Integrating Evidence-Based Practices & ABA Principles in the Early Childhood Classroom: Visual Supports

AUTISM PROGRAMS
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO
CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT AND DISABILITY

A Message from NMPED

"Evidence-based interventions for individuals with ASD are not universal. Although these are evidence-based interventions, they should be individualized for a particular student. In the education setting, the IEP team will develop the plan for that student. The IEP team shall review an IEP at least on an annual basis."

Objectives

1. Participants will be able to provide 2 reasons why visual supports are helpful in the classroom setting.

2. Participants will be able to name 3 types of visual supports to implement in the classroom.

3. Participants will be able to develop and implement at least 2 visual supports for the classroom.

What Can Visual Supports Do?

- Conveys a message, task, or expectation.

- Increase predictability

- Decreases assistance from staff

- Address behavior that impedes learning

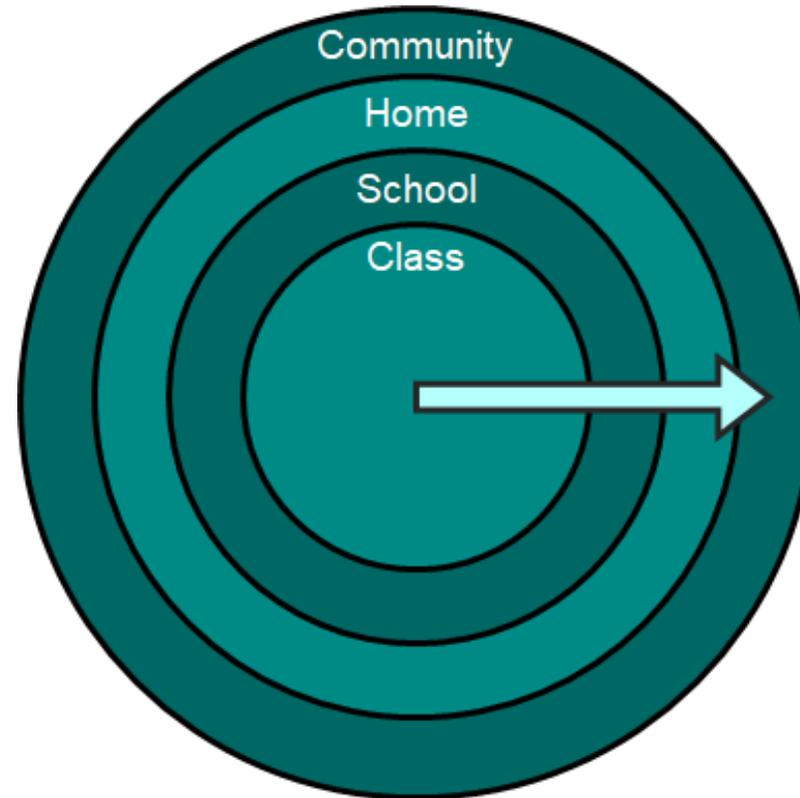- Enhances social skill development

Who Can Use Visual Supports?

- Teachers

- Special Educators

- Therapists

- Paraprofessionals

- Parents and Families

- Students

Where Can Visual Supports Be Used?

- Classroom

- School-wide

- Home

- Community

Why Should Visual Supports Be Used?

- Helps learner focus on key elements

- Increase independence

- Build flexibility

- Helps with generalization

- Breaks down difficult skills into smaller parts

- Helps with transitions

Types of Visual Supports

- Visual Cue
- First/Then Boards
- Choice Board
- Visual Schedule
- Timers
- Task Analysis
- Token Board
- Visual Boundaries
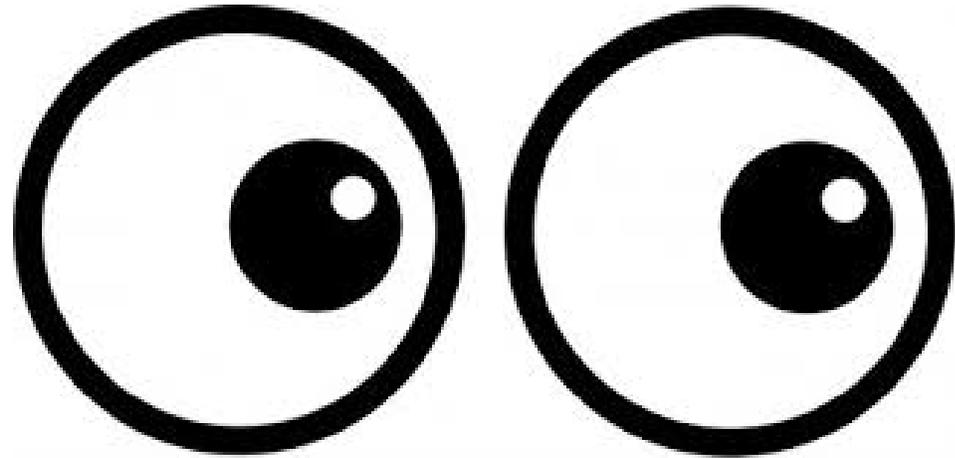
Best Practices When Planning Implementation of Visual Supports

- Identify when and how visual supports should be used
  - To prime?
  - Throughout the day?
  - Who reviews the support?

