



Charting the Cs
Conference 2025:

*To Literacy and
Beyond*

Cooperation
Communication
Collaboration

Unlocking the Power of Using Visual Tools: Why Visual Schedules, First/Then, Timers, and Social Scripts are essential!

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Universal Design for Learning

[Universal Design for Learning website](#)

Guidelines that offer a set of concrete suggestions that can be applied to any discipline or domain to ensure that all learners can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities.

UDL aims to change the design of the environment rather than to situate the problem as a perceived deficit within the learner.

Implications for the Early Childhood Environment...

Universal Design: Providing support for more people rather than fewer.

How many times have **ramps** prevented someone with **independent mobility** from physically accessing a desired location?

How many times have **stairs** prevented someone who **relies on wheeled mobility** from physically accessing a desired location?



Universal Design: Providing support for more individuals rather than fewer.

How many times have people **without hearing loss** used Closed Captioning to support the message of the spoken word?

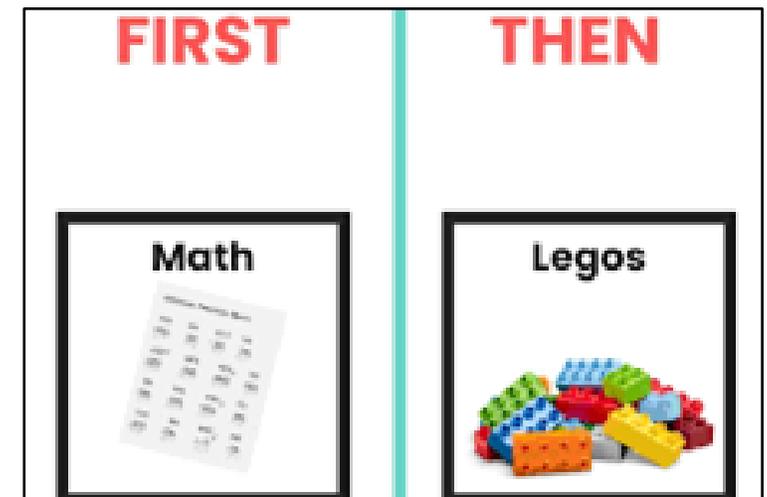
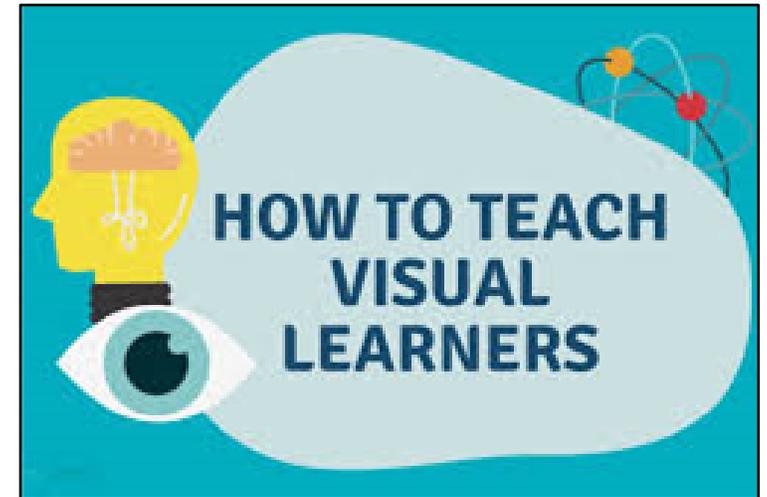
How many times have people **with hearing loss** missed out on the message of the spoken word without Closed Captioning?



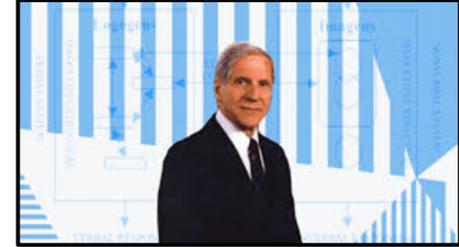
Consider how pictures can be a Universal Design tool to promote independence and increased understanding...

Point: the use of a visual picture tool provides access in a way that honors an individual's strengths and comprehension

- Be aware of the messaging, and how it's being sent and received. How does the message sent find a useful spot to land?



