

How to Develop and Implement Visual Supports

Visual Supports are consistently recommended as a support strategy for individuals with challenges in communication, sensory processing and in executive functioning.

These types of supports can be effective tools to:

- address concept development
- improve communication
- create successful social interactions
- increase independence

Visual supports can assist an individual to:

- Learn more quickly
- Decrease aggression, frustration and anxiety
- Increase communication both receptively and expressively
- Make choices
- Learn and complete tasks by themselves
- Cope with changes
- Prepare for transitions
- Read body language and facial gestures
- Learn organizational skills
- Understand and interpret information
- Increase social understanding and social awareness
- Access the general education curriculum

Visual Supports allow individuals to better understand:

- * What to do
- * What will happen
- * When and where activities will occur
- * People locators
- * How to complete tasks and activities
- * How and when to transition
- * What and how to make choices
- * How to express emotions
- * How to socially interact with adults and peers

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The Spectrum of Visual Supports

I. **Visual Schedules**

- To provide a clear understanding of what will happen
- To provide a clear understanding of the sequence of events
- To provide a way for an individual to remember what will occur

II. **Activity Schedule**

- To provide a clear understanding of each step of a task or activity
- To provide a clear understanding of when a task or activity begins and ends

III. **Social Supports**

- To assist an individual to understand a social situation
- To provide a way for an individual to remember the social expectations

IV. **Communication Supports**

- To assist in receptive language
- To provide a means for an individual to assert or express an opinion
- To assist in the expression of emotion

V. **Choice Boards**

- To provide a means for an individual to clarify desires, wants and needs

VI. **Time Supports**

- To provide a clear understanding of the length of an activity
- To provide a clear understanding of the concept of "clock time"
- To provide a clear understanding of the month, day of the week and date

VII. **Location Supports**

- To provide an understanding of what is expected in specific areas of a room (or space)
- To provide an understanding of the location of an activity or the function of the space
- To provide visual organization for predictability, clarity and calmness

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VISUAL SUPPORT GUIDELINES

The key to visual supports is to **individualize the supports to the unique learning style** of the person that the schedule is being designed to support.

It is helpful to spend some time **planning your visual supports** prior to placing great time and energy in the creation of the items. Assessment questions on page 5 are offered to assist in the planning process.

Materials that may be used for Visual Supports

a) *Objects* -

- most concrete type of Visual Support
- requires using actual items to represent what is occurring in a person's day.
- for example:
 - a. Snack - a cup
 - b. Recess - a jump rope (or a piece of a jump rope)
 - c. Bathroom - a paper towel or a piece of toilet paper
 - d. Block Area - a Lego
 - e. Car Ride - a key
 - f. Coloring - a crayon
 - g. Breakfast - a piece of a cereal box
 - h. Fine Motor - block or puzzle piece

b. *Photographs* -

- Polaroid, digital, or 35 millimeter camera may be used
- Remember:
 - a. Limit or no background clutter - use a blank wall or empty table as the background to the photo
 - b. Focus on "critical element" - take an "exact" photo of the item or person
 - c. When photographing a person, provide a "prop" to represent what the person does
 - d. Always put the person's name on the photo
 - e. Use photos that clearly indicate the exact location that each activity occurs (for example, one table in the room may be used for snack, fine motor activities and small group).
 - f. Computer software can be purchased that provides photographs of common items. (*Picture This - 3.0 version runs on Mac and PC-*)

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c. *Picture Symbolics* -

- Black and white or color
- Generally the most popular materials used to create visual supports
- Picture Symbolics are pictures (not photographs) that represent that represent persons, activities, places, etc.
- May be a close likeness to the object or person, generic , or a symbol

- Example of a variety of software available:
 - ✓ ***Boardmaker:***
(color and black & white)- Available in many SERRC centers for loan. May be purchased through Mayer-Johnson at 1-800-588-4548. Mayer-Johnson also makes stickers and books (Picture Communication Symbols Books)

 - ✓ ***Writing with Symbols:***
(color and black & white)- Available through Mayer-Johnson at 1-800-588-4548 or www.Mayer-Johnson.com

 - ✓ ***Picture Exchange Communication Cards:***
These cards, some are on heavy cardboard or on plastic, are used specifically with the PECS system. The pictures on these cards are from the Boardmaker Program or from the Picture Communication Symbols Books

 - ✓ ***Clip Art:***
Use pictures and symbols from the galleries included in many word processing programs or commercially available to purchase

d. *Written Word-*

- Supports are presented in written format only or with minimal visual support

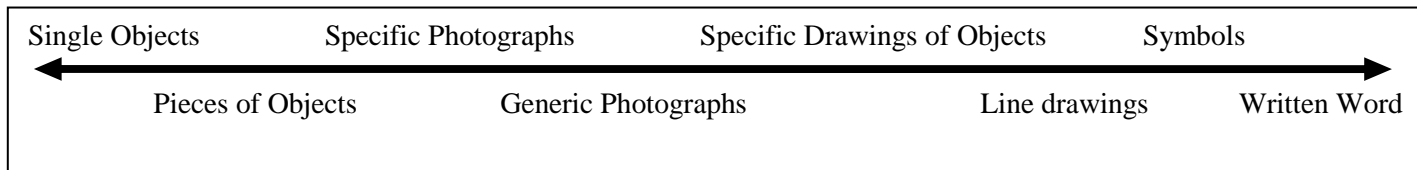
- use word(s) appropriate to the individual's reading level

- Consider -
 - a. size of the print
 - b. color of the print
 - c. consistent use of words (for example - use the word "bathroom" to always represent going to the toilet)

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Developing Visual Supports: Informal Assessment

1. Assess what types of visual supports the individual currently uses (formally or informally) in order to understand what is happening in his/her environment, as well as to communicate needs, wants and desires. This information will help identify the type of materials that should be used to create a variety of visual supports.



- This schematic illustrates a continuum of the types of materials or images that may be used to create visual supports.
- Use this continuum to identify where the individual is demonstrating competence and what other tools or materials may also be useful to present as visual supports to the individual

Guiding Questions

..... to assist in the selection of appropriate materials

- a. How does the individual react to *verbal* directions, conversation, instruction? Does he respond? Ignore? Follow the direction? Partially? Demonstrate understanding of the verbal instruction?

