Weatherford Independent School District

Special Programs Department

Structured Teaching
and
Communication Intervention (STACI)
Program

Program Information Guidelines
Manual

2004-2005

Table of Contents

Preamble and Program Philosophy

Weatherford Independent School District (WISD) holds strongly to the belief that all students are able to learn. While this is true, WISD also recognizes that all students learn in different and often unique ways.

Similar to many school districts across the country, WISD is comprised of diverse learning populations; who are entitled to relevant and functional instruction. Consistent with this philosophy, WISD has created programs across the District to serve the varied needs of all students. WISD is committed to developing and maintaining programs that facilitate functional independence. This commitment is the motivating force behind the development of the Structured Teaching and Communication Intervention (STACI) program.

STACI is a non-categorical special education program that focuses on structured teaching strategies and systematic communication methodology to address the needs of its students. The program employs a variety of instructional options to meet the needs of its students. Some of these options include: a center-based classroom, visual supports, social stories, social skills training, direct instruction, work systems, and provision of related services.

In addition, the STACI program is focused on improving the communication capacity of its students. Students in this program may have communicative ability ranging from nonverbal to highly verbal. As a result, communication intervention is unique to each student in the program. The communication component of this program is a combined effort between classroom personnel and the speech therapist(s) working with the individual students.

Students in this program have intense needs. Because of the intensity of their needs, the majority of instructional programming is administered in a self-contained environment.   However, like all WISD specialized programs, students in the STACI program are provided instructional opportunities with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate to his or her overall educational needs. This is also done on a student-by-student basis.

This manual serves as a guide for instructors as well as providing information to both parents having children in the program, and to parents considering placing their children in the STACI program. The program description is as follows:

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility for Entry into the STACI Program

The STACI program consists of special education classroom(s) available for students with disabilities. This program is a non-categorical placement designed for students with developmental, social, and communication needs. Placement decisions are data based using a variety of assessment options including functional skill evaluations.

All administrators throughout the district who are interested in this program for a student currently on their campus should contact the district the Special Programs Department.

STACI PROGRAM OUTLINE

THE CENTER BASED CLASSROOM

Environment

STACI classrooms are center based. Each student has an individual schedule that is designed to move the student through the different centers of the classroom throughout the day. Schedules will be discussed in a later section of this manual.

Physical Structure

Physical structure refers to the physical boundaries between centers in the classroom and the general physical layout of the room. Physical structure is needed to help students independently navigate their environment and minimize confusion over what activity should occur where. When creating physical boundaries, the following may be used to separate one classroom center from the others.

1. Portable dividers
2. Filing cabinets
3. Book shelves
4. Curtains
5. Tape on the floor
6. Rugs or carpet mats
7. Desks or tables
8. Other furniture

Centers

The following are classroom centers that STACI teachers may consider. Teachers should also take into account the ages of students when deciding the appropriateness of centers in the classroom.
1. Instructional or 1:1 center
2. Individual work center
3. Group center
4. Library
5. Leisure or free time center
6. Computer center
7. Workshop area
8. Domestic skills center
9. Self-help skills center

Center Identification

Centers are identified by a small picture, icon, or word that allows the student to know where he or she is while they are at that center. In addition, the symbol corresponds to the student's individual schedule so the student can match the

symbol on their schedule to the one at the center and consequently increase their independent movement throughout the classroom. It is helpful to have a strip of Velcro next to the symbol or picture that identifies each center so students can place their schedule icon next to the center icon. Teachers may consider using any or all of the following for symbol development and center identification.

➢ Polaroid camera
➢ Board Maker
➢ Do2learn.com website
➢ Hanging picture from ceiling

A sample center-based classroom layout is provided in Figure1 at the end of this manual.

SCHEDULES

Classroom schedules

Classroom schedules are used to guide students in the class to their current activity while showing what activities have been finished and what comes next. These schedules are used horizontally or vertically in a specific location in the classroom. Each activity is displayed as an icon either with a picture, word or both. A sample class schedule may look as follows:

➢ Greeting
➢ Morning activity or group
➢ Snack/break
➢ Morning activity
➢ Lunch
➢ P.E.
➢ Afternoon activity
➢ Snack/break
➢ Afternoon activity
➢ Goodbye time

Individual schedules

Individual student schedules structure the students' day in greater detail than the general classroom schedule. Each student should have an individual schedule that corresponds to a particular color assigned to that student. The schedules may hang vertically (top to bottom) or horizontally (left to right) on a strip of Velcro so the student can easily read and have physical access to it (see figure on next page). Horizontal schedules are often used to promote left to right scanning for students that read or are beginning to read.

