

Behavior Supports During Remote Learning

Guidance for Families and Caregivers

Background/Purpose

This guidance is specific to the period of time in which students are engaged in remote learning due to COVID-19. Many parents are seeking assistance to continue behavior supports to manage challenging behaviors at home during remote learning. The goal of the guidance provided in this document is to help parents and caregivers create a productive, safe, and healthy learning environment that is manageable for the student and the caregiver.

Supporting Positive Behavior at Home During Remote Learning

As parents and caregivers, we must consider how these changes impact our student's learning, including fears and/or anxiety about COVID-19, the health and well-being of family members, and significant change in all routines. We can easily become overwhelmed with the changes in our own lives and face significant challenges managing and supporting our children's learning. Remember to be patient and compassionate with our children and ourselves, as your teachers, paraprofessionals, and related services providers work together to support your child's learning.

Your child may have a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), based on data that was collected while students were physically in school. Families should request access to their child's BIP from the teacher if they do not already have this information. It is important to remember that challenging behaviors exhibited while students are home may be very different than at school, given the very large change in the learning environment from school to home. You should continue to work with the school team to support your child's learning, make progress toward IEP goals, and address challenging behaviors. Your child does not have to have a BIP to benefit from supports described in this document.

A Team Approach: How Families and Schools Stay Connected

Seek support from your child's current teacher/s, paraprofessional, and/or related service providers as appropriate. Teachers and paraprofessionals can communicate with you and your child via telephone and/or video conference. Share with the school staff what the daily routine and structure is at home, including what is currently going well at home, and what may be interfering with remote learning. During these conversations, ask questions about your child's learning habits, preferred routines, likes and dislikes, as well as which supports worked well at school. Ask your child's teacher and/or paraprofessional how to implement similar supports and interventions at home. Schedule regular communication check-ins with your student's teachers to share progress at home.

Tools and Strategies for Behavior Support during Remote Learning

In consultation with your child's teacher, paraprofessional, and other service providers, create a plan of behavior support for your child's remote learning at home. Behaviors can communicate an underlying need, or function, and can tell us what a child wants or doesn't want in a given situation. As situations change, behaviors may change as well. Therefore, supports and interventions that were useful in school may need to be adjusted or changed to support the new learning environment at home. The important thing is to try to observe when your child is motivated to engage in remote learning, and when they are frustrated or off-task. Your child's teacher can support you to collect information about appropriateness of the chosen intervention and adjust if needed.

- Create a structured schedule of daily routines across the entire day (consistent morning routines, during the remote learning school day, as well as evening and night). Include your whole family in creating these schedules, and post them in visible locations (for example, on the refrigerator or in common areas).
- Some students may need frequent breaks in order to stay focused and complete work, consider setting up a break schedule so the student knows they can continue to take breaks and they know what they can do on breaks e.g. give acceptable choices, consider movement breaks.
- Having realistic and age appropriate expectations for your child is important. Remember that your child is unique and has their own learning style and needs. Consider the age of your child; many students have difficulty sitting for lessons, especially during remote learning. Younger children may need a movement break, or hands on activity to supplement the learning, while older students may need peer interaction. For middle and high school students, the peer/social world is significant in their learning; consider opportunities for safe, virtual interaction with peers.
- Consult with your child’s current teacher regarding current management needs in the IEP, such as cues and prompts (e.g. verbal or visual, countdowns, timers).
 - For directions and examples of First/Then Boards, refer to appendix.
 - For directions and examples of visual schedules and routines, refer to appendix.
- Breaking assignments into manageable parts for your child is a strategy teachers use to reduce frustration for students and support success. If assignments have multiple parts, consider setting a goal with your child to complete one part of the assignment, give them time to process the information and formulate an answer, and provide a clear explanation. Again, consult with your child’s teacher, paraprofessional and service providers.
- If your child begins to escalate behaviors (e.g. meltdown, yelling, expressing frustration, shutting down/withdrawn), provide time to self-regulate, give time and space to calm down. Think about your interaction, using neutral tone, in calm voice, without judgement. When your child is engaged and participating, remember to offer praise, specific to task and behavior whenever there is opportunity. Catch your child doing the right thing, or “being good.” Consistency is important.
- When offering choices, limit choices in number that are also acceptable to you. This can help to reduce power struggles by giving children a sense of control. For example, if you want your child to clean their room you can give them a choice of what to put away first and provide them with praise or a reward for completing the task.
- Stay calm – in addition to modeling self-control for your child, it will reinforce that we are going to problem solve together. Even if you need to have consequences for your child’s behavior, it should be done in a meaningful way that reminds them of appropriate behavior that you would have liked to have seen.
- During this time, remember to practice self-care and be kind to yourself. If learning did not go well today, focus on what did go well. (Yes, something did go well! Even if it doesn’t feel like it.)

Tomorrow is another day to try again or make a change. Use the team supporting you and your child, contact your child's teacher, paraprofessional, and related service providers for ideas and support.

Resources for Parents to Support Remote Instruction

Appendix of At Home Resources to Support Remote Instruction

First/Then Boards

Use: A First/Then board is visual support used to communicate a sequence of two tasks. First/Then boards can be helpful to break down a challenging task and may motivate your child to complete a less preferred task (such as academic assignments or chores), knowing that a motivating activity or reward will follow.

