

Commentary on Effective Implementation of Object Schedules/Anticipation Shelves

The DCDD Board members prepare briefs about topics of interest for professionals who serve children and youth with communication disorders and their families. You are receiving this brief on the topic of resources for professionals who work with students who are deaf or hard of hearing because you are a member of DCDD. We appreciate your continued membership with DCDD.

This month will be the first of two commentaries on daily schedules that use objects as representations. This month I will focus on some major issues around implementation (for those of you who already use such schedules). Next month, I'll talk more about the development of such schedules for those who may be working with their first child who requires such a schedule.

The daily schedule has also been called the anticipation shelf, stemming from work at the Perkins School for the Blind, the scholarship of Jan Van Dijk in The Netherlands, and others. It is also called an **anticipation shelf** because one of the primary outcomes is that when a child knows his daily routine (as represented on the daily schedule), he will eventually show some signs of anticipation. This might include an emotional reaction to the next activity or movement to the correct area of the room where that activity occurs or even a bodily movement that is a re-enactment of a movement that the child associates with that activity (based on memory of the activity being repeated). These expressions of anticipation are then a source of **conversation**.

The daily schedule should be regarded as far **more than a tool for transition**. They are not so much about behavioral management as about communication. Often, we see that the child is supported to pick up the object representation and to then move on to the next activity. This is insufficient. The daily schedule is a place to **learn about routines, sequences, and conversations**. It is also a place to preview and review the day's events. So, even our intent to provide emotional security through knowing one's routine, requires us to **slow down and be purposeful**. We should also be **attuned to the child's reactions** and **pause for conversation**. For example, if the next representation is for physical education (PE), we might talk about what will happen during PE that day.

The **daily schedule should be set up with the child**. Each activity should be named as the child touches the representation and helps to place it in the schedule display. It may not be possible to feature all of the day's events. Instead you might use the display to represent the morning and then set it up again (with the child) just after lunch.

Each trip to the schedule display is a lesson in itself and it should not be rushed.

The child should be supported to **start from the far left of the display** and to touch each of the empty containers or segments of the display (that represent activities that have been completed). The teacher or therapist will then say "all done" or "finished" as the

child touches each empty space. This is important so that the child begins to **understand the schedule as a sequence** (just as daily events are part of a sequence). That opportunity is lost when instructors take the child's hand and place it on the next representation without first exposing the child to the bins or sections that occurred before (and that represent completed work).

The child should take the object representation to the location where the activity will occur. If it is an entirely different room, you may want a duplicate of the object representation affixed to the door of the room. The child can then be supported to match the two. Again, the naming principle can be applied to enhance the number of opportunities that the child will hear or feel the name.

Each schedule display will have an "all done" or "finished" container at the far right. This is so that the word or sign for "all done" or "finished" becomes associated with the completion of activities. The family may have a preference for one term over the other, so we should ask. The **left to right sequencing** and structured use of the schedule is particularly important for the child who is visually impaired, blind, or deafblind. We are trying to bring order to his day. In the field of deafblindness, we regard the **daily schedule as an important literacy lesson**.

Again, it is important the child is not overly prompted to find the finished box. It is okay if the child touches additional representations in the daily schedule display on the way to locating the finished container. It is helpful if the finished container is a different color and size than the other sections of the daily schedule display.

At the end of the day, the finished box should be reviewed. This is much like looking over our "to do" list and feeling the satisfaction that comes from accomplishing what we set out to do that day. Lots of praise and conversing about memorable moments of the day can occur at this time. If the child is upset by this part of the procedure it may be because the child fears that he will be asked to do even more at the end of a long day. In such a circumstance, we can briefly and coactively touch what's in the finished box and say at least a few things about what the child did while saying or signing "finished" several times. The child will get the idea that revisiting this box of representations does not mean that more will be asked. The repeated use of the word "finished" or "all done" and the corresponding sign (if appropriate) will be reassuring to the child.

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Susan M. Bruce, Ph.D., Constituent Chair, Severe Disabilities