

# Visual Strategies

Kim Dobson

# *Learning Through Seeing*

Children with autism and other pervasive developmental disorders learn in a variety of ways. But research has shown that for many children with autism and other similar disabilities, one way of learning is  
*learning through seeing!*

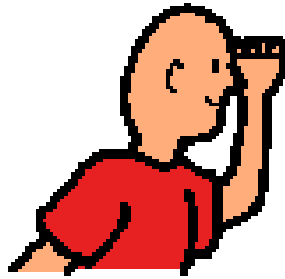
*Making Visual Supports Work in the Home and Community, Savner & Myles (2000)*

When children with autism are given opportunities to learn with visual cues, they:

- Learn more quickly
- Reduce aggressive or self-injurious behavior
- Decrease frustration and anxiety
- Learn to adjust to changes at home/school
- Complete tasks by themselves
- Gain independence

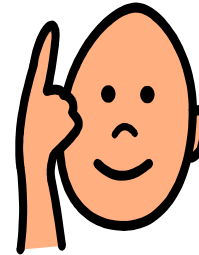
*Making Visual Supports Work in the Home and Community, Savner & Myles (2006)*

I see



it . . .

I understand



!

# Visual Strategies Help Children

- Follow rules
- Understand what they are supposed to do
- Understand how to complete work or play activities and tell someone they are finished
- Move from one activity to another
- Make choices about what they want to do

**“a tool that enables the child to keep track of the day’s events/activities at the same time helps him/her to develop an understanding of time”**

# Visual Strategies

- Visual Schedules
- Choice boards
- Boundary Settings
- Labels
- Tasks/Activity Completion
- Visual Behavior Supports
- Other

# Visual Schedules

- Provides student with structure
- Capitalizes on students' visual strengths
- Allows "Premack Principle" to work (e.g., "first....then")
- Teaches students time
- Helps students in choice diversity
- Aids students in learning flexibility
- Increases independence
- Stimulates conversation related to the day's activities

# Types of Visual Schedules

- Full-size object
- Miniature object
- Photograph
- Black/white (line drawing)
- Written word
- Written phrase
- Mini schedules to break down tasks and multi-step directions

Whole-class  
and  
Individual

# Schedules Provide a Variety of Information

- What is happening today (regular activities throughout the day)
- What is happening today that is new, different, or unusual
- What is not happening today
- What is the sequence of events
- What is changing that is normally expected
- When it is time to stop one activity and move on to another

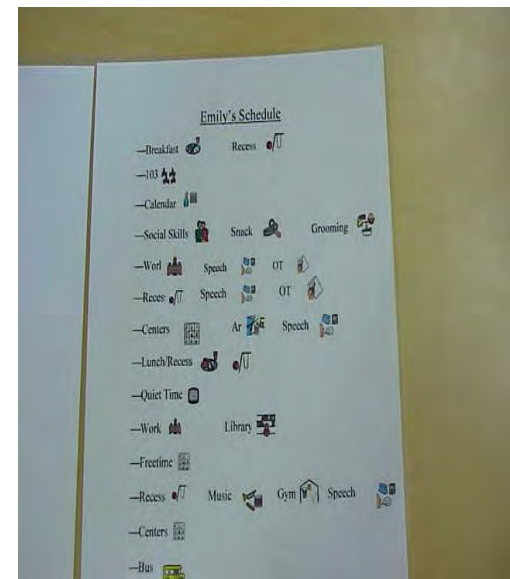
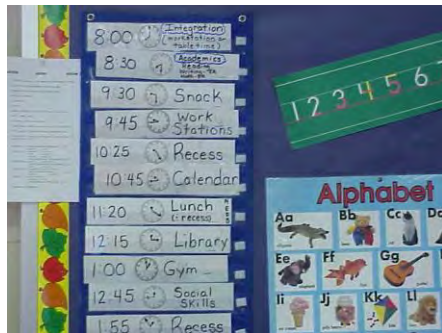
# How to Create a Schedule

- Divide the day into segments (all day or part day)
- Select a representation system (e.g., object, picture, left to right or top to bottom)
- Select a format
  - Who is it for? (group or individual) Where will it be used?
  - How will it get a perspective of time?
  - What will it look like? (wall chart, binder, folder, strips, pages, vertical/horizontal)
  - How big does it need to be?
  - Where will it be located? (wall, desk, table, pocket, personal)
  - How mobile does it need to be?