Does the individual:

- b. Read or does he show interest in words/letters? Does he read at a specific reading level? Specific words? With comprehension?
- c. Attend to photographs? What type of photographs?
- d. Recognize pictures (not photographs)?
- e. Recognize line drawings?
- f. Recognize symbols?
- g. Use objects to transition?
- h. Use objects to assist in understanding the intent of communication?
- i. Make choices using objects? Pictures? Symbols? Does not make choices.

2. Describe characteristics of objects/environment to which the individual will attend. This information will help identify specific qualities to utilize in order to assist the individual to attend to visual supports and/or how to present visual supports.
 - a. Does the individual focus on objects with many colors or those which are black and white?
 - b. Does the individual focus or ignore auditory input? What type? (music, language, other sounds)?
 - c. Does the individual focus most readily on people, objects, pictures, or activity?
 - d. Does the individual need to touch in order to explore or understand?

How to Develop and Implement Visual Supports

3. Identify which activities the individual has difficulty initiating or completing?

Does the individual:

- a. consistently have difficulty with specific tasks or activities?
- b. have difficulty with tasks that require multiple steps (vs. one- or two-step tasks?)
- c. consistently have difficulty in specific environments?
- d. perform more successfully with specific support staff?
- e. require periodic verbal prompts or cues in order to continue, understand what to do, or remember the next step?

This information will help identify the most important times, places or activities to provide visual supports. (NOTE: Individuals may require visual supports in other situations, especially when there are changes in the environment, routine, or the individual.)

4. Making choices can be difficult for an individual. Assess choice-making ability and the types of supports which may assist in successful choice-making.

- a. Is the individual able to make a choice when presented with multiple options, or is the individual more successful when given only two or three options?
- b. When is the individual motivated to make a choice? (This will assist in targeting opportunities for choice-making supports and situations where individual may make frequent attempts to choose)

5. **What** resources do you have available to create Visual Supports?

This information will help you identify what may currently be available to begin the process. Consider both material resources and "people" resources.

6. Utilize the information from the assessment to decide the type, quality, and focus of the visual supports that will be designed for the specific individual.

*Note: Visual support types may be combined when an individual reacts positively to several modalities. For example: picture symbols of the major activities may be combined with photographs of specific people. **OR** a word schedule may be combined with pictures to teach a new or unfamiliar word.*

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GUIDING QUESTIONS	STUDENT INFORMATION
<p>How does the student react to verbal directions, conversation, instruction?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does he respond? Ignore? • Follow the direction? Partially? • Demonstrate understanding of the verbal instruction? • Only understand familiar instructions? • Follows 1/2/3 step verbal instruction? • Does it make a difference in group or 1:1? 	
<p>Does the student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read or does he show interest in words/letters? • Does he read at a specific reading level? • Specific words? • With comprehension? 	
<p>Does the student attend to photographs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What type of photographs? Must they be of the exact item or person or can representative/generic photographs be used? 	
<p>Does the student recognize pictures (other than photographs)?</p>	
<p>Does the student recognize the meaning of line drawings?</p>	
<p>Does the students recognize and understand the meaning of symbols/icons?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What type of symbols/icons are used? 	
<p>Does the student use objects in order to transition ?</p>	
<p>Does the student use objects in order to understand the intent of a communication?</p>	
<p>Does the person make choices? What does the person use to indicate a choice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objects? • Pictures? • Symbols? • Other? 	

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Describe characteristics of objects/environment to which the individual will attend.
This information will help identify specific qualities to utilize in order to assist the individual to attend to visual supports and/or how to present visual supports.

Does the student focus and have meaningful engagement with objects or material which are :

- Black and White?
- Colorful?
- Many colors?
- Patterns?
- Specific colors?

Does the student :

- Appear to benefit from auditory input?
- Avoid auditory input?
- Avoid complex auditory input?
- What types of sounds are appealing?
Disturbing?

Does the student focus and engage with:

- People?
- Objects?
- Pictures?
- Activities?

Does the student have a desire or need to touch in order to understand and gain information?

Identify the most important times, places or activities to provide visual supports.
(Students may require visual supports in other situations, especially when there are changes in the environment, routine, or the individual.)

Identify specific activities or tasks where the student consistently has difficulty?

Does the student have difficulty with tasks that have multiple steps? How many?

Does the student have difficulty focusing and concentrating in specific environments?

Is the student more successful with specific support staff? If so, what types of supports does this person provide?

What activities require periodic verbal prompts or cues in order that he student continues, understands, or remembers the next steps?

How to Develop and Implement Visual Supports

Assess choice making ability and identify the types of supports that will assist the student in successful choice making

Review information on choice making.

- How does the student indicate a choice? With Object? Photograph? Icon? Verbally? Eye-Gaze?
- Does not make a choice when presented.
- Has little opportunity to make choices.
- Does not care...will accept or refuse any item or activity offered.

From how many item/picture/icon/verbal choices is the student able to successfully make a choice?

- One? Two? Three? Unlimited?

When does the student make choices?

- Are these choices that are offered?
- Are these choices initiated by the student?

Putting the Information Together

Review the information collected to describe the type(s) of visual supports that will be needed and how these may be created and presented for the identified student.

How to Develop and Implement Visual Supports

I. Visual Schedules

- Provide a clear understanding of what will happen
- Provide a clear understanding of the sequence of events
- Provide a way for an individual to remember what will occur

How To Create Visual Schedules

1. Choose the materials and/or medium to use (objects, photographs, pictures)
2. Put objects, photos, pictures on cardboard (or stiff paper)
3. Pictures should be laminated or covered with contact paper (be cautious, some individuals may attend to the shiny surface of the lamination)
4. Use magnets, "Velcro", "Sticky-Tack", glue to affix objects, photographs, pictures
5. When using "Velcro", be sure to consistently determine which texture (rough vs. smooth) goes on the pictures and what texture goes on the boards
6. Use clear "pockets" (such as business card holders) that have an adhesive backing
7. Create multiple sets of Visual Schedules (in case pictures/photos/objects are lost, destroyed) to use in all environments

How To Present And Locate Visual Schedules

1. Present Visual Schedules in a consistent manner
 - a) Consider presenting in a vertical format (and present Choice Boards in a horizontal format)
 - b) Pair the written word with objects, pictures, and photographs
 - c) When using multiple schedules, use the same picture to represent the same item/activity
2. Present Visual Schedules -
 - On a stiff board
 - On a large key ring
 - In a daily planner
 - On blackboard
 - In photo albums
 - In a notebook
 - On dry erase boards
3. Provide "portable" visuals schedules that are easily moveable from environment to environment.

