



## Observation Guide Professional Development Tool

### Guide to Evidence-based Practices



#### Focus on Classroom Spaces:

##### Visual Supports are used to Enhance Instruction

- Daily schedule is posted with pictures and words
- Schedule is used as a teaching tool
- Rules are posted with pictures and words
- Class display is child-centered and/or related to instructional units
- Additional visuals are used to support instruction

##### Classroom Materials are Sufficient and in Good Condition

- Classroom areas are organized, clearly defined, and uncluttered
- Shelves, bins, and areas for children's personal items are labeled
- Materials are sufficient in quantity, interest, and variety to engage all children.

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## 1b. Schedule is used as a teaching tool to enhance transitions.

### Quality indicators:

- Teachers refer to the schedule throughout the day using it to share expectations.
- Teachers use the schedule to prepare children for changes in activities and movement from one instructional time to another.
- Teachers emphasize the use of schedules throughout activities and across settings.
- Children are taught and provided practice in using transition strategies in various settings.



### Questions to ask:

- ✓ How do you use the daily schedule to support transitions?
- ✓ How often do you refer to the schedule throughout the day?



### Supports, Accommodations, Adaptations

### [Links to Additional Information](#) [Right click to open in new window](#)

#### Universal Supports

- Pair the symbol with **corresponding verbal directions and provide guided practice** through the activity in order to give children practice in the correct actions.
- Provide a visual symbol and verbal cue that indicates that it is time to change activities.

[Universal Design for Learning in Early Childhood](#)

[Flow Chart for Teaching Visuals](#)

#### Targeted/Specialized Supports

- Use **individual schedules** for children who need to manipulate the schedule cards or who need photos of actual situations.
- Provide **repeated instruction, modeling, and continued guided practice** for transitions.
- Incorporate schedules that show **“first” and “then”** to prepare and reassure children who benefit from knowing what will happen next.
- Incorporate a method to let children know that an **activity has been completed** or is over (turning the visual symbol over, or placing the symbol in a “finished” envelope).

[How to Make a First/Then Visual \(Vanderbilt\)](#)

[Schedules for Transitions \(First/Then\)](#)

[Teaching and Supporting Transitions](#)

#### Intensive Interventions

- Use transition cues that are **designed and individualized to meet specific needs**: photos, drawings, objects and representative objects, tactile, photos of the specific child in area or activity.
- Provide **increased monitoring and interaction** during each transition to give **reminders and reinforcement** for changing activities

[Transition Tip Sheet \(for difficult transitions from ConnectAbility\)](#)

[Helping Children with ASD Transition Successfully - University of Indiana](#)

# 1. Visual supports are used to enhance instruction

## 1c. Rules are posted with pictures and words

Quality indicators:

- Children are able to see the rules, posted with pictures and words, from all areas of the room.
- Pictures are provided that clearly define the rules.
- The number of rules ranges from three to five rules.
- Children participate in rule development.
- Rules are referred to throughout the school day and school year.
- Rules are easily understood by young children.
- **Children are provided guided practice of the rules in varying situations and settings.**
- **Rules are shared with families.**



Questions to ask:

- ✓ How do you develop the classroom rules?
- ✓ How do you teach the rules to the children?
- ✓ How often do you refer to the rules throughout the day or the school year?
- ✓ How do you address rules that have been broken



Supports, Accommodations, Adaptations

[Links for Additional Information](#)  
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### Universal Supports

- Pair the rule symbol with **corresponding verbal directions and provide guided practice** through the activity in order to give children practice in the correct actions.
- Incorporate **frequent verbal statements** to inform children that they are following the rules.

[Displaying Classroom Rules](#)

[General Classroom Rules with photos - Vanderbilt](#)

[Sharing Rules with Families](#)

### Targeted/Specialized Supports

- Use **individual rule cards** for children who need to hold or be shown the cards as reminders.
- Use **photos** of the class or a specific child(individualized rules)
- Use **social statements** to make a story about following a specific rule.
- Incorporate a method for self-monitoring to let children **know how they are doing**. Provide a monitoring system.

