



Shakopee Public Schools
 Stephanie Betley, AT Consultant
sbetley@shakopee.k12.mn.us

Assistive Technology Newsletter

Tech Talk

Helping children learn to their full potential

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Visual Strategies and Your Child

Visual Learners:

Many children are visual learners. That means that they understand what they see better than they understand what they hear. Visual information is easier to process than auditory information because of the amount of time it remains fixed in space. Because words disappear after being spoken, children must both understand them immediately and remember them. This requirement for quick processing and memorization of spoken words can result in anxiety for many children. Pictures do not disappear as spoken words do, so children can look at them and work to comprehend the information contained in them at their own pace. For this reason, visual strategies/supports can be important tools to help children reduce stress and better understand what is expected of them.

What are visual strategies/supports?

Visual strategies involve the presentation of information through colored line drawings, photos and videos as a way of better understanding task expectations. Use of visual strategies involves taking the same kinds of visual tools we all find helpful in everyday life (schedules, calendars, signs/symbols, task charts, animations and information videos) and expanding their use for specific learning objectives.

Visual strategies are designed to:

- 1) support communication and interactions;
- 2) organize environments and support learning; and
- 3) regulate behavior with clear and concise expectations and consequences.

Visual strategies enable children to get the information they need to understand and interact with other people, function independently and behave appropriately. While it is generally understood that visual strategies are important supports for children on the autism spectrum, it is not as well understood that they can be highly effective supports for all learners!

How do visual strategies support children?

Visual strategies help students by:

- Specifically defining what is expected;
- Providing a roadmap for expression of thoughts
- Expanding language;
- Making abstract concepts more visually concrete;
- Providing structure/ predictability;
- Reducing anxiety;
- Assisting with transitions;
- Teaching new skills;
- Helping students to focus;
- Helping students to recall information;
- Organizing information;
- Helping students to learn; and
- Promoting verbal interaction with peers and others

To learn more about how your child might benefit from AT tools that support writing, contact your child's IEP team leader.

Using AT at Home

Visual Schedule

Logan's Schedule

Get up:	
Take shower	
Get dressed	
Eat breakfast	
Brush teeth	
Get backpack	

Words and pictures outline steps of morning routine

Kitchen Cleaning

Task Map

Visual outlines the steps of a work task.

First-Then Board



Pictures guide your child through non-preferred tasks

Parent Question

What visuals can help my child manage home routines?

- A 'First – Then' chart represents what required task must be done before a more desired activity can be begun (e.g. First we pick up our toys, then we can play a video game)
- A visual timer gives a child a concrete picture of how much time is left.
- A choice board empowers a child to select from displayed objects and activities
- A visual schedule displays activities in the order they will occur. This visual helps to support a child who is anxious if unprepared for unknown or changed routines. (e.g. Saturday activities)
- A visual "How to" shows the steps required to complete a task (e.g., how to breathe when upset)
- A video model demonstrates a skill completed by a child in real time. It is particularly helpful for carry through of a skill learned in one environment to another (e.g., the steps of dressing)

Visual Support Apps

(iOS/Android unless specified)

Schedule Builders:

- First Then (Good Karma Apps)
- Visual Schedule Planner : Good Karma Apps
- Choiceworks (Bee Visual, LLC)
- My Video Schedule (Acceptional Abilities)
- iPrompts: Visual Supports, Schedules and Picture Prompts for Autism and Special Education (Handhold Adaptive, LLC)

Positive Behavior Supports:

- First Then Visual Schedule (Good Karma Apps)
- Social Stories Creator and Library for Preschool, Autism and Special Needs (Touch Autism) iOS only
- TimeTimer for Android (Time Timer, LLC)
- Countdown Timer (timeanddate.com)

Communication Supports:

- SoundingBoard (Ablenet) iOS only
- Conversation Social Stories (Touch Autism)
- AAC SpeechBuddy

Parent Question

What visuals can support my child in developing positive behaviors and social skills?

- A Social Story teaches social expectations in a story format with visual examples that can be personalized (e.g., "When I'm angry, there are things I can do to feel calm again")
- A Social Script/Comic-Strip Conversation walks a student through the steps of a conversational interaction (e.g., a small-talk greeting script)
- A Power Card helps to teach a desired behavior by showing or describing it being demonstrated by a character of special interest. The card can be carried by the child for empowerment when use of the behavior is needed. (e.g., sharing during a group play activity)
- Zones of Regulation provide a color-coded rating scale that allows a child to identify and self monitor emotions and levels of alertness.
- A video model shows a child using a positive behavioral strategy that can be used for self-reflection and review.

Informational Resources and Software

- Linda Hodgdon
<http://usevisualstrategies.com/>
- Visual Schedules:
<http://do2learn.com/picturecards/VisualSchedules/index.htm>
- My Social Stories Book, Comic Strip Conversations (Carol Gray)
- Beyond Requesting: Using Scripts to Teach Conversation
<http://praacticalaac.org/strategy/beyond-requesting-using-scripts-to-teach-conversation/>
- Picture Exchange Communication System
<http://www.pecs.com>
- From Images to Symbols and Beyond: Supporting Autism Using and Customizing Visual Strategies
<http://www.dynavoxtech.com/training/online/recorded-web-classes/details/?id=2026>
- The Magic of Duration Charts
<http://autismgames.blogspot.com/2007/11/magic-of-duration-charts.html>
- Zones of Regulation
www.zonesofregulation.com
- The Magic of Duration Charts
<http://autismgames.blogspot.com/2007/11/magic-of-duration-charts.html>
- Speaking of Speech
www.speakingofspeech.com/materials_exchange
- Free picture libraries (Google images, Quick Picks, Imagine Symbol Set)
- Boardmaker Software Family (visual support builder software)
<https://br.boardmakershare.com> (online software and visual support sharing library)
- Carrie Dunn The Incredible 5-Point Scale
<http://www.5pointscale.com/>
- <http://www.5pointscale.com/>
- Clicker 6 (Crick Software) (visual support builder software)
- Kidspiration/Inspiration software (Inspiration Software, Inc.)