

Focus on Classroom Spaces



Visual Supports are used to Enhance Instruction

- a. Daily schedule is posted with pictures and words.
- b. Schedule is used as a teaching tool.
- c. Rules are posted with pictures and words.
- d. Class displays are child-centered and/or related to instructional units.
- e. Additional visuals are used to support instruction.



Classroom Materials are Sufficient and in Good Condition

- a. Classroom areas are organized, clearly defined and uncluttered.
- b. Shelves, bins and areas for children's personal items are labeled.
- c. Materials are sufficient in quantity, interest and variety to engage all children.



1a. Daily schedule is posted with pictures and words.

Quality Indicators

- The schedule is taught or referred to throughout the day and throughout the school year.
- The daily schedule is posted at the children's eye level and is visible from most areas of the room.
- Classroom staff pairs the use of visuals with verbal information and checks for children's understanding.
- Children are encouraged to follow routines with increasing independence and in various situations.

Questions to Ask

- How often do you refer to the schedule throughout the day?
- How do you use the schedule to teach the routine and class expectations?

Supports, Accommodations, Adaptations

Universal

- Use mini-schedules to show the actions associated with routines (ex. handwashing, lining up).
- Pair the symbol with corresponding verbal directions and provide guided practice through the activity in order to give children practice in the correct actions.

Identified/Specialized Supports

- Use individual schedules for children who need to manipulate the schedule cards or who need photos of actual situations.
- Provide accommodations such as reduced time, breaks and sensory strategies for some activities.
- Provide repeated instruction, modeling and guided practice for routines and activities.

Intensive Interventions

- Use schedules that are designed and individualized to meet specific needs. For example: photos, drawings, objects and representative objects (for children who don't yet understand a photo or drawing), tactile (for children with visual impairments or the need for tactile input).
- Provide increased monitoring and interaction throughout activity to give reminders and reinforcement for participation.

Resources

[Essentials For Supporting Young Children
Visual Supports](#)



1b. Schedule is used as a teaching tool to enhance moving from one activity to the next.

Quality Indicators

- Teachers refer to the schedule throughout the day to share expectations.
- Teachers use the schedule to prepare children for changes in activities and movement from one instructional time to another.
- Teachers emphasize the use of schedules throughout activities and across settings.
- Children are taught and provided practice in using strategies when moving between activities in various settings.

Questions to Ask

- How do you use the daily schedule to support moving from one activity to another?
- How often do you refer to the schedule throughout the day?

Supports, Accommodations, Adaptations

Universal

- Pair the symbol with corresponding verbal directions and provide guided practice throughout the activity in order to give children practice in the correct actions.
- Provide a visual symbol and verbal cue that indicates that it is time to change activities.

Identified/Specialized Supports

- Use individual schedules for children who need to manipulate the schedule cards or who need photos of actual situations.
- Provide repeated instruction, modeling and continued guided practice when moving from one activity to the next.
- Incorporate schedules that show “first” and “then” to prepare and reassure children who benefit from knowing what will happen next.
- Incorporate a method to let children know that an activity has been completed or is over (turning the visual symbol over or placing the symbol in a “finished” envelope).

Intensive Interventions

- Use cues when moving from one activity to the next that are designed and individualized to meet specific needs. Examples: photos, drawings, objects and representative objects, tactile, photos of the specific child in area or activity.
- Provide increased monitoring and interaction when moving from one activity to another to give reminders and reinforcement for changing activities. Provide visuals for alternative activities for adaptations for length and level of activities.

Resources

[Strategies for Moving from One Activity or Area to Another in the Classroom](#)
[Process for Teaching Children How to Use a Visual Schedule](#)



1c. Rules are posted with pictures and words.

Quality Indicators

- Children are able to see the rules, posted with pictures and words, from all areas of the room.
- Pictures are provided that clearly define the rules.
- The number of rules ranges from three to five.
- Children participate in rule development.
- Rules are referred to throughout the school day and school year.
- Rules are easily understood by young children.
- Children are provided guided practice of the rules in varying situations and settings.
- Rules are shared with families.

Questions to Ask

- How do you develop the classroom rules?
- How do you teach the rules to the children?
- How often do you refer to the rules throughout the day or the school year?
- How do you address rules that have been broken?

Supports, Accommodations, Adaptations

Universal

- Pair the rule symbol with corresponding verbal directions and provide guided practice throughout activities in order to give children practice in the correct actions.
- Incorporate frequent verbal statements to inform children that they are following the rules.

Identified/Specialized Supports

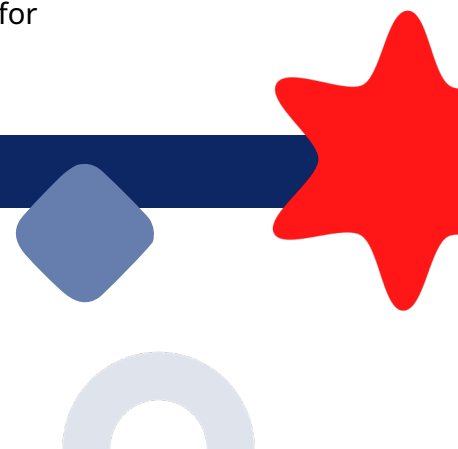
- Use individual rule cards for children who need to hold or be shown the cards as reminders.
- Use photos of the class or a specific child (individualized rules).
- Use social statements to make a story about following a specific rule.
- Incorporate a method for self-monitoring to let children know how they are doing. Provide a monitoring system.

