

Transitions: From Terror to Tranquility

by Vangie Rodenbeck

(Helping Children Adapt to Classroom Routines)

In a room full of so many teachable hearts, we frequently move quickly from one activity to another without thinking about everything involved in the act of transitioning. But for children who experience developmental delays or who face challenges in adaptive functioning, classroom transitions can be anything but smooth and tranquil. In fact, the many changes can seem quite abrupt and frightening.

Understanding Adaptive Functioning

Adaptive functioning skills are those that assist us in navigating the most basic changes of function within our environment. These include the skills required to move effortlessly, step by step, within any single task in order to accomplish the whole task. For instance, the steps associated with getting ready for bed seem simple. They may include brushing your teeth, washing your face, and other routines that you have developed adaptive skills to accomplish. But for the person with low adaptive functioning skills, the act of brushing teeth is a complex, multi-step process that includes finding the toothbrush, grasping the toothbrush, applying toothpaste while grasping the toothbrush, and so on. When we understand the multiple intricacies of tasks such as this one, we

realize how important adaptive functioning skills become. Persons with developmental delays or disabilities often see each part of the task separately, rather than seeing it as a single whole act.

Using Picture Schedules

When this concept is translated to the numerous acts involved in participating in a classroom environment, it is understandable why children with special learning needs often become overwhelmed and anxious. One way to lessen the anxiety of children who struggle with changes in classroom activities is to use a picture schedule. A simple visual map of the daily schedule can help even young children plan out the skills they will need for participating in various activities.

As a management tool, a picture schedule is also useful for pointing out that a preferred activity is on the day's schedule. For instance, if working independently at the art center soothes a child, it might help the child tolerate other non-preferred activities if he sees when art time will take place. Pointing to a picture schedule, you can say, "First we have Bible story time, and then we will be going to the art center." Children are sometimes willing to endure an activity that is more difficult if the reward they seek is in sight.

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For Toddlers Through Pre-K & K

The use of simple pictures, or icons, to visualize your daily schedule can be invaluable when working with young children. Display the pictures near the door of your classroom so that you can introduce your daily schedule when children enter the room. Keep the schedule board available during the entire class so that it can be reintroduced if necessary. For free-play time, keep activity icon cards not being used that day accessible so that nonverbal children can choose and communicate to you the kind of activity they would like to participate in.

For Early and Middle Elementary Children and Preteens

The use of a classroom schedule board is helpful into the early elementary years, but soon you will want to prepare sets of icon cards for individual students. Middle elementary and preteen students can use a set of cards at their seats, or the cards can be attached to a ring or strip of paper that can be kept in a pocket. In this way, the kids will grow to be responsible for themselves, using the cards provided to help them prepare for and transition to the next activity on the classroom schedule.

Making a Picture Schedule Board

Materials Needed

HeartShaper icon cards provided with this article; card stock; clear, self-adhesive covering (or laminating machine); poster board; self-adhesive hook-and-loop strip; double-sided mounting tape

How to Assemble

1. Cut the poster board in half, making two long, vertical strips. If you have two hours of teaching, one board can be used for the first hour and the second board can be used for the extra hour. Apply the hook side of self-adhesive hook-and-loop tape to each board in one long strip. Use double-sided mounting tape to attach the poster boards to a classroom wall at the students' eye level.
2. Print a copy of the HeartShaper icons. Cover with clear self-adhesive covering or laminate the icons. Cut the icon cards apart and attach to the back of each card a piece of self-adhesive hook-and-loop tape (loop side).

How to Use

Place the icon cards on the board in the order in which activities will take place that day. As each activity is completed, its icon card can be removed from the board.

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(Helping Children Adapt to Classroom Routines)

Making a Bookmark Schedule

(for older children)

Materials needed

HeartShaper icon cards provided with this article; card stock (or heavy-weight paper); self-adhesive hook-and-loop dots

How to Assemble

1. Cut a 2" x 8" bookmark from card stock. Attach 5 hook-and-loop dots (hook side) down the length of the bookmark.
2. Print a copy of the HeartShaper icons, printing at 50% of the original size. Cover with clear self-adhesive covering (or laminate). Cut apart the icon cards, and attach to the back of each card a self-adhesive hook-and-loop dot (loop side).

How to Use

Place the appropriate icon cards on the bookmark, showing the order in which activities will take place. If you will be offering a choice of activities, allow the student to choose his or her preferred activity and place that picture on the bookmark at the appropriate place. The bookmark can be folded and kept in a pocket or at a personal space where the student can refer to it as needed.

Making a Picture Ring

(for older children)

Materials needed

HeartShaper icon cards provided with this article; card stock; clear, self-adhesive covering (or laminating machine); hole punch; metal book ring

How to Assemble

1. Cut 3" x 3" squares of card stock. Print a copy of the HeartShaper icons, printing at 75% of the original size. Cut apart the icons and glue one picture to each 3" x 3" card. Cover cards with clear self-adhesive covering (or laminate).
2. Punch a hole in the top left corner of each card.

How to Use

Using a metal book ring, assemble the cards on the ring in the order in which activities will take place. If you will be offering a choice of activities, allow the student to choose his or her preferred activity and place that picture card at the appropriate place on the ring. The student can keep the ring in a pocket to refer to throughout the class time.

Early Childhood Picture Board Icons

 <p>Active Play</p>	 <p>Art</p>	 <p>Bible Memory</p>
 <p>Bible Review</p>	 <p>Bible Time</p>	 <p>Blocks & Buildings</p>
 <p>Books</p>	 <p>CD</p>	 <p>Cleanup</p>
 <p>Craft</p>	 <p>Family Living</p>	 <p>Food</p>

NOTE: You can use the blank boxes to create your own picture icons for additional activities you may offer.

Early Childhood Picture Board Icons



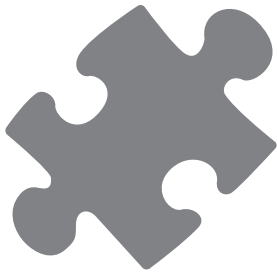
Game



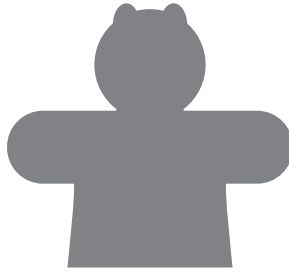
Music



Pray



Puzzles



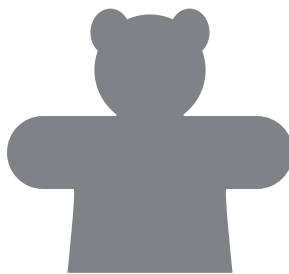
Scamper



Scout



Sing & Pray



Teddy



Wonder

Elementary Picture Board Icons

 <p>Action</p>	 <p>Act It Out</p>	 <p>Activity Page</p>
 <p>Art</p>	 <p>Bible Memory</p>	 <p>Bible Skills</p>
 <p>Bible Story</p>	 <p>CD</p>	 <p>Craft</p>
 <p>Discover</p>	 <p>Discuss</p>	 <p>Food</p>

Elementary Picture Board Icons

 <p><i>Game</i></p>	 <p><i>Interview</i></p>	 <p><i>Listen</i></p>
 <p><i>Music</i></p>	 <p><i>Object Lesson</i></p>	 <p><i>Pray</i></p>
 <p><i>Puzzle</i></p>	 <p><i>Read</i></p>	 <p><i>Science</i></p>
 <p><i>Service Project</i></p>	 <p><i>Sign Language</i></p>	 <p><i>Skit</i></p>

Elementary Picture Board Icons



Video/Media



Write