How to Develop and Implement Visual Supports

4. Place Visual Schedules:
 - On the individual's desk or work area
 - On a portable board
 - Posted in the classroom
 - Near areas of transition

5. When presenting the schedule, consider the following:
 - a) Present the morning schedule (until lunch) and then the afternoon schedule
 - b) Break down a.m. and p.m. activities into two or three sections
 - c) Break the day into four quarters. Provide each quarter of the day.
 - d) Present items in small, incremental steps, that is, one, two, and/or three at a time
 - e) Some students need a simple schedule that uses two pictures to show "First _____, then _____".
 - f) When indicated, present one item at a time by either placing one item on each page of a photo book, a board, or by showing the individual the item

How To Utilize Visual Schedules

1. Review the schedule daily . Prepare for changes that may occur monthly, weekly or daily

2. Create a visual symbol for "something new" or "special". This will prepare the individual that there will be something "different"

3. Create and introduce visual items that are special changes that occur on a regular but not daily basis:
 - Therapies
 - Field trips
 - Parties
 - Haircuts
 - Speakers
 - Doctor appointments
 - Visitors
 - Early Dismissal

4. Prepare for cancellations (of an activity or person) by creating a symbol:
 - Use the universal "no" sign (⊞)
 - Large Red "X"

5. Visual Schedules may include an indicator of "clock time" when:
 - "actual times" that events occur are accurate and not changing
 - using analog vs. digital clocks (or a combination)
 - prioritize "meaningful" times of the day (coming to school, lunch, going home, etc.)

How to Develop and Implement Visual Supports

Main Schedules and Mini-Schedules

- * The Main Schedule will provide information for the entire group
- * Additional assistance may be needed for those individuals who need more visual support.
- * Use a Main Schedule for the entire group and smaller, individualized schedules (mini-schedules) for each individual
- * Mini-schedules are sometimes referred to as Activity Schedules (*for more information see next section on Activity Schedules*).
- * Use the Mini-schedule to facilitate:
 - a) A visual connection during "entire group or class" activities
 - b) Information regarding specific individual activities within the "Main Schedule"
 - c) The order of daily transitions (for example, where to go during "Center Times"
 - d) What activity the individual is expected to participate in during specific times of the day
 - e) What activities are available at the workstation

Other Important Considerations

1. Once an individual knows his daily routine, **keep the Visual Schedule available** to:
 - a) Allow the individual to "glance" at the schedule to assure them that nothing has changed
 - b) Periodically check for any changes
 - c) Transition supports
2. A Visual Schedule should NOT be considered a "crutch" but as a **tool to build independence**
Consider:
 - Modifying the schedule so that it is:
 - a) Smaller
 - b) Changes as the individual's environment changes
 - c) Uses more or less words
 - d) Uses more or less visual symbols
 - e) Portable
 - f) Created and maintained by the individual
3. REMEMBER:
 - Make changes **slowly**
 - Make changes **gradually**
 - Make changes in **small incremental steps**

How to Develop and Implement Visual Supports

II. ACTIVITY SCHEDULES

- To provide a clear understanding of each step of a task or activity
- To provide a clear understanding of when a task or activity begins and ends

How To Create An Activity Schedule

1. After the assessment (see above), select the type of medium(s) that will be used to create an Activity Schedule
2. Create the materials for the Activity Schedule using Visual Supports guidelines
3. Create multiple sets of choices (in case pictures/photos/objects are lost, destroyed) to use in all environments
4. Place the Activity Schedule, including the icons/objects that represent the steps of the activity, in all of the locations where the task will take place.
5. Create a portable Activity Schedule. This allows Activity Schedules to be created quickly in any location.
6. Create a "Picture Library".
A place where frequently used picture/object steps are organized for easy access
Consider:
 - * On the back of a cabinet or a closet door
 - * On the back of the Activity Schedule board
 - * Alphabetically filed in a file box
 - * In a notebook
7. Pre-made or permanent Activity Schedules may be created for tasks or activities where the steps do not change. Examples: "Locker Routine" (this may change when the weather changes), "Getting Dressed", "Arrival to Class", "Washing Your Hair", etc.
8. Mini-schedules are considered Activity Schedules. Mini-schedules are used when the individual requires more information or direction than is available on the Main Schedule. For example: Gym Class may be the Main Schedule activity, but in the gym there is a Mini- or Activity Schedule that assists the individual to understand exactly what to do and in what order gym activities will occur.

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How To Present And Locate Activity Schedules

1. Present Activity Schedules in a consistent manner
 - a. Consider presenting in a vertical format (and present Choice Boards in a horizontal format)
 - b) Pair written word with objects, pictures, and photographs
 - c) When using multiple schedules, use the same picture and words to represent the same item/activity

2. Present Activity Schedules -

On a stiff board	In photo albums
On a large key ring	In a notebook
In a daily planner	On dry erase boards
On blackboard	

3. Provide "portable" Activity Schedules that are easily moveable from environment to environment.

4. Place Activity Schedules -

➤ On the individual's desk or work area	➤ In the area where the specific activity occurs
➤ On a portable board	➤ Near areas of transition

5. Utilize the same visual icon/word or object from a Main Schedule to identify the specific task on the Activity Schedule. This helps create understanding and connection between the Main Schedule and the Activity Schedule.

