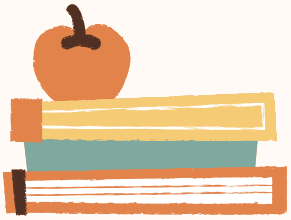

VISUAL ACTIVITY SCHEDULES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

A QUICK START GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

Adapted from Meadan, H., Ostrosky, M. M., Triplett, B., Michna, A., & Fettig, A. (2011). Using visual supports with young children with autism spectrum disorder. Teaching Exceptional Children, 43(6), 28-35.

WHAT IS A VISUAL ACTIVITY SCHEDULE?

A VISUAL ACTIVITY SCHEDULE shows a child **each step of an activity in order** using pictures, photos, or icons.

UNLIKE FIRST–THEN BOARDS (which show what happens next) visual activity schedules show **how to complete an activity from start to finish.**

They are especially helpful for routines with **more than one step.**

VISUAL ACTIVITY SCHEDULES HELP CHILDREN:

- understand what to do next
- remember steps of a routine
- stay engaged during activities
- rely less on adult verbal reminders
- complete activities more independently

Use a visual activity schedule when the goal is to help a child:

- complete **a multi-step routine** (be sure to keep the number of steps manageable!)
- stay engaged throughout an activity
- reduce frustration during routines
- increase independence

EXAMPLES IN PRESCHOOL SETTINGS

- **Handwashing:** wet hands→ soap → wash → rinse → dry → turn off water → all done
- **Cleanup:** pick up toys → put on shelf → all done
- **Art:** get crayons → sit → color → clean up → all done

HOW TO USE VISUAL ACTIVITY SCHEDULES

- Show the schedule before the activity begins
- Use short language and gestures
- Prompt the child to check the schedule between steps
- Let the child remove or mark off steps
- Show clearly when the activity is finished