The schedule itself is comprised of multiple objects, icons, pictures or words showing the daily activities for each student. These activities correspond to the icons that are placed above or at each center as discussed in the previous section. The activities are placed vertically in a row in the order the student is to carry them out. In addition, there is a place for the student to put the removed icons or objects that shows what activities have been finished. The icon that is on the top of the schedule is the activity that comes next.

Students are routinely prompted to "check schedule" whereby they go to their schedule area and remove the icon, picture, or object showing where they are to go at that time. Upon returning to "check schedule", students place the icon, picture, or object in "finished" and they then retrieve the icon at the top of the schedule. The student then travels to the area or center that has the matching icon, picture, or object so the student knows he or she is in the right place.

The consistency provided by a visual schedule allows greater predictability in a student's day. Visual supports can also provide motivation to work through a less favored activity knowing a favored activity is to follow.

For non-verbal students a visual schedule can be a way to introduce symbols that the student can eventually use as an alternate form of communication. Through the consistent use of the schedule, the student can begin to pair the symbols presented with the activities that are occurring. A sure sign that this association is developing is seeing the student begin to rearrange their schedule to include all of their favorite activities. Establishing a visual schedule can also provide a structure for the student to begin to do some choice making, as they are encouraged to provide some input as to the order of some of the day's events. The student may also be introduced to choosing a specific activity from a teacher-selected group of activities.
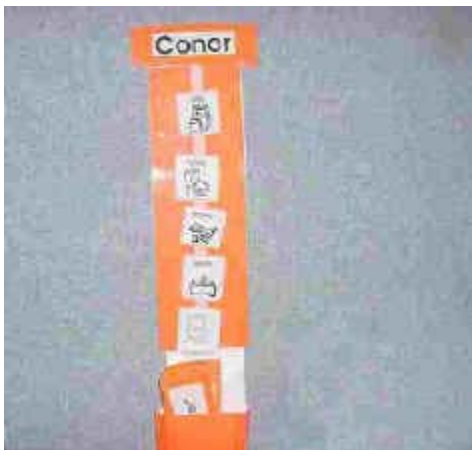
Sample individual schedule
for school day
(top to bottom)

Sample individual schedule for home (left to right)

SKILL BUILDING

Applied Behavior Analysis and Structured Teach model are used in the program. The STACI program addresses the following areas with all of its students as directed by each student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Communication

Communication is perhaps the most essential skill we use throughout our lives. For this reason, there is a substantial focus on communication skill building throughout the STACI program. Communication is not simply talking. In fact, it is often not verbal at all. Communication is possible using several modalities including speech, gestures, sign language, pictures, and writing.

Communication, the reciprocal act of conveying meaning to another person, is a primary goal of the STACI program. Nonverbal students are systematically instructed in the development of "functional" communication. That is, the communication involves purposeful behavior between two or more persons. Staff may be trained in a variety of communication methodologies that could include the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) or the use of augmentative communication systems or devices. Communication with verbal students will always focus on functionality. All student communication goals will be integrated into the student's day to optimize teaching opportunities. Each student will be instructed at his or her individual skill level and according to his or her IEP. Speech pathologists are available to guide teachers in the use of appropriate types and levels of communication systems.

Social

A goal for the STACI program students is to increase their level of interpersonal skills to establishment meaningful relationships with peers and adults.

Students in the program will have their social skills instruction embedded in their daily programming in lieu of social skills being taught at a specific time in the day. Skills are addressed and reinforced throughout the school day across educational settings. Students work on socialization in the classroom with adults, in group, walking down the halls, at recess, at lunch, waiting in line, and any other situation they are involved in while at school.