Intensive Interventions

- Provide increased monitoring, repeated instructions and guided practice along with visuals that are designed to meet specific needs (photos, objects).
- Use an individualized schedule for delivery of reinforcement, starting with a few focus rules and brief time periods.
- Provide an individualized social script with photos to address specific needs for understanding expectations.

Resources

[General Classroom Rules with Photos - Vanderbilt](#)
[Specific Rules for Activities - Vanderbilt](#)
[Developing, Displaying and Using Classroom Rules](#)
[Providing Rule Reminders and Positive Feedback](#)



1d. Class displays are child-created and/or related to instructional units

Quality Indicators

- The classroom display changes throughout the year.
- The display is predominantly child created.
- There is variety in the display – some projects are academic such as writing or patterning, some projects are class projects and some are purely for exploration and creative expression.
- Adequate supports are provided for motor, organization and communication related to projects.
- Children are encouraged to make choices, perform independently and describe their projects.

Questions to Ask

- When are children allowed to create their own artwork or explore with creative materials?
- Are children allowed to create class projects that differ from the teacher provided samples?

Supports, Accommodations, Adaptations

Universal

- Discuss and display expectations for the art center and provide prompts and guided practice in selecting, using and cleaning up materials.
- Encourage children to work in pairs or small groups and to share ideas for open-ended projects.
- Allow extra time or an additional time period for children to be able to complete their projects.

Identified/Specialized Supports

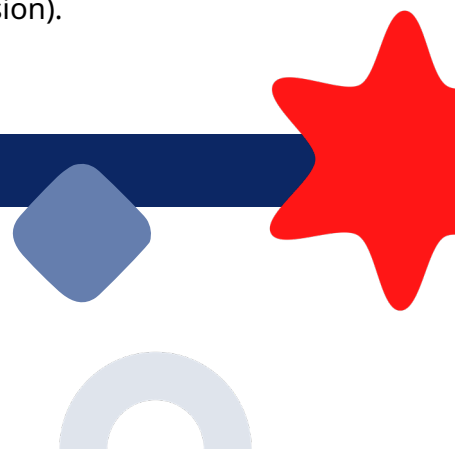
- Provide a model and step-by-step directions on a mini-schedule for the activity. Model each step of a teacher-directed project.
- Accommodate for sensory defensiveness by allowing a child to choose an alternative method of using materials.
- Use various placements of paper (horizontal,vertical) and provide a way to show the border of the artwork (tape, cookie sheet).
- Provide tools with various sizes and styles of grips and handles.

Intensive Interventions

- Provide strategies for children with communication difficulties to participate in labeling and describing their projects.
- Provide adapted materials for children with physical difficulties or disabilities.
- Consult and collaborate with service providers (ex. Occupational/Physical/Vision).

Resources

[Accommodations for the Use of Art and Motor Tools for Art Development in Young Children](#)
[Child-Centered and Instructional Room Displays](#)



1e. Additional visual supports are used to support instruction.

Quality Indicators

- Use pictures to support verbal communication such as stop signs, individualized picture schedules, scripted stories for social situations or first/then boards.
- Incorporate manipulatives to support stories, finger plays and pictures paired with written words.
- Label shelves for organization.
- Visual supports provide non-verbal reminders and can enhance oral language development.
- Children are provided practice in using schedules and in making choices in various settings.

Questions to Ask

- How do you incorporate visual supports to enhance instruction?
- How do you use picture cues to support children who are having difficulty with task completion, following the schedule or adhering to rules?
- Are they consistently used throughout the day, month or year?

Supports, Accommodations, Adaptations

Universal

- Post visuals in play centers and activity areas to support children in making choices, communicating desires and following routines.
- Provide visuals and manipulatives that support story comprehension, retelling and sequencing.
- Organize and clearly label shelves and provide visuals to support cleaning up and putting away materials.
- Provide visuals that remind children about social play and interacting with peers.

Identified/Specialized Supports

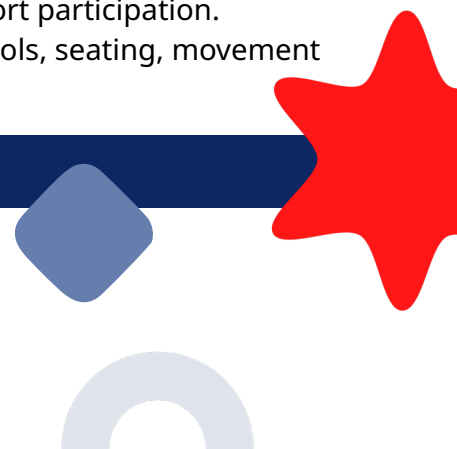
- Provide visuals that assist children in initiating and engaging in play scenarios and in using materials in the play centers.
- Pair visuals with instructions and guided practice during play centers and activity times.
- Pair photos of real objects with pretend toys and books to help children relate the information to real life.
- Provide communication visual prompts to help children engage with peers.
- Provide first-then strips and mini-schedules for play and activities.

