Support your child with special needs in developing life skills

For parents of students in all grades

Structure and Routines are key
Provide structure to:
- increase a child's understanding of what is expected of them and reduce challenging behaviours by minimizing the stress, anxiety and frustration that comes with not understanding
- increase the predictability of events and decrease frustration and anxiety
- ease transitions
- increase a child's availability for learning

Create structure by:

a. Organizing the physical environment by creating spaces for specific activities (eating, sleeping, working, playing, bathing, etc.), creating clear physical and visual boundaries and minimizing auditory and visual distractions will:

- promote increased understanding and attention to task

- clearly indicate the types of activities that occur in each space

- help a child understand the specific rules of each space

- help a child understand the behavioral expectations of a specific space.

- minimize auditory and visual distractions

b. Using visuals to communicate rules, expectations, social norms, schedules and routines will:
- help a child focus on the relevant information
- provide structure and organization
- help manage behaviour
- decrease difficulties caused by poor receptive language, time and organizational skills.
- increase self-motivation and independence

- support communication
- allow a child to take as much time as required to process the message being communicated.

- **c. Developing predictable/consistent routines** with clear beginnings and endings to complete daily tasks, such as brushing one's teeth, dressing, and packing one's backpack will:

- help a child understand their environment

- help decrease a child's anxiety in routine situations.
- increase the likelihood that a child will learn a routine and develop independence

Assistive Technology

The following apps may help children communicate wants and needs, develop routines, transition without difficulty, cope with waiting, make choices and/or develop life skills.

 Choiceworks
helps users complete daily routines, cope with wait times, and regulate emotions. Schedule boards, Wait boards, and Feeling boards can be customized from a preloaded visual library of images that have recorded audio attached to them. Real photos may be taken with the iPad and audio may be recorded for them by the user. Boards created may be printed or saved as PDF files. Different profiles may be created for multiple users. This app may be purchased for $6.99.

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iPrompts

provides structure and routine for daily living activities. It includes Picture schedules, which guide users through an activity or task. A starter library and built-in web search tool provides a wide range of photos to choose from. Photos can be taken and captions added to create simple social scripts to help children make sense of the world around them. Some other features include a Visual countdown timer to help transition from one activity to another and choice prompts to help communicate preferences. This app may be purchased for $99.99.

Standard, Express, and Scenes. With Standard pages, the action occurs when the location is pressed. With Express pages, text to speech messages can be built in a speech bar that will then play in sequence when the speech bar is pressed. While Scene pages are built around a single image or photo. With the Scenes pages, you can arrange invisible hotspots over objects or people in the image or photo so that when the hot spot is pressed, it will play music, speech, or videos. Each type of communication page is customizable. These pages can then be saved or shared with other users with Wi-Fi, saved with DropBox or any Mac /PC. This app may be purchased for $79.99.

WeCookit

This interactive cooking platform teaches basic cooking skills through step-by-step visual recipes, an interactive timer and mixing tools, allergy alerts for recipes that are gluten and dairy free and the ability to create your own visual recipes for your child's favourite dishes. This app may be purchased for $2.99.

Dollars & Cents

Dollars and Cents features three progressive programs with the option to use Canadian currency: Counting Coins, Spending Money, and Making Change. All of the programs feature clear, realistic graphics and an easy-to-navigate interface. Plus, this money talks! This app may be purchased for $45.99.

TimeTimer

makes the passage of time visual and, therefore, more concrete. Time is displayed as a red disk that gets smaller as time passes. Users learn that when the red is gone, it is time to move on to the next activity. It may be purchased for $2.99.

GoTalkNow

provides the augmentative communication capabilities of a traditional GoTalk device with the accessibility of the iPad. Three styles of communication pages are available including

Workshop and tip sheet prepared and presented by Kim Huynh and Shannon Petracco, special education teachers at Parkholme School.
April 18, 2015

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