DUAL CODING THEORY By Allan Paivio



The theory, developed by psychologist Allan Paivio, is based on the understanding that our memory utilizes **two separate channels to store information: visual and verbal**. While these channels function independently, they can also work together to **establish connections between words and images**.

The Pyramid Model

1. The Pyramid Model (AKA Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) is a framework for early childhood education and care that uses visuals to promote social-emotional learning and behavior in children.
2. Visuals are used at all levels of the Pyramid Model to support these needs and aid in mutual understanding amongst the group or the individuals who need the targeted intervention.



Early Childhood Literature and the use of Pictures - WHY?

[Zhihui Fang of Purdue University in 1996 concluded:](#)

In summary, illustrations in picture books are meant to delight, to **capture attention**, to amplify or tell a story, to **teach a concept**, and to develop appreciation and **awareness** in children. Given the important role illustrations play in children's picture books and in children's **language and literacy development**, it is imperative that teachers, textbook writers and illustrators become more sensitive to the information conveyed through the delicate interplay of print, **pictures**, and the child reader.

Autism and Use of Visuals

Brain Processing: Research indicates that autistic individuals may process language through visual areas of the brain, leading to a preference for visual information.

Concrete Understanding: Pictures provide a concrete representation of concepts, which can be easier to grasp than abstract spoken language, especially when dealing with complex ideas or social cues

Reduced Cognitive Load: Interpreting spoken language often requires additional processing to understand nuances like tone and body language, which can be challenging for people with autism; visuals bypass this extra cognitive load

Autism and Use of Visuals, References

Kasari, C., Brady, N., Lord, C., & Tager-Flusberg, H. (2013). Assessing the minimally verbal school-aged child with autism spectrum disorder. *Autism Research*, 6(6), 479–493. doi: 10.1002/aur.1334.Review. Retrieved November 8, 2016, from

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24353165/>

Tager-Flusberg, H., & Kasari, C. (2013). Minimally verbal school-aged children with autism spectrum disorder: the neglected end of the spectrum. *Autism Research*, 6(6), 468–478. doi: 10.1002/aur.1329. Review. Retrieved November 8, 2016, from

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24124067/>

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/visual-thinking-and-autism-5119992>

Additional Resources Used for this Presentation as it relates to the diagnosis of Autism:

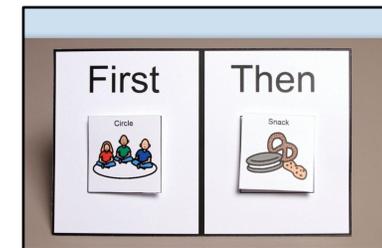
- From [preschool aged children](#) in a classroom, [school age supports](#), to adults on the [job site](#) or visiting a [doctor](#); the use of visual tools accelerated a person's ability to engage in a common routine, understand expectations, social norms, and functional engagement in the activity.
- **Preschool Aged Resources:** [Head Start - Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center](#)
- **Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability:** [The effectiveness of visual activity schedules for individuals with ID; A meta-analysis.](#)
- [Visual Supports and Autism](#) from Vanderbilt Kennedy Center

**OK enough theory and resources....Time to Dive into
Visual Tools!**

Common Visuals Considered and Utilized in Classrooms, Group Homes, Family Homes, Child Care Sites, Playgrounds Etc.

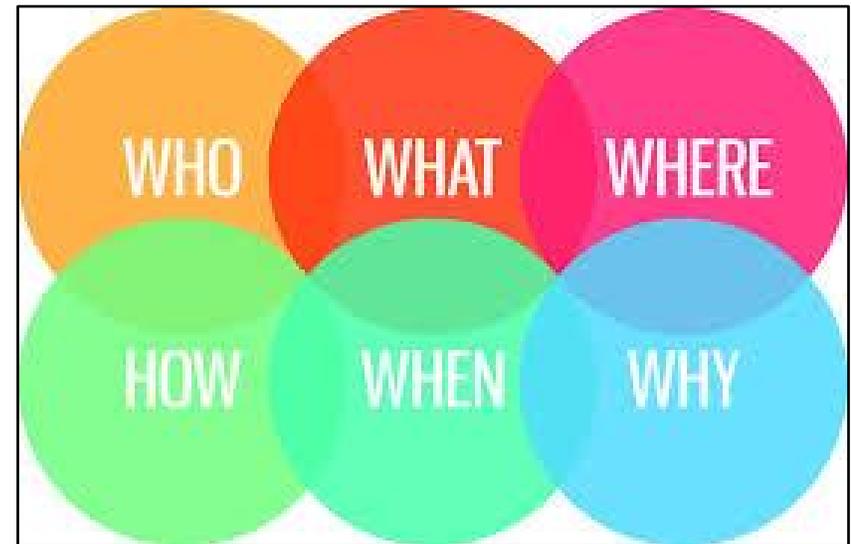
All of these tools rely on creating a visual image or picture.