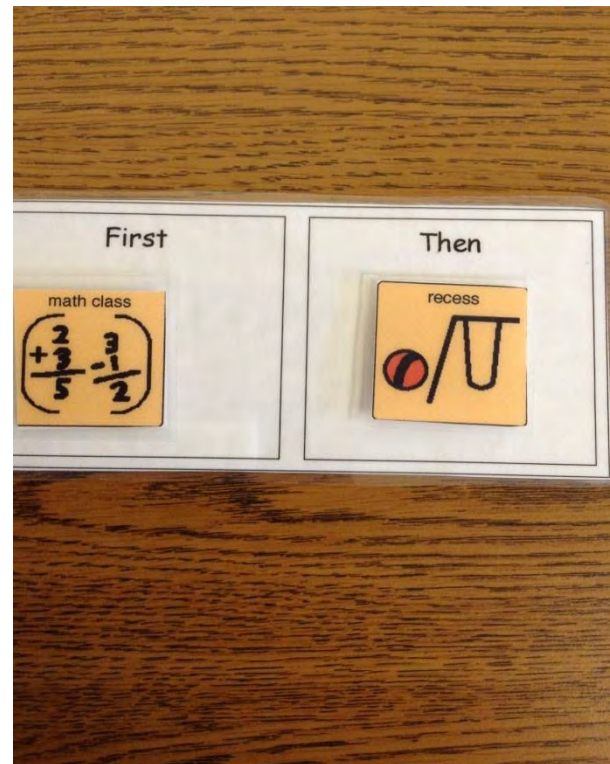
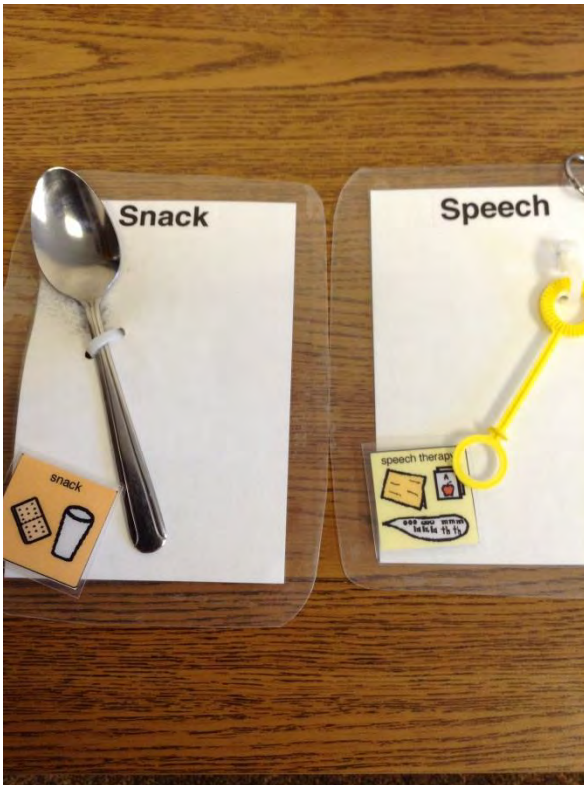
# Schedule

- Decide how the students will participate in schedule preparation at the beginning of the day
- Decide how the schedule will be used throughout the day
  - Cross off or check off what was completed
  - Take off picture/object
  - Turn over the picture
  - Point to the new activity and use a verbal routine
  - Move to new activity
  - Carry the picture/object to guide transition to new location