How to Develop and Implement Visual Supports

How To Utilize Activity Schedules

- 1) Mini-schedules or Activity Schedules can be embedded in the Main Schedule. This assists the individual's understanding of what will happen during each Main Schedule event.
- 2) If an Activity Schedule is designed for a particular person, the person's name and picture should be on the Activity Schedule.
- 3) The Activity Schedule can be used to indicate what items are needed to do the task. The first step on the Activity Schedule should be to locate the necessary items (example: paper, math book, and calculator).
- 4) Review the Activity Schedule each time the specific activity is presented until the individual is able to initiate and complete the task without prompting or re-direction.
- 5) When an individual is successfully using an Activity Schedule but has difficulty initiating, working on or completing an activity, continue to present the Activity Schedule as the only prompt (removing any verbal or physical redirection)
- 6) Create a visual symbol for "something new" or "special". This will prepare the individual for anything "different" that will be occurring.
- 7) If it is necessary to visually represent that "step" will not occur use...
universal "no" sign (☐) or
large Red "X"
- 8) Activity Schedules can include an indicator of "clock time" when "actual times" do not change (i.e., start of school, lunch/recess, ending of school day etc.)
Use analog vs. digital clocks (or a combination)
- 9) Activity or Mini-Schedules can utilize positive reinforcement by including a reward (or desired activity) as the last step on the schedule.

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III. SOCIAL SUPPORTS

- To assist an individual to understand a social situation
- To provide a way for an individual to remember the social expectations


1. **Rules of the Room** – Rules of the room are created to remind the individual what to do in specific situations or environments. Ideally, rules should be visually represented and available for the individual.

1. Rules may be created for a specific individual or for the group (class). Some situations may require the classroom rules to be individualized for a specific student. The rules may remain the same, but may require the use of specific words, pictures, or phrases.
2. Limit the amount of rules to **no more than five**. Choose the highest priority rules in order that the person may understand what is important in the particular environment.
3. Rules should be stated in concrete and positive terms. Use words that the individual is familiar with and that have a specific meaning. Positively stated rules generally allow a person to view the rules as a positive support, rather than a statement of what they are doing wrong.
4. Remember, rules should explain “what to do” vs. “NOT what to do”


Mr. Paul’s Class Rules:

- Turn in homework before second bell
- If you have a questions, raise hand and wait for Mr. Paul (or another teacher in the room) to call on you
- Use a “level 2 voice” in the classroom

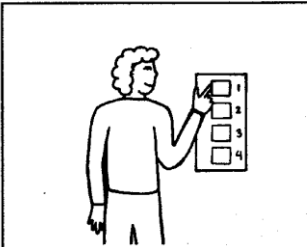
John’s Rules



Raise your hand when you have a question



Mrs. Smith sits at the teacher desk



check schedule
Check your schedule every morning

How to Develop and Implement Visual Supports

2. Prepare the individual by telling them what is expected of him in a social situation.
- Specific Rules - May be understood by most students without specific direction.
 - Others may require the "rules" to be explained, as well as examples of expected responses and actions

Example:

When playing a board game with friends.....

- Wait your turn
- Talk when it is your turn
- Shake hands with the winner

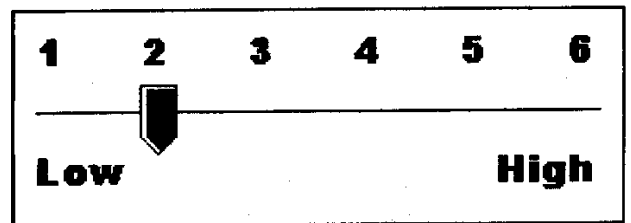
Social Reminders -

Visually presented social reminders may assist an individual to remember a previously taught skill or may provide information to allow a person to move more independently through a social situation.

"Voice Volume Gauge" - A visual representation of a numerical gauge. "1" may be silence, while "5" may be shouting. One may use the gauge to reflect to the individual how loud their voice is, or to indicate at what level their voice should be for the social situation.



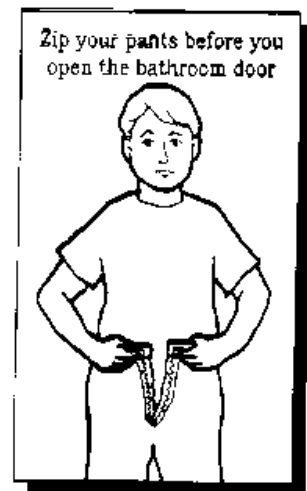
Example:
Locker rules



Social Story Reminders

Visual reminder of what the *Social Story* teaches.

A single picture or several words may be created and posted on a table, desk or wall to remind the individual of the information that has been taught in a social story or other social lesson. This can be the title page or the final "control sentence" of a *Social Story*.



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IV. OTHER COMMUNICATION SUPPORTS

To assist in receptive language
To provide a means for an individual to assert an opinion
To assist in the expression of emotion

1) Visual indicators for "Yes" and "No"

Provide a visual way for individual to indicate a preference
Make available in a variety of locations
Teach one concept at a time utilizing visual supports

2) Individual Communication Boards/Devices

Have communication supports available in all environments
Provide low-tech "back-up" to a "high tech" augmentative device when the "high tech" device is not available
Provide a way express or indicate emotions

3) Enhance Receptive Language

Post-it" note reminders
Use of gestures and sign language
Dry Erase Boards in multiple locations to create quick support
Picture/Word boards with visual representation of the language used in the activity
(*Engineering the Preschool Environment for Interactive, Symbolic Communication-*
Goosens, Crain, Elder : Mayer-Johnson)

4) Utilize Natural Environmental Cues To Support Directions And Instructions

This would include:

- laying out a cookbook when getting ready to cook
- having a towel in place when a person is showering
- having the math paper on the desk when a person enters math class
- holding the car keys when time to leave

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V. CHOICE MAKING and CHOICE BOARDS

Helping an individual with ASD learn how to make choices effectively should be a priority when developing communication and environmental supports. Choice making is empowering, especially for the individual that is struggling to take control.

Providing choice making requires different strategies and supports depending on the individual and the environment. Teams should plan how to teach choice making, as well as how to develop and present Choice Boards. The following guidelines will assist in developing a plan to support choice making.