When it's visual, it doesn't disappear like spoken words do!



Organizing ourselves for the rest of this presentation

- WHO are we focused on?
- WHAT are we doing...
theoretically?
- WHERE are these used?
- WHEN do we provide visual tools?
- WHY do we use these?
- HOW do we get started?



WHO is helped by visual tools?

People...

- Who are learning to read
- Who might struggle with understanding spoken language
- Who have a strength with understanding language spoken to them and struggle to express themselves regularly or reliably.
- Who experience hearing loss
- Who are neurodiverse
- Who display uneven development
- Who are typically developing, and are in the stages of mastery with receptive and expressive language processing
- ALL people

WHAT are we doing?

1. Accommodating Processing Skills

The way in which information goes in, gets stored and creates a response, may take longer for some.

2. Supporting Receptive Language

Tapping into someone's understanding of language and concepts through alternative means.

WHAT are we doing? (Continued)

3. Supporting Concrete Learners

Helping the concept that is spoken and “stays in the air” and never really “lands” anywhere.

4. Did you know that 80-85% of our sensory input is visual?

WHERE can we use visuals?

- At home
- In the car
- At work
- Dr/Dentist appointment
- Restaurant
- Grocery store
- Trying a new activity/location
- During a transition
- Anywhere, they can be portable!



WHEN do we use visuals? Anytime we need to....

...increase structure and predictability
(which means decreasing anxiety about
the future)

....switch our focus on behaviors of
resistance TO what we're asking that is
preventing forward progress or
participation

WHEN do we use visuals? Anytime we need to....(Cont'd)

...measure the passage of time for those who don't understand how to measure time on a clock or understand the concept of time being measured

...create a tool that explains complex and abstract concepts. Examples: social cues interactions or social cues/norms.

WHY use visual tools?

- Display behavioral expectations
- Develop predictable routines
- Support a clear compromise
- Expand play
- Decrease the teaching and learning cycle for all involved
- Reduce anxiety
- Measure time
- Tap into an individual's receptive language skills
- Create a common understanding between two people regardless of skill level
- Support positive reinforcement
- A way to increase cooperation
- Address social and emotional needs

How do visual schedules relate to English Language Arts?

Pre-reading Visual Skills

1. Developmentally, top to bottom visual scanning occurs first.
2. Then, left to right sequencing develops.
3. Some people don't master the left to right sequencing and then we meet them where their skills are.

How do visual schedules relate to English Language Arts? (Cont'd)

Traditional Academic Instruction

1. Support Visual Perceptual Skills
2. Visually recognizing similarities and differences
3. Derive meaning from visual information
4. Provides structure for a lesson, life skills, social cues
5. Promotes independence
6. Can pair text with picture cues
7. Introduces new vocabulary
8. Story sequencing

HOW to initiate and implement visual tools?

Decide with your team what is needed to focus on first?

- Teach or reinforce social skills
- Establish a routine or daily schedule
- Give choices / reminders
- Positive reinforcers
- Measure time

Brainstorm ideas and give yourself grace! Try to predict how this will go well and how it might need revision.

- On behalf of the people needing it and implementing it!
- **Both sides matter for successful interventions!**

HOW to initiate and implement visual tools? (Cont'd)

Acquire Materials Needed!

Do you need a commercial product?

Can something be made?

What materials or technology is needed?

How much time is needed?

How will this work for the long term?

Is it durable?

And finally, what's the easiest way to create and manipulate this visual tool?