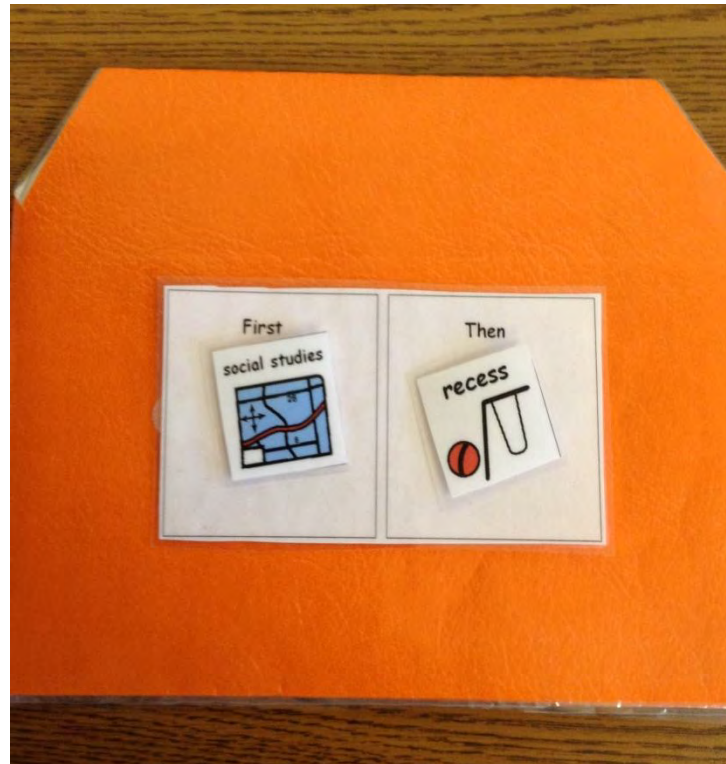
# Examples of Schedules



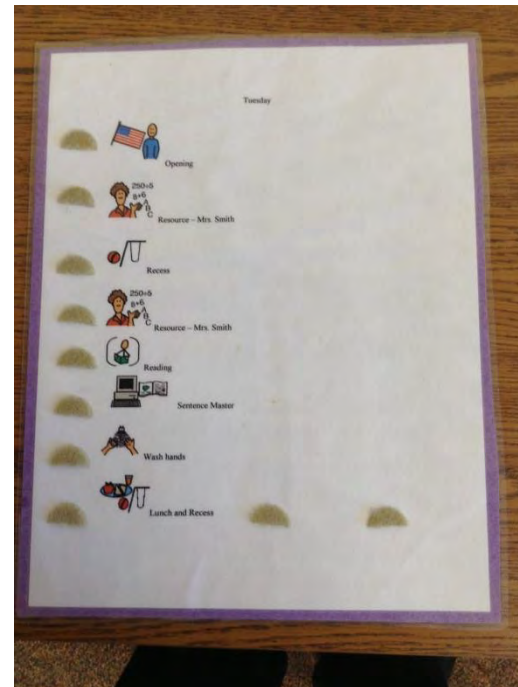
# Schedules



# Schedules



# Schedules



# Choice Boards

Choice boards provide students with a menu of choices for things such as leisure activities, who gets a turn, places to visit, what to eat for snack/meal, which game or activity to do, which song to sing, which job you want to do, what materials you need to complete an activity, what center you want to participate in, or what song to sing.

*SFSD Functional Curriculum*

# Benefits of Choice Boards

- Increases attention to task
- Increases independence and participation (broadens number of choices)
- Reduces inappropriate behavior such as aggression and self-injury
- Teaches acceptable requesting behavior
- Improves communication

# Disadvantages in the Loss of Choices

- Lack of ownership/control
- Increases behavioral problems (idiosyncratic requesting and protesting behavior)