Creating A Choice Board

1. Choice Boards should look different from Visual Schedules or other visual supports. It may be helpful to present Visual Schedules in a vertical fashion and Choice Boards in a horizontal manner **or** color code each board
2. After the assessment assessing (see above), select the type of medium(s) that will be used to create the Choice Board.
3. Create the materials for the Choice Boards using the same guidelines as Visual Schedules. These guidelines include:
 - a) Put objects, photos, pictures on cardboard (or stiff paper)
 - b) Pictures should be laminated or covered with contact paper (be cautious, some individuals may attend to the shiny surface of the lamination)
 - c) Use magnets, "Velcro", "Sticky-Tack", glue to affix objects, photographs, pictures
 - d) When using "Velcro", be sure to consistently determine which texture (rough vs. smooth) goes on the pictures and what texture goes on the boards
 - e) Use clear "pockets" (such as business card holders) that have an adhesive backing
 - f) Create multiple sets of choices (in case pictures/photos/objects are lost, destroyed) to use in all environments
 - g) If "Velcro" is used, consider placing a long strip of Velcro across the board rather than several small pieces. This allows expanding the number of steps for an activity when necessary.

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8. Place Choice Boards, including the icons/objects that represent available choices, in a variety of locations so that they are easily accessed by the individual and adult staff.

9. Create a "Picture Library"

A place where frequently used picture/object choices are organized for each access.

Consider:

- * On the back of a cabinet or a closet door
- * On the back of the choice board
- * Alphabetically filed in a file box
- * In a notebook

Presenting And Teaching The Use Of The Choice Board

1. Presenting and teaching the use of Choice Boards can be accomplished in a variety of settings. It is important, especially early in the process, that the choices are offered in a structured and consistent manner and -
 - a) at time where the individual is calm and able to focus
 - b) with highly motivating choices

This can be done on an individual basis, in a small or large group

2. Prior to addressing the individual, organize materials so that they are easily accessed.
3. To gain an individual's attention, say their name and "wait" for a response. Their response can be eye contact, a brief gaze, a word, a sound or change in body language.
4. Once attention is gained, present the choice. Choices can be presented in several ways. All choices can be presented at one time **or** choices can be presented one at a time (building up the Choice Board as each choice is presented) **or** present one choice (then hiding that choice) then present a second choice and then bring out both choices in front of the individual.

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Indicating A Choice

A choice is made in several ways.

The individual may:

1. Point or touch the picture/object word that he desires
2. Say/read the choice
3. Use eye gaze or
4. Use a protocol such as the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). This requires the individual to remove the card from the board and give it to the communicating partner when requesting an object/activity/item.

If An Individual Is Unable To Make A Choice

If the individual is unable to choose, provide the following strategies:

1. Say their name and "wait" for a response
2. Decrease the number of choices presented.
3. Provide one highly motivating item/object/activity as one of the choices
4. Provide additional "waiting" time
5. Consider the environment - too distracting - reducing their ability to focus and/or process the information
6. If the individual uses eye gaze or indicates in any way that they may be interested in one of the choices, the adult supports that choice by saying, " I see you looking at _____. I think you want to choose _____."

If these strategies do not support choice making by the individual, present only one choice and say, "Your choice is_____". Continue to show the choice to the individual until he responds.

If the individual is unable to consistently make a choice, it may be necessary to re-assess and make changes to the choice-making protocol.

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To Indicate When Something "Is Not A Choice"

When a choice is not available, provide the following:

1. The picture/object/word is simply removed from the choice board.
2. Cover the choice with a large "X" or the universal "no" sign.
3. Present two boards. One board indicates "This is a choice" and the other "This IS NOT A Choice".

Once a choice has been made, be sure to respond quickly. In order to teach the individual to make choices, he must understand that choice-making provides a way to indicate needs, wants, desires and feelings.

Providing Choice In A Schedule

Allowing an individual to have some control over his schedule helps to help build independence and increase decision making.

Place schedule items on a Choice Board. Present the partially completed Visual Schedule. Allow the individual to remove the items from the Choice Board and place them on the schedule.

1. Consider expanding the schedule by letting the individual:
 - a) Decide what activities they want to do
 - b) Choose what activities to do first, second and last
 - c) Choose the number of items to complete for each activity

How to Develop and Implement Visual Supports

Choice Making And Choice Boards For The Individual That Is Higher-Functioning

Choice making is important and effective for all ages and all functioning levels. The older and /or high-functioning students may require modifications to the process so that the process is appropriate and reinforcing.

1. Re-consider the need for pictures. Written words or phrases may be all that is necessary.
2. A choice board may not be necessary, however provide a consistent schedule that predicts the time events will occur and when and how choices will be made when creating the Visual Schedule.
3. Provide opportunities for the individual to create a list of "choices" to be used with all visual supports.
4. The individual may want to write or record the choices.
5. This individual may want to explore, at a higher-level, how to react and handle a situation when they are unable to make a choice or it is not your choice.

How to Develop and Implement Visual Supports

VI. TIME SUPPORTS

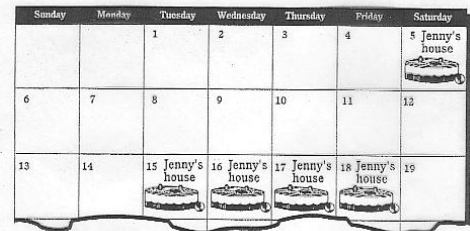
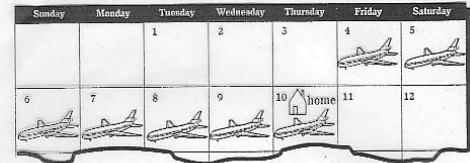
To provide a clear understanding of length of an activity
 To provide a clear understanding of the concept of "clock time"
 To provide a clear understand the month, day of the week and date

* Calendars

Weekly and Monthly Calendars

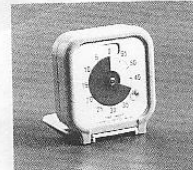
- Home and School
- Individual and /or Group calendars - show the important aspect for the entire group and then highlight the individual's activities
- Place information (words and pictures) that indicate what will happen on that day vs. what generally may be on the calendar (example: Instead of "vacation", try, "no school-Go to Grandma's house")

Use of Calendar to Show When Events Will Occur
 --Shows Events Important to Person