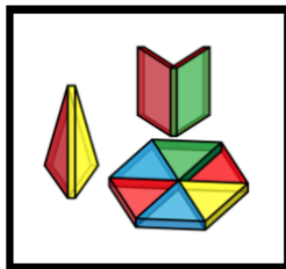
What is a First/Then board?

A First/Then board is a simple visual used to communicate a schedule. A First/Then board can be used to help children complete an activity. The "First" is a less desirable activity or the work that you are requesting of your child. The "Then" is a desirable activity or the child's choice or reward. The idea is to show your child a desirable activity or item is available after completing the task/activity that they may not want to do.

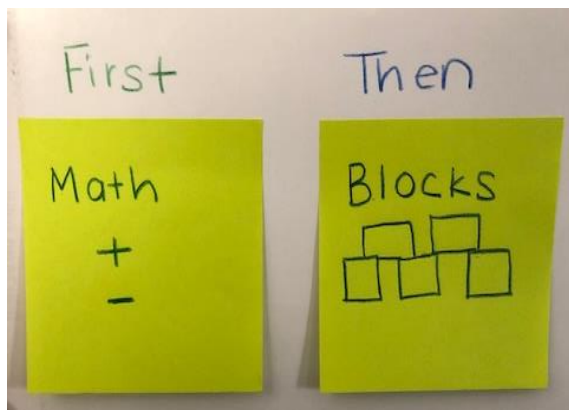
First



Then



How can I create one at home?



A First/Then can be presented through words or pictures, on the I-pad, a dry erase board or even a piece of paper:



How do I teach it?

- Draw a picture and/or write a word that represents the “First” and “Then” activity. Place the board in front of your child and say “First _____, then _____”. It may be helpful to point to the pictures/words as you are saying it.
- When the “First” task is complete, point back at the board and say “All done_____, now _____!” It may be helpful to say it with excitement- your child just completed a task! You can also symbolize the completion of the activity by turning the picture over, putting a check mark or crossing out the activity.

Some Helpful Tips:

- It may be helpful to introduce the First/Then board for tasks that your child likes and can do successfully such as First : Eat lunch - Then: Play with blocks. This will help your child understand the concept of First-Then and the sequence of events.
- A First/Then board is best used proactively, in other words, introduce the board before presenting the less desirable task or activity. Symbolize the completion of the activity by turning the picture over, putting a check mark or crossing out the activity.
- If your child is having a difficult time following the schedule or is resistant to starting the activity, refer back to the board. Point to the board and say “First _____, Then_____”. Use simple directives and focus your attention on the board (instead of their behavior).
- Remember to take a deep breath and take some time for yourself! This is tough time and you are doing the best that you can!

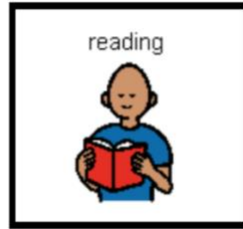
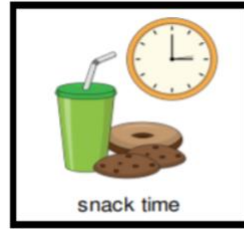
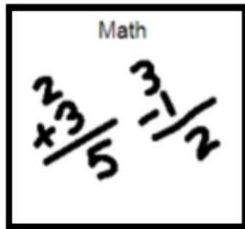
Visual Activity Schedule

Use: A visual activity schedule is a graphic representation of a series of activities or events. Visual schedules can help build structure and routine, make transitions more predictable and may help to

increase independence.

What is a Visual Activity Schedule?

A visual activity schedule is a series of pictures or drawings to sequence activities or events in a child's day. A visual activity schedule will help to create structure, ease the transition between activities and alleviate anxiety as your child will know what to anticipate next.



How can I create one at home?

A visual activity schedule can be presented using an iPad or computer, dry erase board or pen and paper. After gathering materials, decide how to break down the activities and the manner in which you will symbolize each activity. For example, for early learners it may be best to use a photograph, illustration or real objects. For others, simple stick figures and line drawings would suffice.



How do I teach it?

- When you want to teach or review the schedule you can say "Let's check our schedule. First we have _____, then _____, next _____ and finally _____". It is helpful to point to each item as you say them aloud.
- For many children, it is helpful to include them in the creating of the schedule. Providing your child a choice of activities or the order of some activities will help to increase motivation and adherence to the schedule.
- It may be helpful to decide with your child the form in which you will indicate the completion of the activity. This can be done by placing a check mark next to the activity, crossing it off, or by turning the pictures over. As you complete the activities you can say "Great work _____! All done _____, now it's time for _____."

Some Helpful Tips:

- Keep the schedule in a conspicuous place preferably in close proximity to your child.
- Involve your child in the monitoring of their schedule by having them point to the pictures or say the next activity.
- Sometimes things change! Be sure to include your child in any changes to the schedule by allowing them to rearrange the activities.
- Praise your child for following the schedule and offer a motivating reinforcement for completing the entire schedule.