# Types of Choice Making

## **Within -**

Choices of materials to be used within an activity

## **Between -**

Choices between activities

## **With whom -**

Choice of person to include/exclude

## **Where -**

Location of an activity

## **When -**

Time of the activity

## **Refusal -**

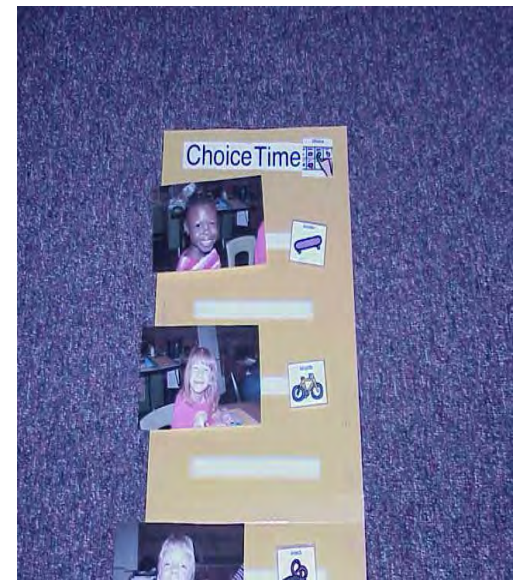
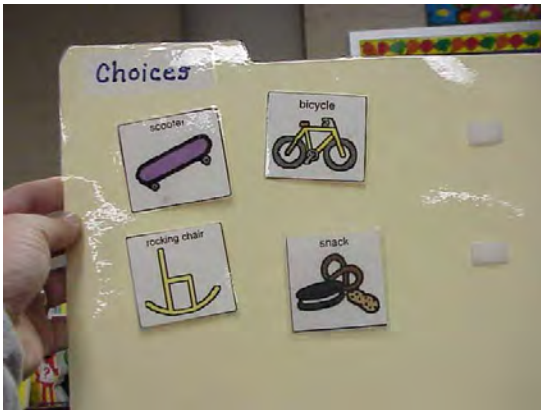
Refuse to participate in an activity

## **Terminate -**

End an activity

*Visual Supports (video)*

# Examples of Choice Boards



# Boundary Settings

Visually structuring the environment assists students with autism in making sense of their world.

# Early Childhood and Elementary Classrooms

- Label all areas such as snack, play, work, etc.
- Transition area - "check schedule"
- Workstation/independent work-designated area where independence of task completion is the main focus
- Visual boundaries-tape on the floor, small stop signs on the door, "hands on hands", different colored cues at each area (chairs, color cards)
- Label areas and materials

# Middle School and High School

- Label supply areas - Family and Consumer Science, Technology Education, Science Classes, etc.

# Examples of Boundary Settings



# Examples of Boundary Settings



# Task Completion

Task completion (via work systems with visual supports) teaches students cause and effect.

- How much work?
- What work?
- What's next?
- Concept of finished
- Reward or motivator (ties student's action to a consequence)

