Helping Children Understand Routines and Classroom Schedules

Schedules and Routines are Important because:

- They influence a child’s emotional, cognitive, and social development.
- They help children feel secure and comfortable.
- They help children understand the expectations of the environment.
- They help reduce the frequency of behavior problems (e.g. tantrums).
- They can result in higher rates of child engagement.

Remember:

- A schedule that is followed consistently helps make settings more predictable for children and adults.
- When planning activity schedules, caregivers should consider the balance of activities (outside vs. inside, active vs. passive, teacher directed vs. child directed, the pace of activities, and the length of young children’s attention span)
- Longer play periods can result in higher levels of play behaviors.
- Teachers and caregivers should include blocks of time where children have choices between different activities and materials.
- Caregivers should discuss the classroom schedule using a picture or object chart to help children understand what will come next.

What are Classroom Schedules and Routines?

The terms routines and schedules are often used interchangeably. Schedules represent the big picture (main activities to be completed daily) and routines represent the steps done to complete the schedule.

Schedules refer to deciding who will do what and when they will do it. If a consistent schedule is followed it helps to make settings predictable for both young children and adults.

Routines are events that are completed on a regular basis, frequently involving a series of responses. For example, when preparing for nap time (a daily routine) children should go potty, wash hands, gather cot and blanket, lay on cot, and listen to music (the steps involved).

Resources on Classroom Schedules and Routines:

© What Works Briefs: Helping Children Understand Routines and Classroom Schedules. www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel
© Transition Magician, www.redleafpress.org
© Simple Transition for Infants and Toddlers, www.gryphoonhouse.com
**Visual Cues can Help Children Understand Schedules and Routines**

Visual strategies can help children understand schedules and routines by giving them a “visual prompt”. For children under the age of six, visual cues override the auditory cues. This is how the brain develops. What they see is a more powerful influence than what they hear. A teacher can tell them something over and over again, and they may not follow through. However, a picture will help them more likely be successful with the task at hand.

Visuals are also static, which means that the visuals remain present after the words are spoken. Children can refer to them once the spoken words are no longer present. They serve as a reminder of the verbal direction. Visual strategies are helpful in supporting and increasing both receptive and expressive communication. They can also enhance memory. For many children, visual supports are beneficial when used in combination with verbal language and/or sign language.

Visual cues allow children to know exactly what is expected of them. For example, washing hands independently or cleaning up toys. Visuals can also act as a cue to teach appropriate behavior or new skills for children who have challenging behaviors.

**Ten Tips to Remember when Implementing Visual Cues**

1. Remember that children communicate and understand at different levels.
2. Use written text along with photographs, pictures, and line drawing to promote literacy. Written text also assures that everyone interacting with the child uses the same language for a particular item.
3. Present visuals from left to right. This can help to prepare the child for reading.
4. Remember to make the picture visual sturdy, easy to hand, and durable. Either print on cardstock or glue to a file folder, then cover with contact paper or laminate.
5. When taking the photographs remember the children's perspective. Make the pictures have meaning to the child.

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I Have an Autistic Child in My Classroom...How Can I Teach This Child? (Part 2)

- **Date**: January 27, 2009 Time: 6:00pm-8:00pm
- **Location**: Child Care Connections of Burke County

**Challenging Behavior Challenges**

- **Date**: February 17, 2009 Time: 6:00pm-7:30pm
- **Location**: Caldwell County Public Library

**Partnering with Families to Address Challenging Behaviors: We are all in this together!**

- **Date**: February 28, 2009 Time: TBA
- **Location**: McDowell Community College and Technical College

**Brain Development**

- **Date**: March 12, 2009 Time: 6:00pm-7:30pm
- **Location**: Mayland Community College (Avery Campus)

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_to register for any of these trainings please contact Rhonda Hamby at (828)439-2328 ext. 3_