'First-Then' Board

What is a 'first-then' board?

A 'first-then' board is a visual support that includes objects, photos, pictures, line drawings or text and is used to provide information to your child around an expectation. The 'first' section involves a task that your child is expected to complete, and the 'then' section should always be a preferred item/activity (reinforcer) for successful completion of the indicated task. For example, 'first' John needs to sit at table and 'then' he can play with Play-Doh.

Why might you use a 'first-then' board?

Many children with ASD are difficult to motivate and may struggle to understand some of the demands and expectations within the home, school and community, however they tend to have a strong ability to understand visual information. A 'first-then' board addresses the areas of difficulty while capitalizing on this strength. By visually representing the expectation and the preferred item/activity to follow, it may increase the child's understanding and motivate them to complete the task/activity.

When could you use a 'first-then' board?

A 'first-then' board is a strategy that you may use *before* a potentially challenging situation occurs with your child. This strategy can be used to clarify expectations by showing your child what first needs to be completed before gaining access to one of their preferred items/activities.

Questions to consider when implementing a 'first-then' board:

- What is the goal of the 'first-then' board?
- What is your child's visual recognition level (e.g., objects, photos, pictures, line drawings or text)?
- How will the 'then' be determined (i.e., will you choose or will your child?)?
- How are you going to teach the 'first-then' board?
- Is the strategy appropriate for your child's developmental level?
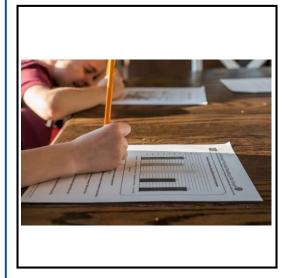- Where will the 'first-then' board be placed?

Before implementing any strategy, remember to:

1) Assess – What is your child currently able to do?
2) Goal – What is a specific goal for your child to work towards?
3) Strategies – How will you teach your child to reach the goal?
4) Monitor – How will you know if the teaching strategies are working?

Sample:

FIRST

THEN

Always a task

Always a reinforcer

References:

Hodgdon, L. (1995). *Visual strategies for improving communication practical supports for school and home,* Troy: QuirkRoberts Publishing.

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