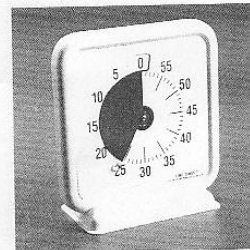


* Timers

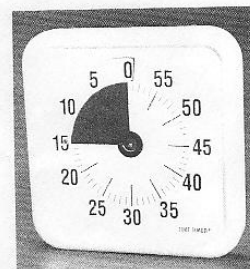
- Auditory
- Visual ("Time-Timer")
- Classroom and individual
- Associate timer with the actual clock time for generalization
- Use analog and digital clocks



3" Personal Timer \$24.95
 (with carrier & stand)



8" Time Timer \$26.95
 (with stand)



12" Time Timer \$39.95

How to Develop and Implement Visual Supports

VII. LOCATION SUPPORTS

To provide an understanding what is expected in area of the room or space
To provide an understanding of the location of an activity or the function of the space
To provide visual organization for predictability, clarity and calmness

1. Physical Boundaries

Study Carrels
Rug/Carpet Square
Chairs and Table
Room Dividers

2. Labeling Room/Building Space

Pictures and Words

Example: Book Area
Library
Gym
Cafeteria
Big Rug Area
Bench

3. Labeling the Use of the Space

(In some cases, labeling the space is not enough, the function of the area may need to be indicated, as well)

Use Picture and Words

Example:

Book Area → Read Books
Library → Study, Do Homework, Read Books and Magazines
Gym → PE, Play Basketball, Exercise
Cafeteria → Eat Lunch
Big Rug → Circle Time, Calendar Time, Sing Songs
Bench → Wait for Bus

4. Where People are Located

Provide supports on "who" is in various locations

- * Where important people are located at any given time
- * Where the person is (if it is different from where they are usually expected to be (for example, Mom is not home, she is at a meeting or the teacher is absent, she is sick at home)
- * Identification of who will be in specific locations where the individual will be going

How to Develop and Implement Visual Supports

Guiding Principles for Organizing the Environment Using Visual Supports

The environment should be created in a manner that follows these general principles:

- Always provide **order, structure and routine** in the daily schedule (“no surprises”)
- Assure **predictability day after day**. Introduce changes **very gradually**
- Use **visual supports**

Carefully plan how each general principle will be provided...

- Consistently...
- Throughout the day...
- In all settings

How to Develop and Implement Visual Supports

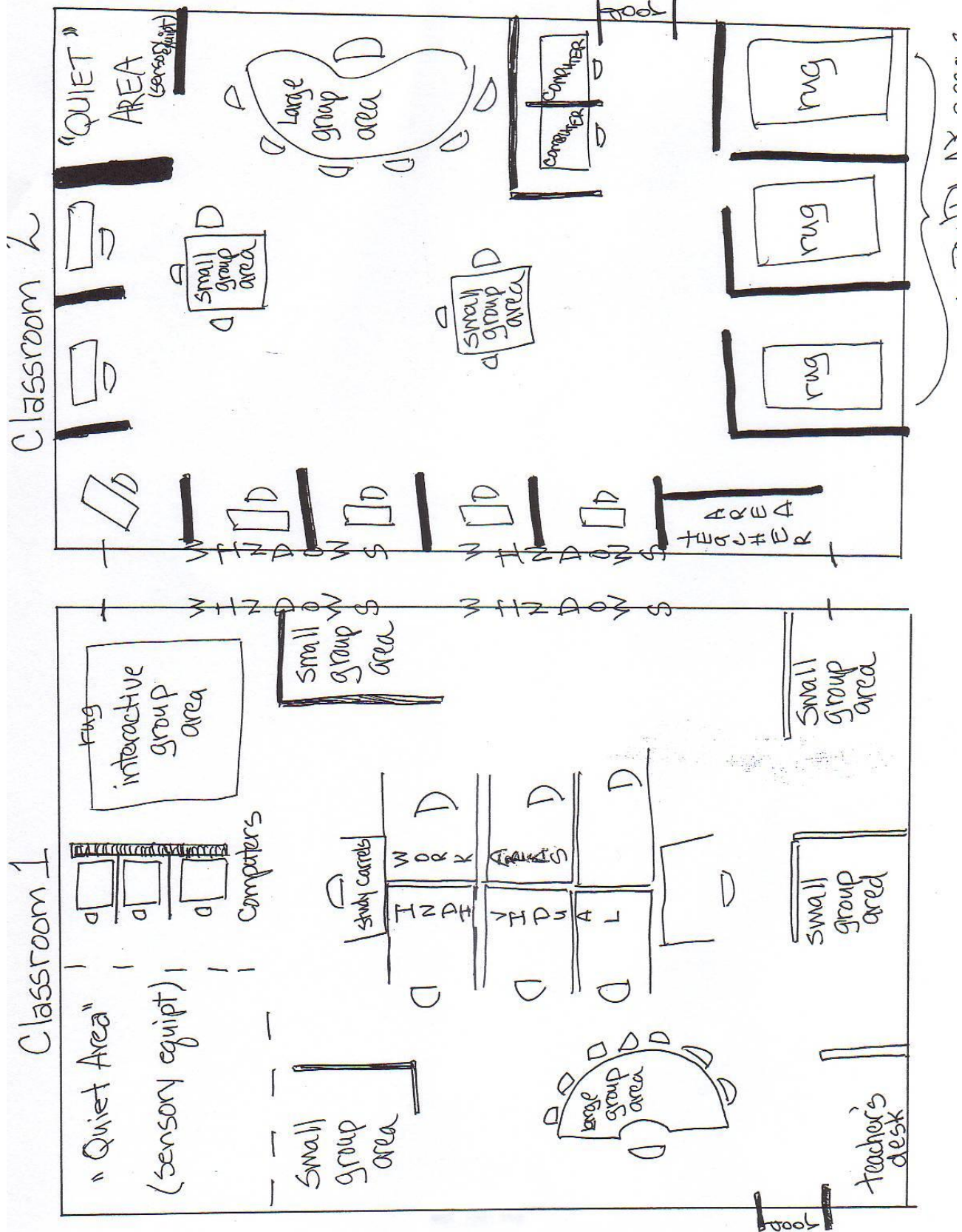
Organizing the Classroom

When organizing a classroom, consider the following:

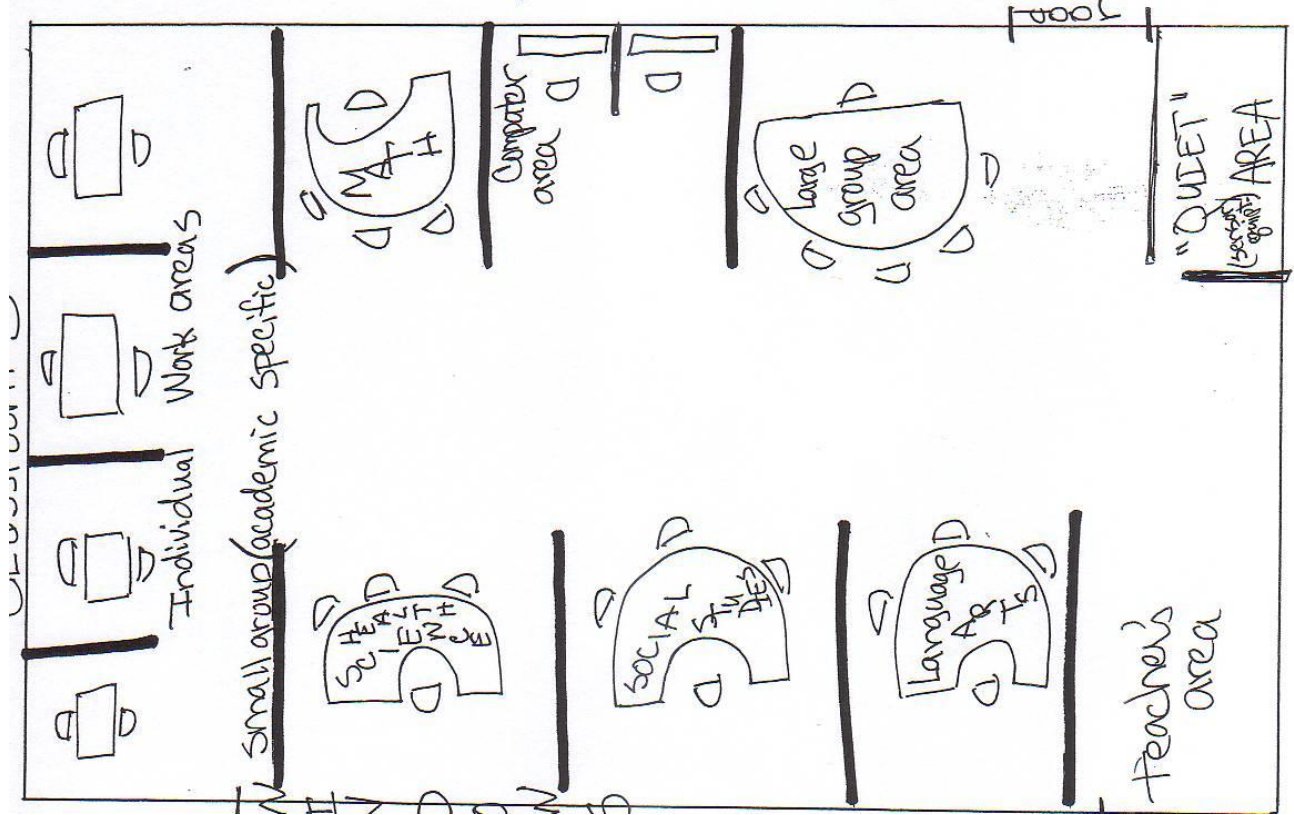
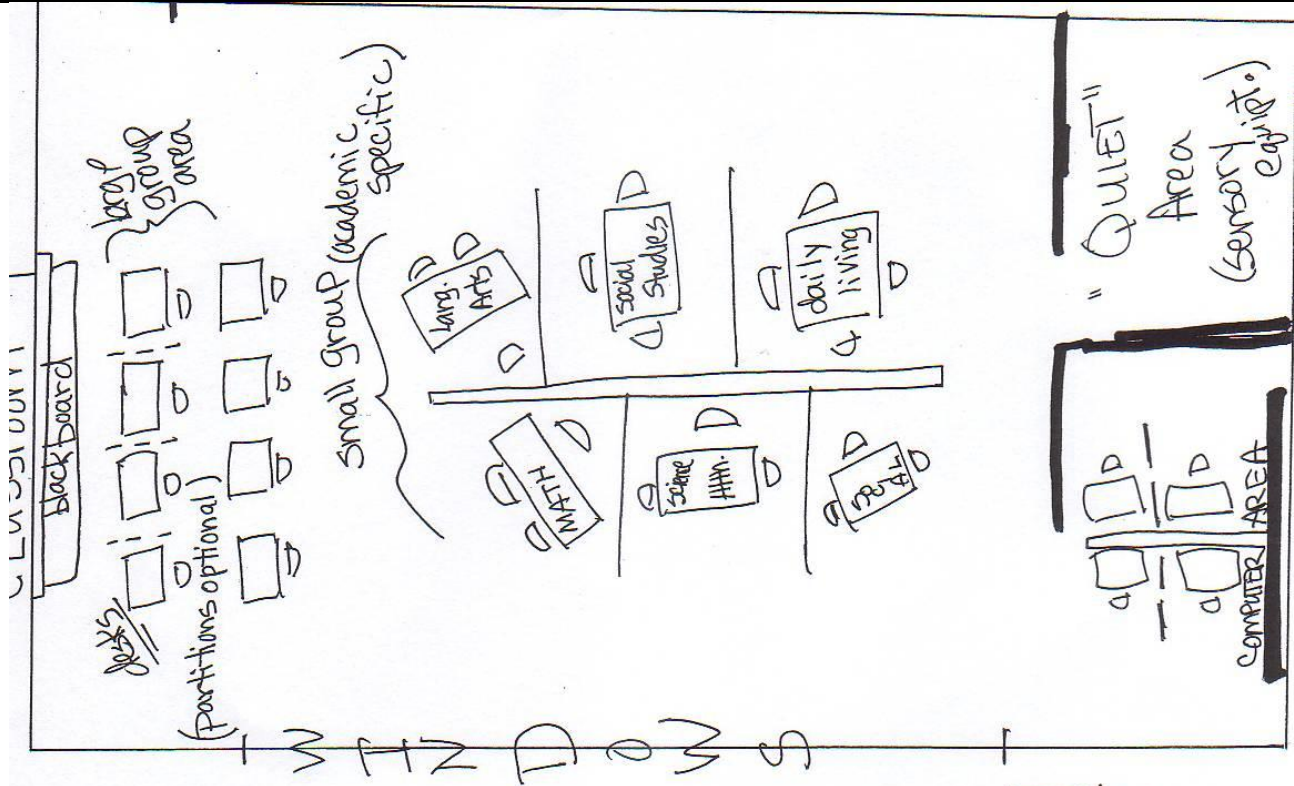
- **Organizational Information.** Area for important information regarding the daily schedule, activities, required work, etc. Clearly presented and visually organized for entire class and/or for individual students.
- **Individual instruction.** Areas to teach students utilizing one-on-one instruction. Generally, an environment with limited distractions to promote attention to the introduction and understanding of specific concepts.
- **Independent work areas.** Space that is clearly and visually organized and generally has limited distractions. This area allows the student to work independently on concepts and tasks that are familiar.
- **Small group instruction.** Area for working on academic and/or social skills with two or three students at a time.
- **Large group or classroom instruction.** Area to work with all students in the classroom . This area is used to promote and develop a student’s ability to listen to instructional lessons by the teacher and complete academic activities with other students.
- **“Quiet Area”.** Space that provides sensory equipment/materials or relaxation supports. This area can be used as a “break area” for students needing opportunities to engage in “sensory diet” activities for calming and organizing. May include music, rocking chair, visually calming posters or objects, books, magazines, tactile items, etc. (This area may look very similar to other sections of the room, however, it is understood to be a space where the student is allowed to relax).
- **Academic supports.** Areas that specifically address teaching math, language arts, social studies, science/health, daily living skills and social skills. Students move from one area to another.
- **Computer/Technology.** Area that provides computer or other technology to support academic or skill development (rather than leisure activities).