Intensive Interventions

- Provide supports that are individualized for specific needs (visuals, photos, objects, tactile) to help children understand and relate to instruction.
- Incorporate multi-sensory strategies and increase prompting levels to support participation.
- Provide individualized communication systems and/or adapted materials (tools, seating, movement and sensory) to support participation.

Resources

[Literacy for Children with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss](#)
[Using Visuals to Support Instruction](#)
[Visual Supports](#)



2a. Classroom areas are organized, clearly defined and uncluttered.

Quality Indicators

- All areas of the room are clearly defined.
- Materials are organized and easily accessed by children and adults.
- Storage of materials not being used in centers or for current instructional units is minimal and not taking up classroom space.

Questions to Ask

- How often do you rotate materials?
- How much of the classroom materials are available for use by the children?
- Which materials in the classroom can only be accessed by adults?

Supports, Accommodations, Adaptations

Universal

- Define areas with signs (ex. centers, quiet/calm area, class library).
- Post signs for areas that are not accessible during parts of the day (ex. computer area “closed”).

Identified/Specialized Supports

- Use carpets, carpet squares and placement of furniture to further define areas of the room.
- Provide photos and visuals for students to help clarify and define specific areas (ex. photo of block area with directions for where to play with blocks).
- Provide visuals and instructions for putting away materials. Teach children how to match the labels on bins to the materials they are putting away.

Intensive Interventions

- Arrange the room so that there is ample space for navigating for children who have special equipment, wheelchairs, walkers and seating.
- Provide adaptations within each area for children with needs for tactile, visual, hearing, motor and/or communication supports.

Resources

[Considerations for Classroom Arrangement](#)
[Designing Environments - Head Start](#)
[Environmental Arrangements Checklist](#)
[Examples of Clearly Defined Areas in Preschool Classrooms](#)



2b. Shelves, bins and areas for child's items are labeled.

Quality Indicators

- Words, pictures and shape outlines may be used when labeling.
- Children know where to put materials when not in use.
- The organizational system for the room is taught to the children.

Questions to Ask

- How do children know where materials are stored or where to get desired materials?
- How do the children know where to put materials when they are done?

Supports, Accommodations, Adaptations

Universal

- Labels for each child's storage areas (for backpacks, lunchboxes and personal items) should include the child's name and a recognizable visual, such as a symbol or photo.

Identified/Specialized Supports

- Provide visual mini-schedules and/or social scripts to support children in the processes for locating, using and putting away materials.
- Include labels to indicate that some areas are "closed" and that some materials are "teacher" materials.
- Provide direct instruction and guided practice along with visual mini-schedules for children who are not yet familiar with the directions and actions of cleaning up and putting away items according to category.

Intensive Interventions

- Provide hooks, cubbies and bins that are accessible for children with motor, movement or positioning needs. Examples: bins with easily-removed lids, over-sized hooks for hanging items, a cubby on the end of a row so that it is accessible for a child using a wheelchair.
- Consider accommodations for vision, tactile and hearing when labeling the areas and the materials in the room.
- Provide labels related to safety. Emphasize and display safe use of furniture to decrease behaviors such as climbing on the shelves and tables.

Resources

[Examples of Labels in the Prekindergarten Classroom](#)
[Visual Support Guide - Head Start](#)



2c. Materials are of sufficient quantity, interest and variety to engage all children.

Quality Indicators

- Materials are stored on child-sized shelves.
- There are multiples of high interest class materials and shelves are stocked.
- There are plenty of activities available in the class that are rotated throughout the year, to keep children actively engaged and extend learning.
- Class materials are in good condition.

Questions to Ask

- How often are materials rotated?
- Do children have access to high interest toys during center time activities?
- Can the children access materials independently?

Supports, Accommodations, Adaptations

Universal

- Wide range of developmental levels.
- Wide and varied range of interests.
- Addressing all skill areas throughout the day.
- Variety in materials that provide: physical motor play, quiet time, pretend play, manipulative items, problem solving, individual as well as group activities.

Identified/Specialized Supports

- Provide visual scripts and guided interactive play to assist children who need support in understanding how to use some toys or in engaging in pretend play with peers.
- Increase engagement for all children through the use of peer buddies.
- Provide visuals that are specific to toys and materials for making choices and for communicating with peers during play.

Intensive Interventions

- Include toys that are cause and effect in nature and that have a variety of responses (ex. lighting up, making noise, moving) and that have a variety of required actions to activate.
- Include toys such as puzzles with large knobs and specialized materials with accommodations for tactile, vision, hearing needs.

Resources

[Adapting Children's Learning Opportunities](#)
[Examples for Supports and Accommodations for Toys and Materials](#)
[Promoting Play Opportunities for Children with Disabilities](#)
[Toys for Young Children by Age and Stage of Development](#)