TEACCH / work baskets / work stations

# Example of Task Organization



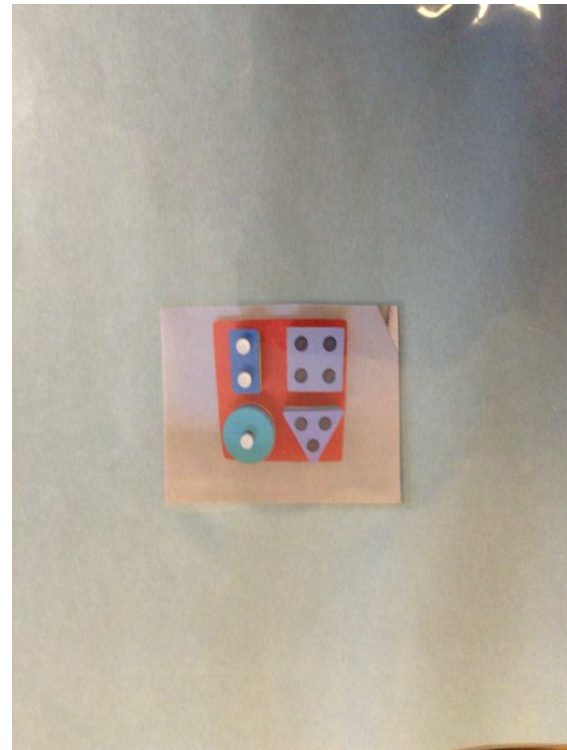
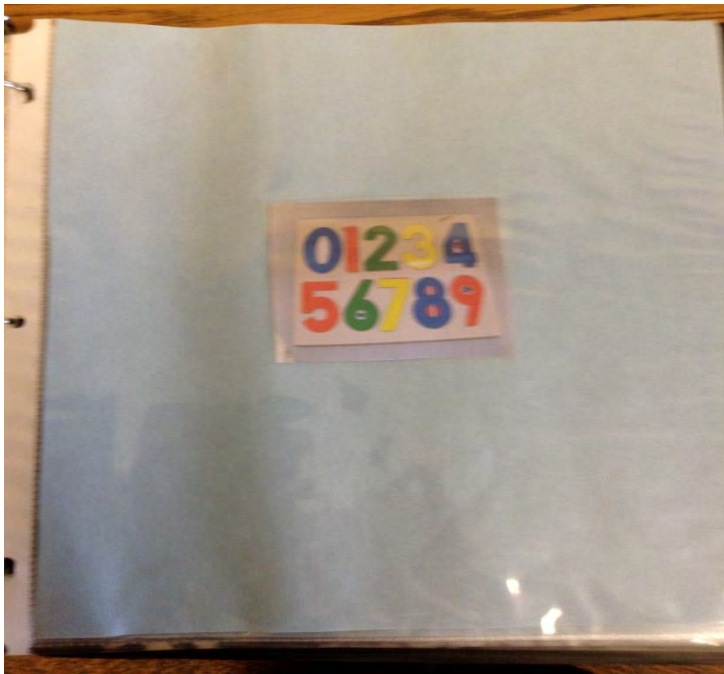
# Work Stations

- Format - left to right, top to bottom
- Organization - match colors, shapes, letters, numbers, etc.
- Baskets - Tasks are placed in baskets, once completed return to basket and then basket in done box
- Can be a folder system

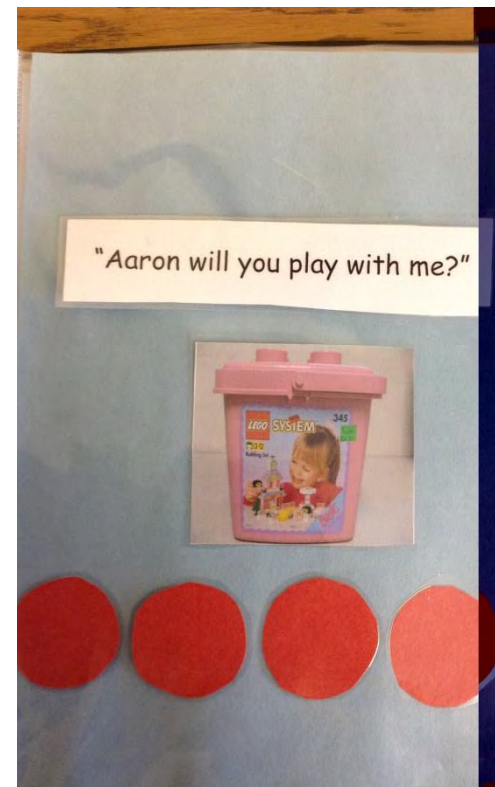
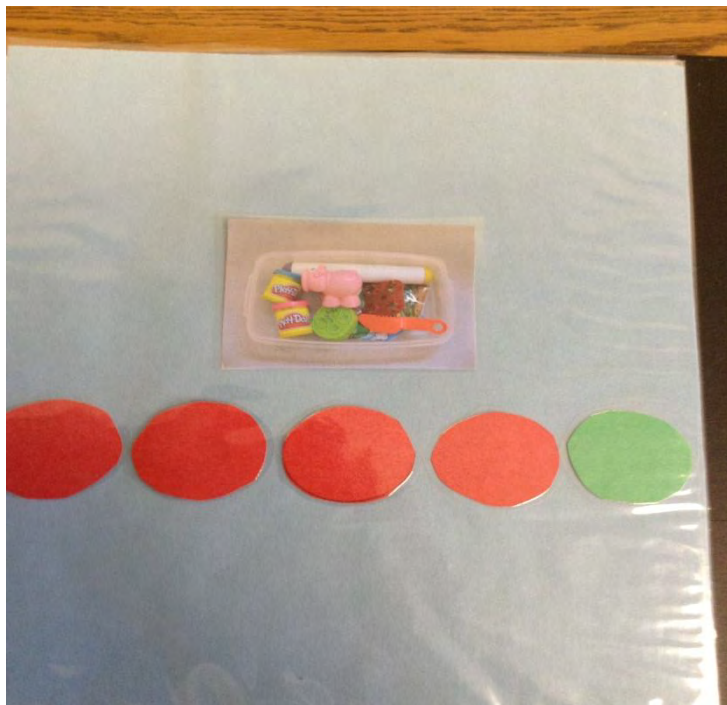
# Activity Schedules

