✓ Structured Daily Schedule

Definition

A structured daily schedule is a daily outline of classroom activities designed to maximize student learning. Structuring time through a planned daily schedule of specific activities and transitions maximizes "on task" (i.e., engaged) behavior and minimizes students' inappropriate behavior. The daily schedule must be followed and a sufficient number of staff must be present to make high rates of on-task behaviors feasible.

Things to Do

✓ List school activities over which you have no control.

✓ Identify nonacademic but necessary tasks.

✓ Schedule instructional activities.

✓ Develop the schedule.

✓ Post the schedule.

✓ Present/review the schedule.

✓ Stick to the schedule.

✓ Clearly communicate any changes.

☑ **List school activities over which you have no control.**

Determine the times for activities during the school day that cannot change such as lunch, recess, or physical education.

☑ **Identify nonacademic but necessary tasks.**

Such activities might include taking roll, collecting lunch money, sharpening pencils, announcements, flag salute, getting drinks, and going to the restroom. As these activities reduce instructional time, they must be carefully considered in the daily schedule.

☑ **Schedule instructional activities.**

Determine the specific instructional activities that must take place during the day. Estimate the time required to carry out each task.

☑ **Develop the schedule.**

Considering the time needed for the activities identified in Steps 1-4, develop an activity schedule which meets the goal of 70% instructional time. The order in which you schedule activities is another important consideration. Some tasks might be better accomplished in the morning—others in the afternoon; difficult tasks may seem more approachable following simpler activities or may be best gotten out of the way with more enjoyable tasks as a reward. These tasks will need to be determined by the teacher, since different students will have different preferences.

Consider Transition Time

A great deal of instructional time is wasted when the transition between activities is not planned or managed efficiently. Expectations of student behavior during transitions should be specifically taught, practiced, and reinforced. Minimize transition time by:

✍ having materials organized and ready before each activity;

✍ cueing students 5 minutes before the end of an activity;

✎   monitoring students during transition time and praising those who move quickly;

"I like the way Danny and Billy got their books, went to the table, and are waiting quietly for me"); **and**

✎   planning activities at which students succeed so that they will be enthusiastic about the next activity.

✅ Post the schedule.

Post the schedule of daily activities or class periods in a conspicuous part of the room. Make certain the print is large enough to be seen from any part of the room. Secondary students should receive a copy of the schedule for their notebooks.

For very young students or students with moderate to severe language or reading deficits, a "picture" schedule can be used with photographs of each activity or a series of clock faces with one-word descriptions are effective alternatives, as well.

Regardless of students' language or reading level, some type of daily schedule should be posted. Individual schedules can be posted next to the main schedule for variable activities.

✅ Present/review the schedule.

Make certain that students understand the schedule. Telling them is not enough. Review the schedule several times before assuming they know the routine. Initially this may require a daily review. Question them about the schedule, role play examples and nonexamples of expectations regarding the schedule, and give students an opportunity to ask questions.

✅ Stick to the schedule.

Once the schedule has been explained and posted, stick with it! Time for a particular activity may vary, but stay with the overall routine.

✅ Clearly communicate any changes.

Once a schedule has been established, do not hesitate to make changes if it is not working satisfactorily. When making changes, post copies of the revised schedule and make certain students understand the new routine.

Example

The following is an example of an elementary class schedule which provides for academically scheduled time more than 70% of the day, accounts for set and variable activities, transitions, and morning attentiveness.

Daily Schedule

8:15 – 8:30	Homeroom/Reading
8:30 – 9:15	Language Arts
9:15 – 10:00	Math
10:00 – 10:15	Recess
10:15 – 11:00	History
11:00 – 11:45	Science
11:45 – 12:15	Lunch
12:15 – 12:30	Great Books
12:30 – 1:15	Media/Computer
1:15 – 1:45	Physical Education
1:45 – 2:40	Cooperative Learning
2:40 – 2:45	Clean-Up/Dismiss

Variations of the Technique

While a set daily schedule is desirable, a teacher may wish to allow students choices (e.g., which task to do first) during certain times of the day when a choice is acceptable.

Potential Problems and Solutions

Students May Become Restless

Students may become sleepy, bored, or inattentive during prolonged periods of inactivity. Consider the level of physical activity during the day, particularly with the younger students. Plan for some physical activity every 40 minutes or so, even if it is only to stand and stretch or get a drink. Be certain that students also have time during their day for physical games and more strenuous activity.

Too Much Variety

Beware of too much variety in the schedule. Students typically do better with an established routine. Too little variety, on the other hand, will make the classroom a boring place to be.

Getting Ready

✍ Ensure that the classroom has a large wall clock to help students learn to manage their time and follow the schedule.

✍ Plan to schedule instructional time for at least 70% of the school day. Each student should be on task a minimum of 85% of that time. If not, the teacher needs to help the student increase his/her on-task behavior. For students with severe disabilities, a specific "attending" program may be needed.

A schedule a day keeps off-task behavior away.

Examples of ways to systematically increase on-task behavior include the use of a timed system, such as a "beeper tape" for differential reinforcement, or a combination of a token economy and response cost (see *LRBI—Level 1 and 2*).

✍ Select tasks at which students can perform with at least an 80% success rate.

✍ Ensure sufficient staff are available to make high rates of on-task behavior feasible.

Materials and Supplies

✍ Clock

✍ Large posterboard or space to display schedule.

References

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