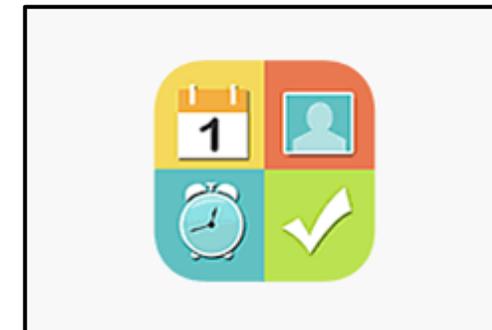
High Tech Options...

Apple/IPAD Apps To Consider

- Choiceworks (top left image)
- First Then Visual Schedule HD (top right)
- Visual Schedule Planner (bottom left)
- Time Timer (bottom right)

All schedule apps are available for purchase.

The Time Timer app is free.



CHROME STORE Apps

1. Visual Schedule Pro (Top image)
2. Pictogram Agenda (Bottom image)



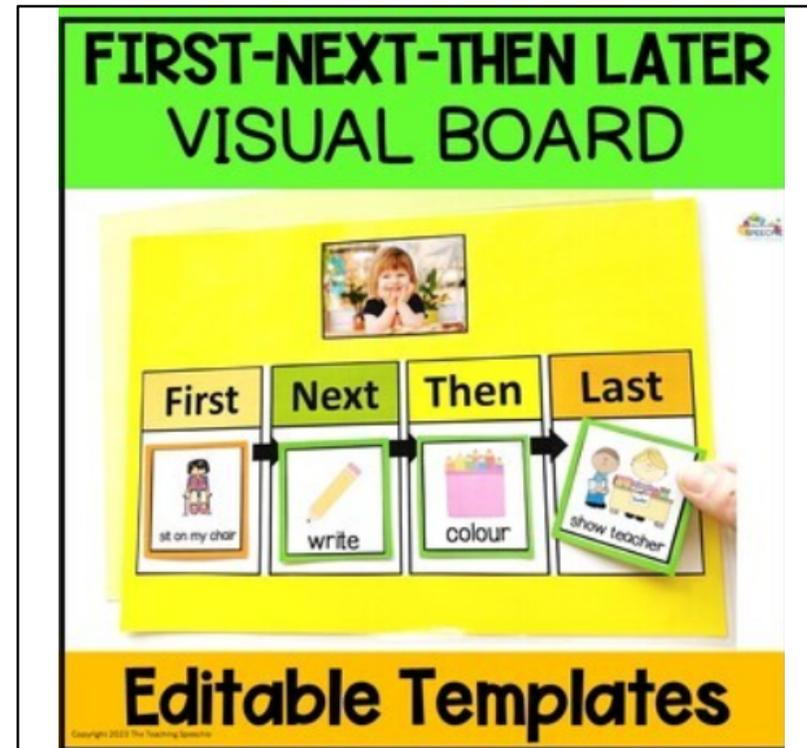
Low Tech Options....

Templates can be purchased online

(Pinterest, Teachers Pay Teachers, etc)

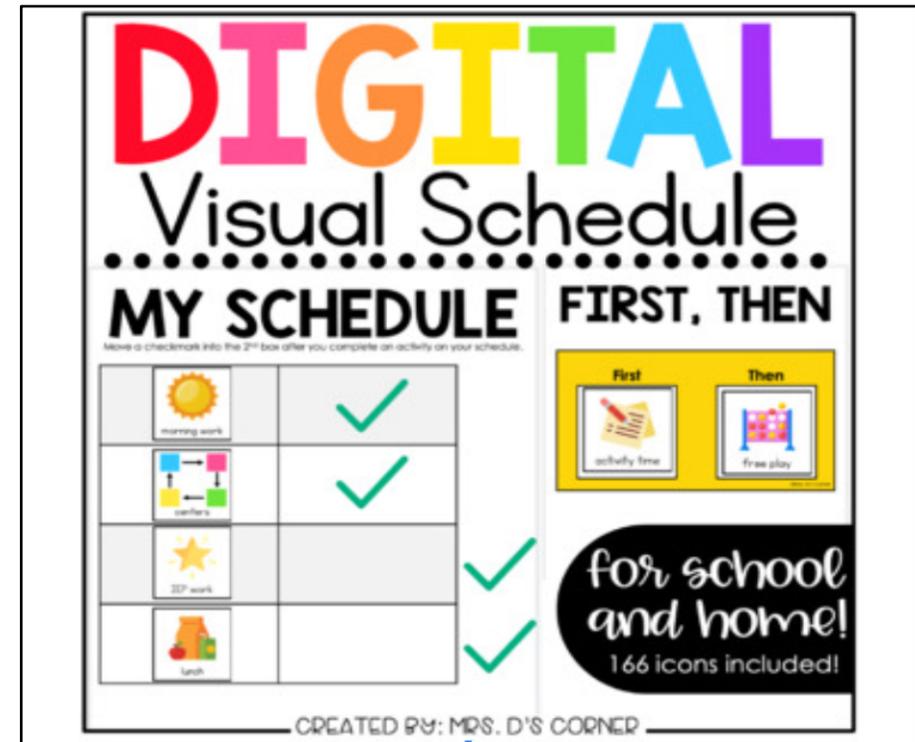
Templates are available for purchase, or can be made by reviewing others strategies and what is needed.