- Creates greater independence than a work station
- Can incorporate social skills
- Can incorporate interactive play skills

# Activity Schedules



# Activity Schedules



# Organizational Ideas

- Limit the amount of material needed to take between classrooms and home
- Use organizational binder with color coded folders for each class, schedules, assignment charts, social reminders, materials list for each class
- Colored construction paper for various books

# Organization that Provides Structure and Routine

- Routine sequencing of tasks will provide predictability which will decrease anxiety and promote independent work skills
- Changes in routine should be written in the daily schedule

# Visual Behavior Supports

Visual behavior supports provide the child with information on behavior expectations and possible consequences of following or not following the rules.

*Making Visual Supports Work in the Home and Community, Savner & Myles (2000)*

# Visual Behavioral Supports Can

- Gain and maintain student attention
- Create support for students to stay on task, using less teacher intervention
- Make directions very clear and concise
- Encourage simple, routine communications
- Help students remember what needs to be remembered

*Making Visual Supports Work in the Home and Community, Savner & Myles (2000)*

# How Do I Make the Visual Support?

- Photographs
- Magazine pictures
- Drawings
- Boardmaker (commercially made icons)
- Written words
- Pairing (pair 2 different types of visuals)

*Keep visual support clear and concise, including only the precise information necessary to complete a task.*

# How Do I Use the Visual Support?

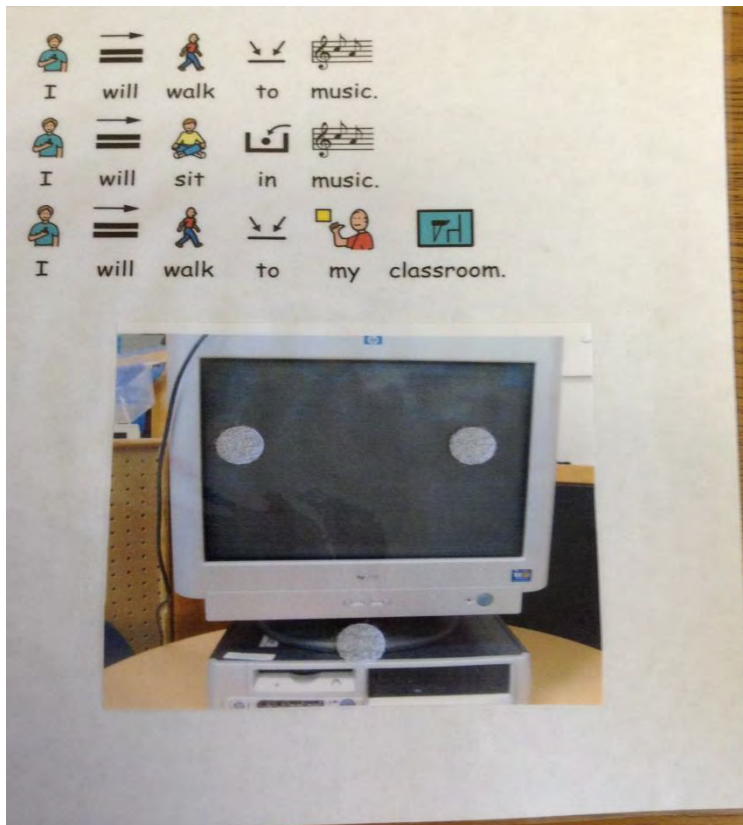
- Talk with the child about the benefits, adjusting their language to the child's ability level
- Model the steps of the process (prompt as needed)
- Provide praise for attempts and successes
- Use the visual support in different settings