- Establish a goal for the student

- Determine which visual support(s) will be most helpful

- Determine the ratio of words to pictures on supports

Additional Things to Consider

- How will the child learn to use this environmental support?
  - Who is teaching it?
  - When is it taught?
  - Prompting strategies

- How is this visual support going to help the child?

- Can this visual support be utilized in other places? in the home setting? Outside the classroom?

Three Steps of Implementation

1. Plan
   - Create supports that accommodate each learner's specific needs.
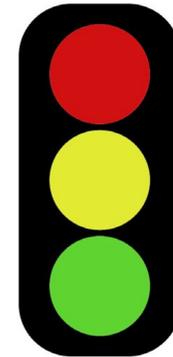2. Use
   - Implement supports consistently over time.
3. Monitor
   - Take data to determine if the support is changing child's behavior.

Visual Cue

- A visual cue is the simplest type of visual support
- Presents a single visual to a learner to serve one of many purposes
- Form of representation
- Can be a gesture or a picture

Implementation of Visual Cues

1. Direct the learner's attention to the visual cue (standing behind them).

2. Use limited vocal language (only words that are directly relevant).

3. Assist learner in participating in the activity/event with the visual cue.

4. Fade your vocal language over time.

First/Then Board

- Increases motivation in completing task
- Use of visual in addition to verbal first/then supports learners understanding as well as decreasing verbal prompting
- Promotes understanidng of sequencing
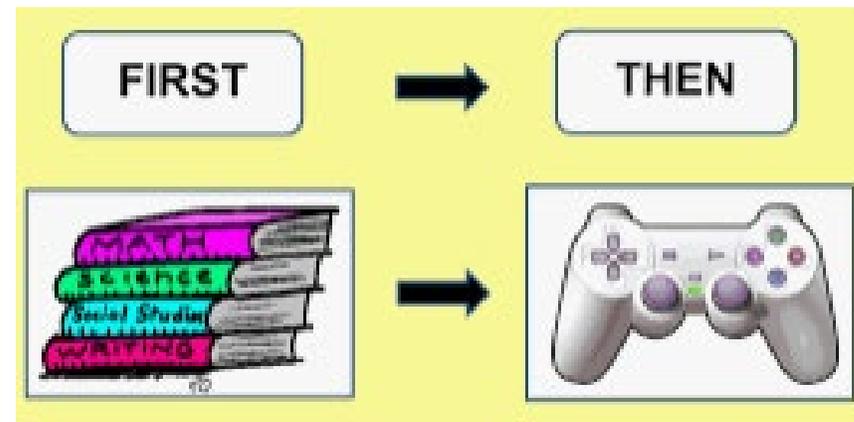
Implementation of First/Then Board

- Developing the first/then board:
  - Identify a motivating item for an individual
  - Present the item immediately after task completion
- Teaching the student to use the frist/then board:
  - Direct the learner's attention to the first/then board
  - Use limited vocal language
    - Only use words that are relevant
    - Can be a fill in the blank to increase student's understanding

Choice Board

- Array of visual representations of choices that are relevant to the learner

- Empowers learners

- Promotes motivation

- Increase engagement

- Displays availability of things in the environment

My Choice Board
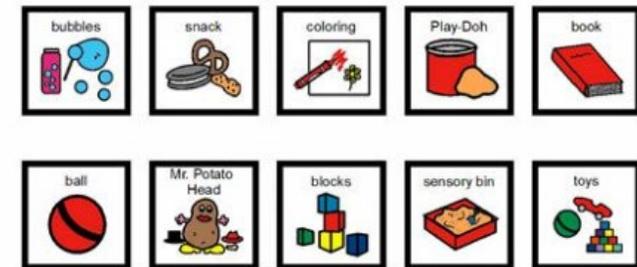
Implementation of Choice Board

- Developing the choice board:
  - Start with few choices, can increase as your learner is able to tolerate more choices
  - Consider your learner's ability to scan an array to determine presentation of choices
- Teaching the student to use the choice board:
  - Direct learner's attention to the choice board
  - Use limited language
  - When necessary, remind learner that these are the only available choices

Visual Schedule

- Display the sequence of upcoming activities.
- May include images and/or text to convey the main ideas of the activities.
- Primes the learner
- Can be individualized for the learner
  - Learner may have their own schedule
  - Learner may do better with pictures or words

Implementation of Visual Schedule

1. Direct the learner's attention to the visual schedule

2. Use limited vocal language

3. Prompt, as needed, learner to the relevant visual cue on the schedule.

4. Assist learner getting to designated activity/location, and prompt learner to place schedule materials in appropriate location.

