Continue to adapt based on learner needs



Involve your team for consistency.

Thank you!

www.theautismhelper.com



@theautismhelper

The Autism Helper.
theautismhelper.com