On the following pages are several “sample” classrooms:

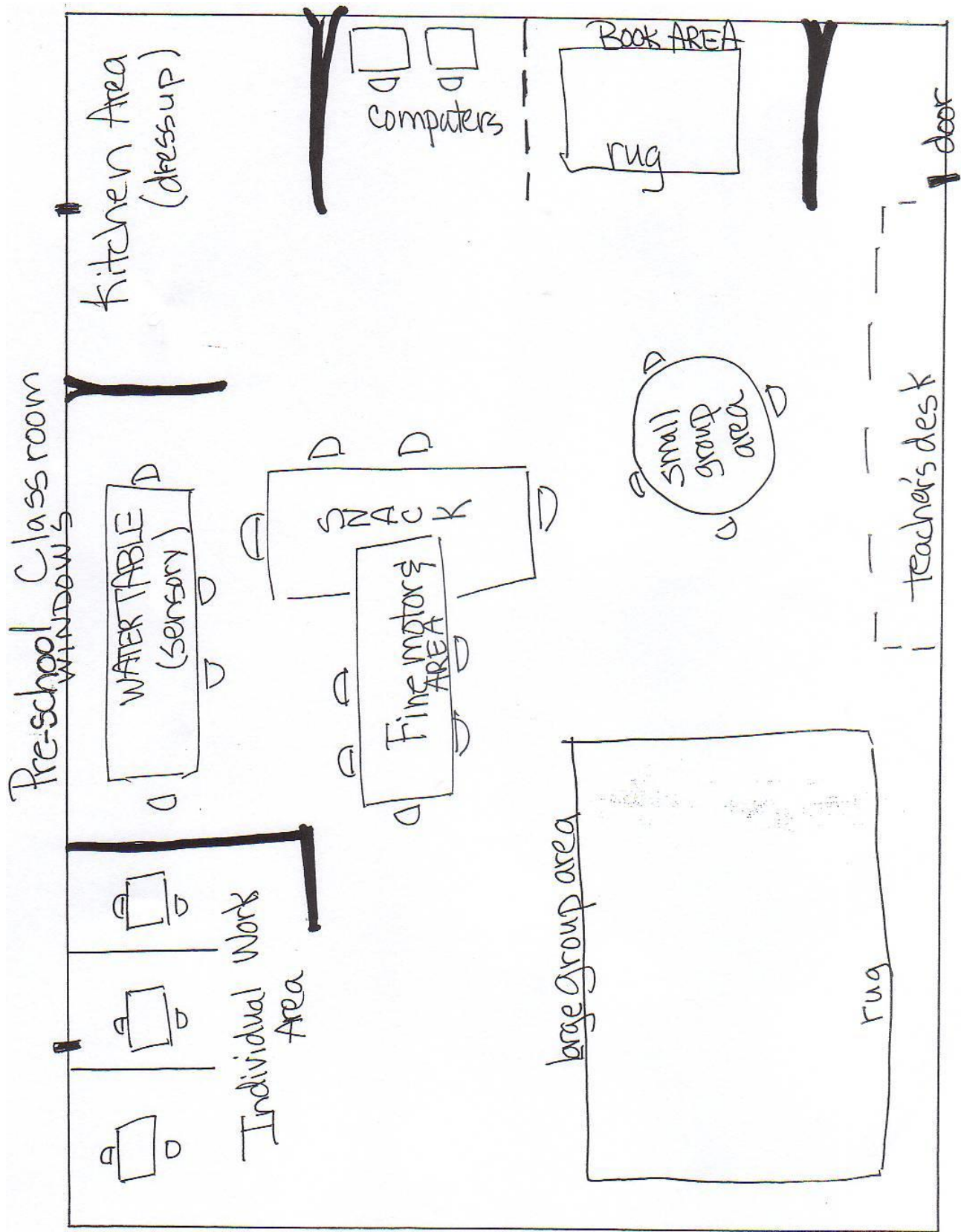
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