Utilizing Visual Strategies to Facilitate Successful Participation in Academic Settings

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Guidelines for Success

• Make it - CONCRETE
• Present it - VISUALLY
• Give it - STRUCTURE
Problem: Motivation

- The student lacks motivation to complete work or participate in instructional activities.
Solutions

• Include elements of the child’s special interest(s) in the instruction
• Introduce visual components into the printed material or presentation
• Provide visual structure for task completion in step-by-step format
• Use a visual reinforcement system
Problem: Imitation

- The student does not work well in group situations. He has difficulty imitating or taking direction from peers and negotiating roles to complete a group project.
Solutions

• Identify and define roles for each group member
• Carefully select partners
• Coach peers who will work with student
• Develop a social story for group work
• Teach imitation, negotiation and compromise in social skills group
• Structure turn-taking for contribution of ideas
Problem: Perception

- The student’s ability to think imaginatively is impaired, leading to problems in creative writing
Solutions

- Give additional opportunities to write about real things or experiences
- Provide visual prompts: photos, picture-symbol, props
- Use sentence or paragraph starters
- Use graphic organizers: webs, Inspiration, Kidspiration
Problem: Perception

• The student fails to understand the impact of his actions or words on others
Solutions

- Use social stories involving actual and potential situations
- Involve the student in small-group social skills instruction
- Identify, define, and demonstrate emotions and reasons for responses
- Role play and practice appropriate interactions
Problem: Attention

- The student asks the same questions over and over - interrupting the lesson, frequently off topic
Solutions

• Set clear rules for asking questions during a lesson
• Support the rule visually for the class and/or individually for the student
• Set up an individual procedure for the student to ask questions
• Set aside time for the student to ask his questions
Problem: Memory

• The student has difficulty answering questions - especially "Why" questions
Solutions

• Turn questions into statements with a gap for the student to fill in
• Use fill in the blank format for tests
• Provide choices for both verbal and written questions: word banks, multiple choice
Problem: Sequencing

• The student has difficulty understanding multi-step verbal and written instructions.
Solutions

- Simplify language (use concrete language)
- Give instructions one step at a time
- Use objects and pictures to support understanding
- Create charts and checklists
- Use calendars for long-term assignments
Problem: Problem-solving

• The student is unable to ask for help when he/she needs it.
Solutions

• Teach him to recognize that he is “stuck”
• Identify the resources for each possible difficulty
• Role play and practice strategies
• Use peers in role play
• Develop social stories with the student
Problem: Language Processing

• The student may be a skilled reader-can decode words-but doesn’t fully understand the text (poor comprehension)
Solutions

• Draw attention to illustrations: “What’s happening in the picture?”
• Provide visual cues to aid in comprehension
• Make connections to real-life situations
• Allow reading in areas of interest and/or realistic/non-fiction topics
• Teach structured re-telling using “wh” questions
Problem: Language Processing

- The student has difficulty when words have multiple meanings or when different words have the same meaning.
Solutions

• Use concrete and practical examples to help the words make sense
• Use visuals to support explanations
• Create word banks and dictionaries for student’s personal use
• Use multiple-choice format when testing for comprehension
• Teach multiple meanings of words and how to make inferences
Consistency through Programming

• Planning!

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Positive Behavioral Supports

Do everything you can to make them successful, then REINFORCE the heck out of them.
Recommended Resources

1. **Visual Strategies for Improving Communication**, written by Linda A. Hodgon
2. **Solving Behavior Problems in Autism**, written by Linda A. Hodgon
3. **The New Social Story Book**, written by Carol Gray
4. **Teaching Children with Autism, Strategies to Enhance Communication and Socialization**, edited by Kathleen Quill
5. **Behavioral Interventions for Young Children with Autism**, written by Catherine Maurice
Catalog Resources

1. Future Horizons - (800) 489-0727
2. Autism Society of North Carolina - (919) 743-0204
3. Autism Resource Network, Inc. - (952) 988-0088
4. Generaction - (513) 561-2599
5. Intellitools - (800) 899-6687
6. Mayer-Johnson - (800) 588-4548