

Consequence Strategies and Visual Supports

Because Richard enjoys swinging on the hammock and does so whenever he has the opportunity, 5 minutes of access to the hammock could be offered as a reward for completing three to five vowel problems, rather than a result of having a tantrum.

Prevention of meltdowns also often depends on the appropriate use of visual supports:

- *Labels:* A label can be a printed word, a photograph, or a clip art drawing indicating the material contained in a bin, cubby, storage cabinet, or room, or indicating ownership of materials (e.g., the name or image of the person). Labeling bins in which materials are stored can reduce frustration and confusion.
- *Boundary setting:* All children with disabilities, including those with ADHD and autism, have difficulty grasping the idea of boundaries: what is “off limits” and which places are appropriate for the children in question. Colored stripes on the floor or wall, painted room dividers, or distinctive colors on opposite sides corresponding to the type of activity can be supplemented by posters that function as labels. For example, the walls of the reading area can be painted blue; a poster of a child reading and one showing the child with the index finger to her lips in a “shhhh” posture can be used to indicate that this is *not* an area for talking and making noise.
- *Communication cue cards:* Cards with photos to remind the child of the activity that is occurring or to serve as prompts (e.g., “shhhh”; “use your pencil”) are carried by instructional staff members. They are often more effective than spoken verbal cues

and are less likely to provoke arguing. *First-then* cards and *First do this, then this happens* cards are examples of cue cards. They remind the child of what he or she is expected to do and what the reward will be for completing the requested task.

- *Time related:* Digital timers that children can learn to operate themselves can lead to greater independence and self-management.
- *Turn-taking supports:* A timer placed next to the computer, with a photo of the child whose turn it is next to use the computer, can reduce resistance to turn taking.
- *Visual schedules:* Visual schedules are widely used in classrooms to provide students with constant reminders of the sequence of upcoming activities and, in some cases, the times at which they occur. Lynn McLannahan and Patricia Krantz's book, *Activity Schedules for Children with Autism*,¹¹ is an especially good guide for constructing visual schedules and, in particular, for realistically discussing the prerequisite teaching steps that should be followed for these schedules to be successful. Depending on the child's functioning level, a visual schedule may be presented on successive pages of a three-ring notebook, photographs or icons may be arranged in rows from top to bottom on card stock, or a list of words may be written on the student's daily calendar.
- *Task organizer:* A task organizer is a specialized type of visual activity schedule that breaks down the steps required to complete a complex activity (task analysis). It can be used with a visual schedule or mini-schedule (a small, hand-carried schedule covering part of the day) to further simplify activities. Several task organizers can be used, each focusing on a given type of complex task, to promote adaptive self-help skills (e.g., dressing, toileting). Task organizers can be used in conjunction with activity schedule notebooks: a single task can be broken into several substeps. Task organizers are especially helpful for students with ADHD and learning disabilities who typically have serious organizational problems.
- *Behavioral contracts and self-management:* A child who has frequent behavior challenges usually prefers having some

ability to negotiate the conditions of his or her school activities. The teacher and student agree that certain behaviors are desirable and should be goals toward which they will work together. Other behavior is jointly targeted for reduction, and the student collaborates in identifying the target behavior, setting goals (which are often unrealistic), and deciding on consequences. It is important for the student to be involved in self-monitoring. Once a student has accepted a behavioral contract and has experienced some success, the teacher should plan to reduce the degree of direction provided, and future contracts should have an increased degree of student direction. In some cases, after several months, the student might manage his or her own behavior management program and consult with the teacher on new goals and reinforcers.

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