[Specialized and Individualized Rules](#)

[Specific Rules for Activities - Vanderbilt](#)

[Providing Rule Reminders and Positive Feedback](#)

### Intensive Interventions

- Provide increased monitoring, repeated instructions, and guided practice along with visuals that are **designed to meet specific needs** (photos, objects)
- Use an individualized schedule for delivery of **reinforcement**, starting with a **few focus rules** and **brief time periods**.
- Provide an **individualized social script** with photos to address specific needs for understanding expectations.

[Social Scripts and Self-monitoring](#)

[Specialized and Individualized Rules](#)

## 1. Visual supports are used to enhance instruction

### 1d. Class displays are child-created and/or related to instructional units.

Quality indicators:

- The classroom display changes throughout the year.
- The display is predominantly child created.
- There is variety in the display – some projects are academic such as writing or patterning, some projects are class projects, and some are purely for exploration and creative expression.
- **Adequate supports are provided for motor, organization, and communication related to projects.**
- **Children are encouraged to make choices, perform independently, and describe their projects.**



**Artistic Process Emphasized:**  
Children are permitted to explore and create.

Questions to ask:

- ✓ When are children allowed to create their own artwork or explore with creative materials?
- ✓ Are children allowed to create class projects that differ from the teacher provided samples?



**Product development is emphasized:**  
Adult directed activity with minimal creative expression

Supports, Accommodations, Adaptations

[Links for Additional Information](#)  
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#### Universal Supports

- Discuss and display **expectations** for the art center and provide prompts and guided practice in selecting, using, and cleaning up materials.
- Encourage children to work in pairs or small groups and to **share ideas** for open-ended projects.
- Allow **extra time** or an additional time period for children to be able to complete their projects.

[Supporting Children's Projects](#)

[Universal Design for Learning in Early Childhood](#)

[How Process-focused Art Experiences Support Preschoolers - NAEYC](#)

#### Targeted/Specialized Supports

- Provide a **model** and step-by-step directions on a **mini-schedule** for the activity. Model each step of a teacher-directed project.
- Accommodate for **sensory defensiveness** by allowing a child to choose an alternative method of using materials.
- Use various **placements of paper** (horizontal, vertical) and provide a way to show the border of the artwork (tape, cookie sheet).
- Provide **tools** with various sizes and styles of grips and handles

[Supporting Participation and Success](#)

[Fine Motor Activities for the Classroom](#)

[Supporting Art Development](#)

#### Intensive Interventions

- Provide strategies for children with communication difficulties to participate in **labeling and describing** their projects.
- Provide **adapted materials** for children with physical difficulties or disabilities.
- **Consult and collaborate** with service providers (ex. Occupational/Physical/Vision)

[Accommodations and Adaptations for Classroom Tools](#)

[Fine Motor Development Checklist](#)

[Adapting Activities and Materials](#)



# 1. Visual supports are used to enhance instruction.

## 1e. Additional visual supports are used to support instruction.

Quality indicators:

- Use of pictures to support verbal communication such as stop signs, individualized picture schedules, scripted stories for social situations or first/then boards.
- Incorporation of manipulatives to support stories, finger plays and pictures paired with written words.
- Labeled shelves for organization.
- Visual supports provide non-verbal reminders and can enhance oral language development.
- **Children are provided practice in using schedules and in making choices in various settings.**



Questions to ask:

- ✓ How do you incorporate visual supports to enhance instruction?
- ✓ How do you use picture cues to support children who are having difficulty with task completion, following the schedule or adhering to rules?
- ✓ Are they consistently used throughout the day, month or year?



Supports, Accommodations, Adaptations

[Links for Additional Information](#)  
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### Universal Supports

- Post visuals in play centers and activity areas to support children in making choices, communicating desires, following routines.
- Provide visuals and manipulatives that support story comprehension, retelling and sequencing.
- Organize and clearly label shelves and provide visuals to support cleaning up and putting away materials.
- Provide visuals that remind children about social play and interacting with peers.

