Using Activity Schedules to Increase Independence for Individuals with Autism

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Learning Objectives

• In this session, you can expect to:
  – gain understanding of current research involving the use of activity schedules for promoting independence by individuals with autism in regard to quantity, quality, and future possibilities
  – learn various uses of activity schedules to promote independence for individuals with autism during transitions and task analytic skills
  – explore various activity schedules and determine appropriate options based on individual needs (object vs. picture vs. written; high tech vs. low tech; etc.)

Activity Schedules

• What are they?
• Why are they used?
• Where do we use them?
• Who should use them?
Review of the Literature

• 27 articles
  – Used SSR design
  – Publication in peer reviewed journal
  – At least one participant with ASD
  – Investigated effects of VAS on on-task, on-schedule, and/or transition performance
  – Evaluated against Horner et al. (2005) criteria

Review of the Literature, cont.

• 12 qualified as either “high quality” or “acceptable”
  – 3 qualified as “high quality” meeting 100% of the Horner et al. (2005) criteria
    • Bryan & Gast (2000)
    • Chuhador & Diken (2011)
    • Morrison, Sainato, Benchaaban, & Endo (2002)
  – 9 qualified as acceptable

Review of the Literature, cont.

• 44 Participants
  – 38 male; 6 female
  – Age range: 3-21 years
• Settings
  – Majority in general education
  – Others: special education, therapy room, community, home
Review of the Literature, cont.

- Target Skills
  - Play/Leisure
  - Academic Centers/Tasks
  - Transitioning Between Classroom Activities
  - Cooking
  - Daily Living Skills

- Dependent Variables
  - On-task, On-schedule, Engagement, Independent transitions

- Schedule Type/Mode of Presentation
  - Pictures/Line Drawings
  - Videos

- Results
  - All 12 reported positive findings

Review of Literature - Discussion

- Preliminary findings
  - Results of the review suggest that there is a “moderate level” of evidence for using activity schedules to teach on-task, on-schedule, and transition behaviors

- Limitations to the studies
  - More than half of the original 27 studies included for analysis did not meet criteria for “acceptable” or “quality” studies.
  - The main reason was the lack of replication to establish external validity
Review of Literature - Discussion

• Directions for future research
  • Address the overall limitations to the participants and
    settings of the studies
  • Address students across the spectrum (e.g., Asperger’s,
    severe, Rett syndrome)
  • Address high school, preschool, community, and home
    settings
  • Explore the use of VAS for academic and daily living
    activities

• Implications for Practice
  • VAS have been used to teach a range of skills (e.g., on-task, on-
    schedule, transition) in a variety of environments. Increasingly,
    activity schedules are being used in general education settings
    as well as resource, community and home settings.
  • Systematic instruction may promote the success of VAS
  • Both picture and video activity schedules were effective for
    teaching a range of behaviors. In comparison studies, video
    activity schedules were more effective for most students than
    picture activity schedules.
  • Overall, results from the social validity measures were positive
  • Evaluate efficacy of the practice for individual students by
    collecting data

Variations

• Objects
• Line drawings
• Pictures
• Lists
• Embedding Videos
• Stationary vs. Mobile
• Static vs. Video
Assessing Effectiveness

- Assessing Appropriate Form
- Progress Monitoring
  - Desired behavior
  - Level of independence

Creating Schedules

- Age appropriateness
- Knowing where/when/how they will be used
- Setting up the environment
- Object/Picture
  - Choice
- Written List
  - Clear
  - Concise

Creating Schedules, cont.

- Using available materials
- Left to Right vs. Top to Bottom
- Number Activities to Display
- Consistency of Routine
  - Crossing pictures/words off
  - Taking pictures and transitioning
    - Designating place for pictures
    - Arrow moving to next activity
    - Other
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