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Object Schedule: An Overview

Definition and Purpose	A schedule is an ordered list of specific activities to be completed during a given time period. Schedules are considered an **antecedent-based intervention**, which is an evidence-based practice for autistic students that "includes a variety of modifications that are made to the environment/context in an attempt to change or shape a learner's behavior" (Steinbrenner et al. 63). An object schedule is a variation of a visual schedule that uses objects instead of words, pictures, or line drawings to indicate the specific activities and their order in the specified time. For learners who may benefit from more concrete visuals, the use of objects can serve as a helpful alternative to written words, photos, or line drawings. By selecting objects that either represent the various activities or objects that will be used functionally during an activity, the object schedule can be a customized schedule tailored to the unique needs of the learner.
When to Use Object Schedules	Ideal times to use an object schedule with autistic students, or other students with or without disabilities, could include (but are not limited to): » throughout the entire day for a whole group, for a small group, or for individual students; » throughout an activity or instructional block to break down the specifics of that subject, class, or time-period (e.g., activity schedule for circle time, activity schedule for literacy block); or » during new or different activities (e.g., field trips, assemblies).
Why Use Object Schedules?	An object schedule: » increases predictability about the events of the day; » clarifies expectations about where a student should be and what the student should be doing; » promotes student independence within the classroom and the school setting; » teaches flexibility to students by helping them anticipate when changes may occur; and » makes the abstract concept of transitioning and the passage of time more concrete.

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Critical Components of Object Schedules	Schedules for autistic students should: » be visible to the learner and presented in a format that the student can comprehend (in this case, objects applicable to the specific task or activity); » be broken down into reasonable steps; » include a clear way to indicate when an activity is finished; » be referenced before and after each activity listed on the schedule; » be handled by the student if possible; » include a consistent phrase to prompt the student to reference their schedule (e.g., "Check the schedule," or "Let's see what is next…"); and » include a visual representation of a schedule change.
Object Schedules in Action	
Assembly Tips	1. Identify the object schedule activity pieces, as well as a backing (folder, paint stick, laminated paper, etc.) for the schedule. 2. Place a hard-sided Velcro strip on a folder, paint stick, or laminated strip of construction paper. 3. Place soft-sided Velcro on the back of each object schedule piece. 4. Lay out the daily schedule appropriately, with part or all of the day represented. 5. Consider where to post the schedule (e.g., taped on a desk or in a locker, carried with the student in a folder or attached to a planner).

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Using an Object Schedule to Support Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP)

A Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is a process for gathering, analyzing, and summarizing information about the relationship (i.e., function) between a person's challenging behavior and their environment (Cooper et al., 2019). An FBA provides specific information around how behavior interventions should be individualized in consideration of a person's skills, preferences, sensitivities, and environment. For students in schools, an FBA must be conducted to address one or more of the following situations:

» a change of placement to a more restrictive setting is considered due to a student's behavior;
» a student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is removed from their current placement for more than 10 school days for behavior determined to be a manifestation of their disability;
» the IEP provides for the use of restraint or isolation;
» a student's behavior impedes learning for self or peers;
» a student's behavior threatens safety of self or others;
» when determined appropriate by the student's IEP team;
» a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) is considered ineffective by virtue of incomplete or flawed understanding of the student's behavior; and/or
» a student's behavior limits student engagement, inclusion, and/or independence.

See State Board of Education Rule 0520-01-09-.24.

An FBA may be conducted, as appropriate, in the following situations:

» a student with an IEP is removed from current placement for more than 10 school days for behavior not determined to be a manifestation of their disability; or
» a student with an IEP is removed to an interim alternative education setting for up to 45 school days for a zero-tolerance offense.

See State Board of Education Rule 0520-01-09-.24.

Ultimately, a complete FBA will present one or more functional hypotheses supported by available evidence as to why behaviors of concern are occurring, along with an appraisal of student's skill deficits that are impacting the behavior targeted within the FBA. The results of this FBA are used to individualize the BIP. The BIP focuses on decreasing challenging behavior and increasing appropriate behavior (Cooper et al., 2019).

Object schedules are an antecedent strategy that can be built into the BIP as a means of making the abstract concept of time concrete and providing both a visual and tangible representation of what is next for the student. As an antecedent strategy for supporting the student, the object schedule can help to reduce challenging behavior.

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Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) and Antecedent Supports	A BIP should include antecedent strategies that will be effective and actionable in the context in which the behavior targeted within the FBA occurred. These strategies are meant to prevent challenging behavior by either modifying the context or providing supports or prompts to the student before challenging behavior occurs. Antecedent strategies should consider the student's unique needs by clarifying expectations, establishing predictability, promoting skill acquisition, fostering independent functioning, and/or reducing stressors. An object schedule is considered an antecedent support strategy. The following is an example of an object schedule intervention description within the "Antecedent Supports" section of a BIP.

EXAMPLE DESCRIPTION WITHIN A BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION PLAN	
Intervention Description	Staff will use the object schedule to show the student what is coming next, and when the student complies, he/she can receive <preferred reinforcers determined in FBA>. When starting a task, the educator will show the student the object schedule and say, "Check your schedule." When the student pulls the object off the schedule and takes it to the next task or place identified on the schedule, he/she will receive the reinforcer determined within the FBA. This pattern will continue with each object schedule piece throughout the day.
Who will implement?	Educator
When will it occur? (e.g., time of day, days of week)	At the beginning of the day and before transitions
When will the intervention begin?	8/1/24
Materials Needed	Object schedule (schedule board, objects for each activity of the day, Velcro), reinforcers

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Considerations for Students with Extensive Support Needs	Object schedules are useful for students with extensive support needs because the object is directly related to and representative of the next task/ item on his/her schedule. The object is a tactile cue and can be removed from the schedule and used as a transition item to the next task/item on the schedule. *For individuals who require more extensive prompting, ensure that prompts are always from behind so the student can learn his/her object schedule with an unobstructed view.*
Learn More	View TRIAD resources and trainings at triad.vumc.org/schools. Visit our online learning portal to access courses about **schedules**. To access the following free courses, first register for an account or log in to an existing account at triad.vkclearning.org. Then click on a link below to launch. » **Setting Up Schedules in the Classroom [two-part series]** https://bit.ly/3TI9y4Q » **Using Schedules [six-part series]** https://bit.ly/3TnReN4 » **Early Childhood Schedules [four-part series]** https://bit.ly/4cl7irA
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