[Overview of Universal Design for Learning in Early Childhood](#)

### Targeted/Specialized Supports

- Provide visuals that assist children in initiating and engaging in play scenarios and in using materials in the play centers.
- Pair visuals with instructions and guided practice during play centers and activity times.
- Pair photos of real objects with pretend toys and books to help children relate the information to real life
- Provide communication visual prompts to help children engage with peers.
- Provide first-then strips and mini-schedules for play and activities.

[Visuals to Support Social, Communication, and Transition skills](#)

[Visuals for Supporting Beginning Literacy and Math skills](#)

[Visuals for Supporting Play](#)

### Intensive Interventions

- Provide supports that are individualized for specific needs (visuals, photos, objects, tactile) to help children understand and relate to instruction.
- Incorporate multi-sensory strategies and increase prompting levels to support participation.
- Provide individualized communication systems and/or adapted materials (tools, seating, movement, and sensory) to support participation.

[Literacy for Children with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss](#)

# 1. Visual supports are used to enhance instruction

## 1a. Daily schedule is posted with pictures and words.

Quality indicators:

- The schedule is taught or referred to throughout the day and throughout the school year.
- The daily schedule is posted at the children's eye level and is visible from most areas of the room.
- **Classroom staff pairs the use of visuals with verbal information and checks for children's understanding.**
- **Children are encouraged to follow routines with increasing independence and in various situations.**



Questions to ask:

- ✓ How often do you refer to the schedule throughout the day?
- ✓ How do you use the schedule to teach the routine and class expectations?



Supports, Accommodations, Adaptations

**Links to Additional Information**  
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### Universal Supports

- Use **mini-schedules** to show the actions associated with routines (ex. handwashing, lining up).
- Pair the symbol with **corresponding verbal directions and provide guided practice** through the activity in order to give children practice in the correct actions.

[Introduction to Schedules](#)

[Class Schedules](#)

[Universal Design in Early Childhood \(TATS-FIN\)](#)

### Targeted/Specialized Supports

- Use **individual schedules** for children who need to manipulate the schedule cards or who need photos of actual situations.
- Provide **accommodations** such as **reduced time, breaks, and sensory strategies** for some activities
- Provide **repeated instruction, modeling, and guided practice** for routines and activities.

[Flow Chart for Teaching Visuals](#)

[Individual Schedules](#)

[Schedules for Routines](#)

### Intensive Interventions

- Use schedules that are **designed and individualized to meet specific needs**: photos, drawings, objects and representative objects (for children who don't yet understand a photo or drawing), tactile (for children with visual impairments or the need for tactile input).
- Provide **increased monitoring and interaction** activity to give **reminders and reinforcement** for participation
- Provide visuals for **alternative activities** for adaptations for length and level of activities.

[Specialized Schedules](#)

[Schedules for Devices](#)

[Tips and Ideas for Making Visuals](#)

## 2. Classroom materials are sufficient and in good condition.

### 2a. Classroom areas are organized, clearly defined, and un-cluttered.

Quality indicators:

- All areas of the room are clearly defined.
- Materials are organized and easily accessed by children and adults.
- Storage of materials not being used in centers or for current instructional units is minimal and not taking up classroom space.



Questions to ask:

- ✓ How often do you rotate materials?
- ✓ How much of the classroom materials are available for use by the children?
- ✓ Which materials in the classroom can only be accessed by adults?



*Supports, Accommodations, Adaptations*

**Links for Additional Information**  
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#### **Universal Supports**

- Define areas with signs (ex. centers, quiet/calm area, class library).
- Post signs for areas that are not accessible during parts of the day (ex. computer area “closed”).

→ [The Universal Design of Early Education - journal.naeyc](#)

#### **Targeted/Specialized Supports**

- Use carpets, carpet squares, and placement of furniture to further define areas of the room.
- Provide photos and visuals for students to help clarify and define specific areas (ex. photo of block area with directions for where to play with blocks).
- Provide visuals and instructions for putting away materials. Teach children how to match the labels on bins to the materials they are putting away.

→ [Designing Early Childhood Inclusive Classroom](#)

→ [Examples of Clearly Defined Areas - Specialized Supports and Intensive Interventions](#)

#### **Intensive Interventions**

- Arrange the room so that there is ample space for navigating for children who have special equipment, wheelchairs, walkers, and seating.
- Provide adaptations within each area for children with needs for tactile, visual, hearing, motor, and/or communication supports.

