Structured Work Systems
Visually Organized Tasks

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Presentation Outline
Participants will have the opportunity to...

1. Gain a perspective on challenges that impact active engagement & where support is needed the most

2. Define structured work systems: visually based organizational strategies

3. Discuss steps to develop a meaningful work system

4. Share resources for future reference

Challenges that Impact Active Engagement
Neurodevelopmental difference that have a significant impact include...

- Predicting that others are a source of assistance
- Predicting that others are a source of engagement or pleasure
- Predicting the sequence of activities
- Predicting the steps within each activity
- Predicting what to say
- Predicting how to engage in activities
- Predicting how to regulate emotions in a manner sensitive to others
- Predicting the purpose of academic and social activities
As a Result, Students with Social Learning Differences ... 

• May not realize that others can be a source of help limited
  – limited initiations and reduced rate of spontaneous communication

• May not realize that others can be a source of emotional support & engagement
  – difficulties responding to bids for interaction and a limited range of communication for social purposes

• May not realize that others are a source of information
  – the use of unconventional gestures, language, and coping strategies as opposed to those learned through social imitation,

As a Result, Students with Social Learning Differences...

• May not know what to expect
  – difficulties with transitions initiated by others,

• May not be motivated to engage in tasks initiated by others
  – as they may not be able to determine the steps within the task as well as why they are being asked to engage in the task

• May have limited trust in others
  – heightened anxiety, frequent activity avoidance and/or aggression toward caregivers, teachers and peers; miscommunication and lack of predictability often leads to a history of repeated failure in social situations and negative emotional memory.

Where Support is Needed the Most 
From Early to Advanced Development

• Active Task Engagement
• Transitions
• Emotional Expression & Coping

Why is it difficult? + What can we do? = Competent & Successful Individual
### Active Task Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why is it difficult?</th>
<th>What can we do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Hard time predicting clear beginning and end of task</td>
<td>• Infuse motivating and meaningful topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• May not be motivated because results of task may not be rewarding</td>
<td>• Provide supports to define steps in a task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What’s in it for me factor</td>
<td>• Modify sensory properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Predicting others are a source of assistance</td>
<td>• Provide support to foster child’s success with the task and visuals for functional communication</td>
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### Transition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why is it difficult?</th>
<th>What can we do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Hard time predicting what we are going to do</td>
<td>• Provide visual supports to enhance smooth transitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• May not know what to expect</td>
<td>• Provide time for child to solve problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Might not be using self-talk strategies to transition</td>
<td>• Provide time for child to complete activities at own pace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Verbal language and gestures are often not helpful</td>
<td>• Infuse motivating and meaningful topics in upcoming activities to increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Physical guidance can pose an additional threat</td>
<td>engagement and motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use visuals to define steps within upcoming tasks to enhance language for self-regulation</td>
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### Emotional Expression & Coping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why is it difficult?</th>
<th>What can we do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• May not have had many positive emotional experiences with others</td>
<td>• Inhibit our initial “wired” reaction to a student’s behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Often don’t perceive others as a source of help, social engagement, or emotional assistance</td>
<td>• Attune to the student’s emotional expressions appropriate to child’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Often feel vulnerable and stressed</td>
<td>developmental level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• May become disinterested in people and show decreased rates of initiations, particularly social functions</td>
<td>• Model appropriate behavior when child uses inappropriate behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use visual supports to remind individuals how to express emotions and to provide choices of coping strategies to enhance regulation</td>
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</tbody>
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Active Task Engagement: Work Systems

• Individual work systems promote independence by
  – Organizing tasks and activities in ways that are comprehensible

• Work systems are visually structured sequences that provide opportunities to practice
  – Skills
  – Concepts
  – Activities

Three Components of Work System

1. **Instructions**
   a) Provide information for students regarding how to complete the task
      i. Materials connected to activity define the task
      ii. Jigs – show visually where materials should be placed
      iii. Written instructions
      iv. Samples of finished product

2. **Organization**

3. **Clarity**
Three Components of Work System

1. Instructions

2. Organization
   a) Simplification of tasks
   b) Only necessary materials are present
      i. Provides fewer opportunities for distraction
      ii. Less opportunity for off-task actions
   c) Written list of necessary materials, as appropriate

3. Clarity

Three Components of Work System

1. Instructions

2. Organization

3. Clarity
   a) Limit the materials on work surface areas
   b) Highlight important details with color
   c) Picture, number, word labels
   d) Routine/sequences

Recommended Classroom Learning Areas:
Preschool, Elementary, and Secondary Classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preschool</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>One-to-one lessons</td>
<td>One-to-one lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books/listening</td>
<td>Independent work</td>
<td>Independent work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross motor</td>
<td>Group activities</td>
<td>Group activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-one lessons</td>
<td>Prevocational skills</td>
<td>Vocational skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent work</td>
<td>Self-help/hygiene</td>
<td>Self-help/hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free choice/play</td>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>Leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group activities (circle time, snack, etc.)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Toileting/hygiene</td>
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Note: Summarized from Schopler, Mesibov, and Hearsey, 1995
Secondary Classroom Structure

Visual Supports: Work Systems

Questions to Consider when Developing Work Systems

- **What** activities to complete?
- **How many** activities to complete?
- How the individual will know **when the work is finished**?
- **What will happen after** the work is complete?

Visual Supports: Work Systems

- When using a work system, the individual moves to the designated workspace or the organization systems is placed in student’s workspace
- Individual then completes the following steps:
  - Views the list of activities to complete
  - Initiates the first activity
  - Places it in the work area
  - Completes the activity
  - Places the activity in the area designated for complete work
  - Moves on to the next task until items/tasks are “finished”
Work System Flow

Types of Work Systems

- Left to right – Finished box
- Matching (Color, Shape, Alphabet or Numbers)
- Written System
- Folders
- File System
Visual Supports: *Work Systems*

Visual Support: *Work System*

Visual Supports: *Work System*
Visual Support: Work System

Visual Supports: Work System

Visual Supports: Work System
Visual Supports: Work System

Why use a work system?

Because...

– It offers a tool for organization so individuals can focus on important details
– It supports individuals to maintain attention to tasks
– It enhances generalizing skills
Visual Supports: Work System
QUIZ - True or False

- Highlight important information and help limit distractions
- Offer an external organization tool for individuals who may have trouble organizing materials
- Provide a clear and predictable sequence of activities to complete
- Limit the need for verbal instructions
- Limit the need for constant adult support & prompting
- Promote independence
- Can be used across environments to promote generalization of skills

Work System: Task
Instruction, Organization, Clarity

Work System: Task
Instruction, Organization, Clarity
Illustrate the concepts of House, Town, State, Country, Continent, Planet.
Work System: Task Instruction, Organization, Clarity

1. Consider the Learner & the Environment
2. Create the Work System (Task Analysis too)
3. Teach/Monitor
4. Reinforce Participation & Have Fun!

Recommendations for Using Work Systems

- Avoid taking task apart in front of the learner
- Base task objectives on individual learner and his/her educational plan
- Infuse motivating or special interests into the tasks
- Make it meaningful and value the work the completed by the learner
Work Systems Review

- Visually structured sequences that provide opportunities to practice previously taught skills, concepts, or activities
- Can be used across settings, ages, developmental levels
- Can incorporate bins, drawers, matching and/or can include written lists, folders, binders, and many other materials
- Promote independence from adult support
- Three components include: instructions, organization, and clarity

NOTE: If an individual needs adult support to complete the work system, the work activities may be too difficult, the system may need to be adapted, or the individual may need additional teaching (reconsider the task analysis and the ‘just right’ skill)

References