*Making Visual Supports Work in the Home and Community, Savner & Myles(2000)*

# Behavior Supports



# Behavior Supports



5		Emergency Voice
4		Playground Voice
3		Classroom Voice
2		Soft voice (talking with only one or two people)
1		Whisper

# Behavior Supports



# Using Visual Supports to Adapt Curriculum

Visual supports for abstract information, input vs. output

Sequential/rote learning

Quantity of homework

Use of visual supports to teach the Hidden Curriculum

# Power Cards

- Use a hero or special interest area of the student to teach appropriate social interactions.
- The card begins with a reference to the hero and then it lists the steps necessary to carry out the strategy that is being taught.
- The card often has a picture of the special interest or hero on it.

# Power Card

When Lightning McQueen's teacher told him to do something he would say, "No." Doc told Lightning he needed to listen to his teacher and say, "Okay" in a quiet voice. Now Lightning McQueen says, "Okay" to his teacher and his teacher is proud of him. The other cars like to hang out with him when he says, "Okay" in a quiet voice. Lightning McQueen is good student!



Be quiet when the teacher is talking  
Listen to the teacher  
Say, "Okay"

# Travel Card

- A travel card is a visual strategy used to reinforce a student's skills across environments. It could be used in upper elementary through high school.
- It is a card that lists the student's classes along the side of the card and across the top it lists various behaviors specific to the student. Behaviors listed may include things such as follows class rules, participates, turned in homework.
- Teacher write a Y for yes or a N for no in each box. There is also space for teacher's to comment when necessary.

Created by Laura Carpenter

# Travel Card

Date _____		<b>Travel Card</b>		
Student Name _____				
	Follow class rules	Participate	Do Work	Turn in homework
Reading				
Science				
English				
Spanish				
Study Hall				
Geography				
Teacher Comments:			Y = Yes   N = No	

# Additional Ideas to Decrease Behavior Challenges

- Look at Me Book - Michelle Garcia Winner
- Transition Checklists
- Transition Books

# Additional Visual Supports

- Task analysis
- Play routines
- Visual cues
- Curriculum modifications
- Strategies for comprehension
- Video modeling



# Additional Supports for Middle School and High School

- Provide copy of PowerPoint in advance
- Clearly state expectations for assignments (put in writing)
- Be as concrete as possible when presenting new concepts and abstract material
- Use examples
- Provide timely and useful feedback
- Check for understanding

# Additional Supports for Middle School and High School

- Explain unwritten classroom rules
- Reduce classroom distractions
- Consider arranging in-class peer supports
- Be familiar with the behavior plan
- Short breaks if needed
- Separate room for testing
- Extra time for testing

# Things to Remember

- Ensure consistency of expectations among staff
- Recognize that some change in manner or behavior may reflect anxiety
- Do not take rude or aggressive behavior personally
- Incorporate interest areas when possible

# Social Stories

- Definition: Social stories describe social situations using relevant social cues, and often define an appropriate response in a non-threatening format.

Social Stories are written in response to individual student needs identified through:

- Observations of situations difficult for the student.
- Student's response to questions about social situations which indicate the student is "misreading" a given situation.

# Writing a Social Story: Getting Started

- Observe a targeted situation that is difficult for the student.
- Include variations in situation that may occur.
- Be aware of the student's perspective.