5. Ensure learner remains in scheduled location until prompted to use schedule to transition.

6. Repeat steps until learner is able to complete the sequence independently across activities/locations.

Visual Timers

- Provide a visual reminder to create an awareness of time

- Commonly used with other visual supports such as first/then, visual schedule

- Primes the learner

Implementation of Visual Timers

- Direct the learner's attention to the timer

- Use limited vocal language

- When appropriate, refer to timer more than once (e.g. 10, 5, and 1 minute left on the timer)

Task Analysis

- Process of breaking a skill or complex activity down into smaller, more manageable components

- Select a skill that is achievable
  - Teach each step

- Reduces anxiety and frustration

Implementaion of Task Analysis

- Development of Task Analysis:
  - Determine skill needed to be broken down
  - Break down the skills
  - Determine where in the sequence the learner requires support
  - Determine prompting hierarchy in conjuntion with the visual
    - Chaining
- Teaching the learner to use the Task Analysis:
  - Direct the learner's attention to the visual
  - Use minimal language
  - Use prompting as neededed
  - When appropriate use the TA as a checklist

Token Boards

- Assist in visualizing progress
- Helps build motivation
- For some learners, may broaden reinforcing items
- Aids in consistent delivery of positive reinforcement for various behaviors in the classroom

I'm working for:

Implementation of Token Boards

- Development of token board:
  - When appropriate add in learner's interests to the token board
  - Determine number of tokens on the board
    - Start with one to teach the learner the relation
    - Increase slowly
  - Determine motivator choices
  - Determine ratio of reinforcement
    - Thin as learner becomes more fluent with the system

Implementation of Token Boards

- Teaching the learner to use the token board:
  - Direct learner's attention to the board when delievering the token
  - Pair with behavior specific praise
  - Have student count the number of tokens left, when appropriate
  - Repeat untill all tokens have been delievered and immediately deliver the chosen reward

Visual Boundaries

- Organizes the environment

- Promotes consistency and routine

- Aids in teaching personal space

Implementation of Visual Boundaries

- Introduce the learner to the established boundary

- Use modeling to teach the learner to stay within the boundary.

- Use reinforcement when learner stays within a boundary

- Use feedback appropriate to the learner when they do not stay within the boundary

Visual Supports Reminders

Visual supports should:

- Be individualized
- Be age-appropriate
- Be used consistently
- Be faded out as needed
- Make the learner's life easier

Resources

- UNM CDD Online Training Resources
  - https://cdd.health.unm.edu/autismportal/online-training/
- Tools for Challenging Behavior
  - https://cdd.health.unm.edu/autismportal/2021/03/04/tools-for-challenging-behavior/
- Evidence-Based Practices in Classrooms
  - https://cdd.health.unm.edu/autismportal/2021/04/14/evidenced-based-practices-in-classrooms/
- Data Collection for Busy Classrooms
  - https://vimeo.com/334960323

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Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (2015). Visual supports: Helping your child understand and communicate. Retrieved on December 9, 2015, from: http://card.ufl.edu/resources/visual-supports/

Cohen, A., & Demchak, M. (2018). Use of visual supports to increase task independence in students with severe disabilities in inclusive educational settings. *Education and training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 53(1), 84-99.

Sam, A. & AFIRM Team. (2015). Visual Supports. Chapel Hill, NC: National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorder, FPG Child Development Center, University of North Carolina. Retrieved from: http://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/visual-supports

Want More Info?

Visit the CDD Autism Portal
https://cdd.health.unm.edu/autismportal/
Visit the Region 9 Education Cooperative
https://www.rec9nm.org/New-Mexico-Autism-Project-Through-PED

Center for Development and Disability:

[UNM CDD](#)

CDD Library:

[CDD Library - Center for Development & Disability](#)

CDD Information Network:

[Information Network |Other Disability Resources | Center for Development & Disability | UNM Health System | Albuquerque, New Mexico](#)   505-272-8549

CDD Autism Portal: [CDD Autism Portal](#)

Patrick Blevins, MA BCBA, AODD

prblevins@unmmg.org