Visual Supports for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder
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Teacher
Education Services Manager
Workshop Outline

• Overview of communication characteristics of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

• What are visual supports?

• Implementing visual supports to build structure.
Building Structure
Using Visual Strategies & Assistive Technology
Factors influencing learning

• Effectiveness of the classroom teacher has the most influence on student learning (Hattie 2003)

• Number of opportunities that students have to respond to teacher directions and instructional materials is strongly associated with learning and achievement (Hook 2006)
Effective teachers:

- Create supportive environments
- Actively engage students
- Provide instruction to match student level and needs
- Systematically present new knowledge
- Ensure learning is significant and relevant
- Provide immediate, specific and constructive feedback
Effective teachers:

• Use humour, flexibility & consistency
• Have high expectations
• Use a range of strategies including visual supports

(Hook 2006)

Julie Hook, Project Manager
The Australian Autism Education and Training Consortium (AAETC)
Visual Strategies
Autism Spectrum Disorder
Triad of Impairments

- communication
- sensory
- social interaction
- flexibility of thought
Autism Spectrum Disorder Continuum
Overview of Communication Characteristics

- Impaired receptive communication – significant difficulties processing spoken language / transient information
- May have difficulty sequencing and organising spoken instructions
- May have difficulty controlling and re-establishing attention
- May echo other people’s speech or repeat phrases from TV (*echolalia*).
- May use complex phrases without a full understanding of their meaning – compartmentalised approach to information processing
Overview of Communication Characteristics

• Social use of language is impaired
• Difficulty interpreting the behaviour of others
• Language processing may be affected by sensory integration difficulties and attending problems ie. working out what it is that they are supposed to attend to
• May have limited or NO speech
• May have difficulty initiating and/or ending a conversation
• Compartmentalised / chunk learning
• Visual learners
Communication and Learning Strengths

Janzen (1996) summarises the learning strengths in autism as the ability to:

- Take in chunks of information quickly
- Remember information for a long time
- Learn to use visual information meaningfully
- Learn and repeat long routines
- Understand and use concrete, context-free information and rules
- Concentrate on narrow topics of interest
What are visual supports?

Things that we SEE to enhance the communication process.
Types of Visual Supports

- **Body Movement**: such as body language, natural gesture, key-word sign
- **Environmental cues**: such as objects and signs e.g. logos, labels
- **Traditional tools for organisation of information**: such as calendars, shopping lists, recipes, instruction manuals
- **Specialised communication aids and materials**: such as picture stories, behaviour scripts, activity schedules
Visual Support Continuum

Concrete
- Real objects
- Object symbols
- Coloured photos
- Black & white photos
- Line drawings
- Sign Language
- Written words

Abstract
Visual Support Continuum

- Coloured photos
- Black & white photos
- Sign Language
- Line drawings
- Real objects
- Written words
- Object symbols
Why Visual Strategies for students with Autism?

• Visual supports give the student time to focus attention, work out the meaning, and keep the message visible when the student needs to refer to it again.

• Visual supports enable communication to be more specific and encourage consistency in expectations, procedures and routines across all the people involved with a student.
Why Visual Strategies for students with Autism?

• Visual supports can make life predictable, helping the student with autism track the daily routine and tasks.

• A visually supported timetable provides a framework for talking about change.
Tips for using visual supports

• View the student’s visual communication supports as part of their educational program, not something additional that has to be incorporated into their day.

• Visual supports must be accessible, durable and easy to use.

• Visual Supports must contain relevant information that is up to date.
Using Visual Supports

• Schedules & Calendars
• Social Stories
• Aided Communication
• Curriculum Accommodations and Adjustments
Getting organised

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[Diagram of a timetable with various activities scheduled.]
Getting Organised – A Visually Supported Environment

• Visual supports give the student time to focus attention, work out the meaning, and keep the message visible when the student needs to refer to it again.

• Visual supports enable communication to be more specific and encourage consistency in expectations, procedures and routines across all the people involved with a student.
Getting Organised – A Visually Supported Environment

• Visual supports can make life predictable, helping the student with autism track the daily routine and tasks.

• A visually supported timetable provides a framework for talking about change.
Timetables/Schedules

Monday

Morning AM
- Work
- Bus
- Shower

Afternoon PM
- Lunch

Evening PM
- Dinner
- Listen to music
- Sleep

Tuesday

Morning AM
- Clean

Afternoon PM
- Shop

Evening PM
- Cook
- Watch TV
Class timetable
Mini Schedule

**Calming Down**

1. move away
2. sit down
3. 5 deep breaths
4. put head down
5. quiet mouth
6. quiet hands
7. return to activity

**Going to Bed**

1. use bathroom
2. put on pajamas
3. brush teeth
4. get in bed
5. read story
6. kiss goodnight
7. turn off light
8. go to sleep
9. 
10. 


Activity Transition
Finished Strategies
Choice

What do you want to choose?

- construction
- cars
- blocks
- train
- drawing
- triangle
Choice

Talking Symbols Notepad
Behaviour support
Emotions Meter

5: mad
4: angry
3: upset
2: worried
1: sad

Help you quiet place
Follow your plan
Breathe count talk
Talk

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
Social Stories
Social Stories

- Is a tool for helping people to control or redirect behaviour
- Identifies the consequence of the behaviour
- Acts as a visual reminder - content is important
- Use consistent language across changing communication partners
- Remind, Rehearse, Review
Throwing

Sometimes I feel angry.

I do not throw things at people.

Throwing things hurts.

Julie does not like throwing

I do not throw things at friends

I say, "I am angry"

John threads the belt through the harness.

John puts his belt on.

John sits with his hands on knees.

John can look out the window.

John can read junk mail to himself.

John can sign to himself.
Social Stories

Social School Stories

Spence

Hedda

Faces & Feelings

Rob

Clementine

Max and Manny
Personal Development

www.hiyah.net
Personal Development
Boardmaker and Boardmaker Plus Version 6 (Windows)

- Database of more than 4500 in core library
Picture This…Pro Series Photo Libraries

- Picture This…Pro
- Picture This…Functional Living Skills and Behavioural Rules Edition
- Picture This…School Routines and Rules
Augmentative Resources
Welcome to AdaptedLearning.com

A powerful new resource from Mayer-Johnson.

Mayer-Johnson

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