# Writing a Social Story: Guidelines

- Use three basic types of simple sentences.  
Descriptive sentences define where situation occurs, who is involved, and what happens.  
Perspective sentences describe the reactions and feelings of others to the situation in the story.  
Directive statements are individualized statements of desired responses. They often begin with, "I will try...." or "I will work on...."
- Good formula to follow is to write a total of at least 3-5 descriptive/perspective sentences for every directive.

# Descriptive Sentences

- When students want to talk in school, they raise their hand.
- When kids are on the playground, they play inside the fenced area.
- When we are in our classroom, we stay in our desk unless the teacher tells us to move.
- When people talk to someone, they look at that person's face while they are talking.
- There are lots of different color chairs in our room.

# Perspective Sentences

- When kids raise their hand, the teacher knows that they want to talk or answer the question.
- Kids need to stay inside the fenced area to stay safe so the teachers know where they are.
- The teacher likes it when we stay in our desk and do our work.
- When we look at someone's face, it lets them know that we are talking with them, and that we are interested in them.
- Most kids don't care what color chair they sit in, they know that no matter what the color is, they get to sit down.

# Directive Statements

- I will try and raise my hand to let the teacher know I have something to say.
- I will try to stay in the fenced area so I will be safe and the teacher knows where I am.
- I will try to stay and work at my desk unless the teacher tells me to move.
- I will try to look at people when I am talking with them.
- I will try to sit in different color chairs.

# Concluding Statements

- Concluding statements can sum up the story or feelings of people in the story.
  - Everyone will be happy when I raise my hand.
  - Teachers will be proud of me for following the rule and I will be safe.
  - I will get more work done and the teacher will be proud of me.
  - People will be happy when I look at them when I am talking.
  - It will be okay if I sit in a different color chair. Maybe next time I can have the blue chair.

# Describe Any Situation

## The Substitute Teacher

Usually my teacher is Mrs. Jones. Sometimes Mrs. Jones can't be at school. She might be sick or at a workshop. When Mrs. Jones isn't at school, she gets a substitute for our class. She tells the substitute what she wants her to do. Sometimes the substitute doesn't do things exactly the same way as Mrs. Jones does. Mrs. Jones knows this and she thinks this is okay. The other students listen to the substitute and do what she says. I will try and listen to the substitute and do what she says. Mrs. Jones will be proud of me when I listen to the substitute. I will have a good day.

# Personalize Social Skills

## Playing Games

Usually, people like to play games. It is fun to win. Everyone likes to win, but only one person can. Sometimes I might win, and sometimes a friend might win. It's okay when other people win. When I win, my friends say "good game", or "way to go". This is being a Good Sport. When someone else wins, I can try to say "good game" or "way to go". Maybe I will win the next time. My teacher will be proud of me when I am a good sport, and I will have fun playing games.

# Teach Routines

## Fire Drills

Sometimes we have a fire drill.

The bell rings. It will be okay.

We line up by the door.

We follow our teacher outside.

She tells us when to go back inside.

I will try and follow the teacher when we have a  
fire drill.

It will be okay.

# Address Behavioral Concerns

## Hands to Self

In school, kids keep their hands to themselves.

Kids use their words when they want something.

The teacher likes it when kids use their words.

Kids like other kids who use words and keep their hands to themselves.

I will try to keep my hands to myself and use my words.

My friends will be happy to play with me, my teacher will be happy, and I will be happy.

# More Guidelines to Writing a Social Story.

- Comprehension level
- Vocabulary and print size
- First person and present tense
- Clear and simple illustrations
- Avoid terms like always, use usually or sometimes, try, etc.
- State directive positively, describing desired response instead of problem behaviors

# Based on Identified Needs, Social Stories May:

- Describe any situation using relative social cues and correct responses.
- Personalize any social skills covered in any social skills curriculum.
- Translate goals into understandable steps.
- Teach routines or help students with changes in routine.
- Teach academic material in a realistic social story.
- Address behavioral concerns.