→ [Examples of Clearly Defined Areas - Specialized Supports and Intensive Interventions](#)

## 2. Classroom materials are sufficient and in good condition.

### 2b. Shelves, bins, and areas for each child's items are labeled.

Quality indicators:

- Words, pictures and shape outlines may be used when labeling.
- Children know where to put materials when not in use.
- The organizational system for the room is taught to the children.



Questions to ask:

- ✓ How do children know where materials are stored or where to get desired materials?
- ✓ How do the children know where to put materials when they are done?



*Supports, Accommodations, Adaptations*

***Links for Additional Information***  
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#### **Universal Supports**

- Labels for each child's areas for storing backpacks, lunchboxes, and individual items should be labeled with their names in addition to a recognizable visual (symbol, photo)

→ [Universal Design Tip Sheet](#)

#### **Targeted/Specialized Supports**

- Provide visual mini-schedules and/or social scripts to support children in the processes for locating, using, and putting away materials.
- Include labels to indicate that some areas are "closed" and that some materials are "Teacher" materials.
- Provide direct instruction and guided practice along with visual mini-schedules for children who are not yet familiar with the directions and actions of cleaning up, putting away items according to category.

→ [Examples of Labels for Specialized Supports and Intensive Interventions](#)

→ [Visuals for Supporting Play](#)

#### **Intensive Interventions**

- Provide hooks, cubbies, and bins that are accessible for children with motor, movement, or positioning needs, Examples: some bins with easily-removed lids, over-sized hooks for hanging items, a cubby on the end of a row so that it is accessible for a child using a wheelchair.
- Consider accommodations for vision, tactile, and hearing when labeling the areas and the materials in the room.
- Provide labels related to safety. Emphasize and display safe use of furniture to decrease behaviors such as climbing on the shelves and tables.

→ [Examples of Labels for Specialized Supports and Intensive Interventions](#)



## 2. Materials are sufficient and in good condition.

### 2c. Materials are of sufficient quantity, interest, and variety to engage all children.

Quality indicators:

- Materials are stored on child-sized shelves.
- There are multiples of high interest class materials and shelves are stocked.
- There are plenty of activities available in the class that are rotated throughout the year, to keep children actively engaged and extend learning.
- Class materials are in good condition.



Questions to ask:

- ✓ How often are materials rotated?
- ✓ Do children have access to high interest toys during center time activities?
- ✓ Can the children access materials independently?



Supports, Accommodations, Adaptations

**Links for Additional Information**  
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#### **Universal Supports**

- Consider the following when choosing materials:
  - ✓ Wide range of developmental levels
  - ✓ Wide and varied range of interests
  - ✓ Addressing all domains of development throughout the day
  - ✓ Variety in materials that provide: physical motor play, quiet time, pretend play, manipulative items, problem solving, individual as well as group activities

- [Best Toys for Young Children by Age and Stage - NAEYC](#)
- [Planning a Developmentally Appropriate Program for Children](#)

#### **Targeted/Specialized Supports**

- Provide visual scripts and guided interactive play to assist children who need support in understanding how to use some toys or in engaging in pretend play with peers.
- Increase engagement for all children through the use of peer buddies.
- Provide visuals that are specific to toys and materials for making choices and for communicating with peers during play.

- [Let's Play Project - Guidelines to Promote Play Opportunities for Children with Disabilities](#)
- [Toy Tips - Ideas and Options for Children with Special Needs](#)
- [Examples of Supports and Adaptations for Toys and Materials](#)

#### **Intensive Interventions**

- Include toys that are cause and effect in nature and that have a variety of responses (ex. lighting up, making noise, moving) and that have a variety of required actions to activate.
- Include toys such as puzzles with large knobs and specialized materials with accommodations for tactile, vision, hearing needs.

- [AT Participation Supports for Young Children with Disabilities](#)
- [Examples of Supports and Adaptations for Toys and Materials](#)
- [Adaptive Materials Resources](#)