(The Teaching Speechie)



Template Examples

Digital Visual Schedule
(Mrs. D's Corner)



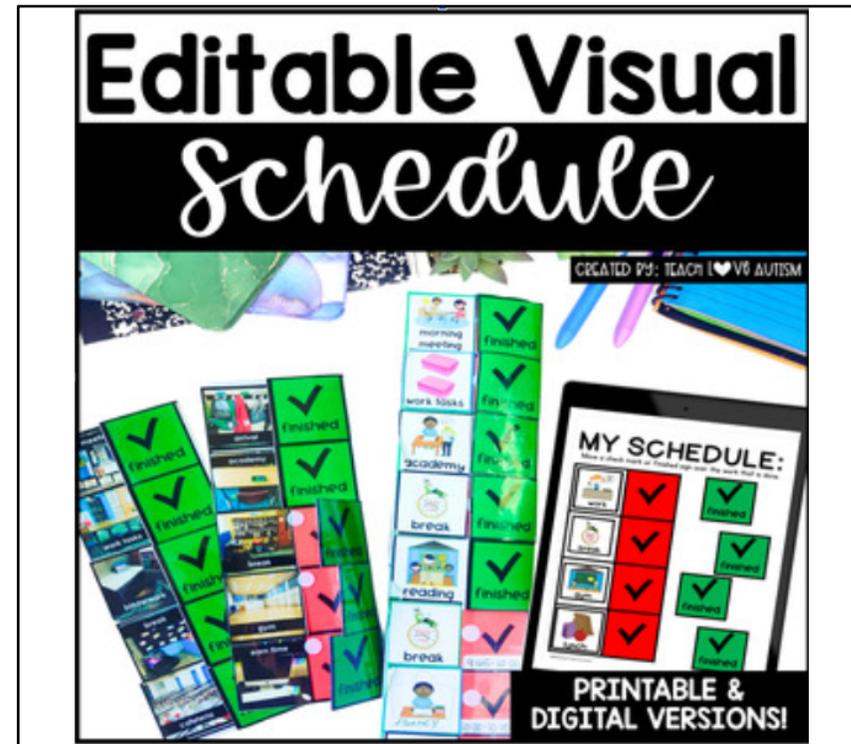
Templates for multiple steps in one task.

Instead of multiple tasks, sometimes we need multiple steps for one task - routines within routines.
(Teaching Sensory Explorers)



Templates with a fold over option.

(Teach, Love, Autism)



Additional Examples....

Sometimes people need to have the task that is finished moved from one side to the other.



More Low Tech Examples....

Sometimes having something durable, portable, or “cleanable” helps the lifespan of the visual tool.

Sometimes pictures need to disappear for the individual to focus on the appropriate images.



Early Examples of the EZ Slide Schedule

Seeing a picture, closing a door when something is completed. Doors can be closed in any order, see the bathroom images example.



EZ Slide Schedule Assembly Video



Let's practice making an EZ Slide Schedule!

EZ Slide Schedule:

Materials - EZ Slide Schedule, pictures, laminator (optional), scissors or cutters

1. Cut pictures (rectangles)
2. Laminate pictures (optional) and cut again.
3. Insert pictures into the schedule
4. DONE - use it right away!





Thank you!

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