



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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TATS is funded by the State of Florida, Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS), through federal assistance under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), Part B, Section 619.

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](#)

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

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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

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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](#)

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*](#)
[*Right click to open in new window*](#)

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](#)