Some possible areas needing social skill building include:

- ➢ Tolerating being in a group of sociable peers
- ➢ Participating in a group setting with peers
- ➢ Approaching others without touching, standing at arm's length from other person
- ➢ Initiating a greeting
- ➢ Saying please and thank you to adults
- ➢ Using table manners so not to repel peers
- ➢ Use physical contact with others appropriately (hugging, etc.)
- ➢ Turn taking
- ➢ Game playing

Academic

Academic skills can be developed through the utilization of work systems and associated work tasks. Work Systems, refers to the systematic and organized presentation of tasks/materials in order for students to learn to work independently, without adult directions/prompts. Work Systems can reflect **any** type of task(s) or activities (e.g., academic, daily living skills, recreation and leisure, etc.). Each work system should address the following four questions:

- ○ **What is the work to be done? What is the nature of the task?** (E.g., sorting by colors; adding/subtracting 2 digit numbers, making a sandwich, brushing teeth, etc.).

- ○ **How much work? Visually represent to the student exactly how much work is to be done.** If the student is to cut out only 10 soup can labels, don't give him a whole stack and expect him to independently count and/or understand that he is to cut out only 10 soup can labels, for the task to be considered complete. Seeing the whole stack of labels - even if told that he is going to cut only ten - can cause a child with autism a great deal of frustration and anxiety in not being able to understand exactly how much work to complete.

- ○ **When am I finished?** The student needs to independently recognize when he is finished with a task/activity. The task itself may define this, or the use of timers or visual cues, such as a red dot, to indicate where to stop on a particular worksheet, has proven effective.

- ○ **What comes next?** Items such as physical reinforcers, highly desired activities, break times or free choice times are highly motivating toward task completion. In some cases, being "all done" with the task motivates the child enough to complete it.

Information on specific types of work systems that could be used with STACI students may be found at the following web addresses as well as other internet sources: http://www.preschoolfun.com/pages/teacch%20work%20jobs.htm; do2learn.com. See Figure 2 for a sample work system.

Behavior

Student behavioral needs are managed using principles of structured teaching, applied behavior analysis techniques, and by addressing the unique sensory needs of each student. Figure 3 at the end of this manual provides a list of sensory interventions that may help students self-regulate when needed.

Self Help

The acquisition of self-help skills such as eating, dressing, grooming, and managing personal responsibilities is vital to every person. The ability to maintain one's appearance and to be responsible for basic needs increases independence, confidence, and security. Using a consistent routine and structure to systematically teach self-help skills in all environments and in context will enhance growth toward independence.

Teaching these skills should occur naturally during daily routines, i.e., learning to eat by oneself during mealtime or learning to brush one's teeth after eating. Since some of these behaviors occur at a low rate of frequency in the natural environment, additional opportunities to learn skills and practice them may be made available. It is important to keep these skills functional and meaningful to the student.

A task analysis of a particular skill is an effective method of teaching students skills that involve multiple steps in sequence. Task analysis involves breaking down a general task such as tooth brushing into increments that the student can learn one step at a time. For example, the student may learn to first pick up and hold the toothpaste with left hand, then remove the lid and put lid on counter with right hand, and so on until the entire task is completed.

OTHER PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Transition Planning

Students in the STACI program can have difficulty with transitioning from one activity to another. These students routinely have a high need for sameness and consequently have difficulty shifting their cognitive process from what is currently happening to something new. Frequently, transition difficulties give rise to behavioral considerations as the student has difficulty with change.

For this reason, it is often necessary to plan for transitions systematically. The following are some suggestions to benefit students with transition difficulties.

- ➢ Let the student know when the activity will be over
- ➢ Use a transition object to take to the next activity (mini-schedule, object, picture)
- ➢ Refer to schedule to indicate when current activity will be available again
- ➢ Increase motivation for next activity (manipulation of reinforcers)
- ➢ Provide opportunities for choice making

If STACI students continue to have difficulty with transitions, teachers should assess the function of the behavioral issue. Some considerations include:

- ➢ Does not want to stop a preferred activity
- ➢ Afraid they will not get to do the activity again
- ➢ Unable to stop immediately
- ➢ Do not like change
- ➢ Perceives next activity as interesting
- ➢ Perceives next activity as too difficult

Reinforcement

Instructors should have a working knowledge of behavioral methods that employ reinforcement administration. School staff will be responsible for reinforcement scheduling. That is, they will decide what reinforcer is used, when it is used, at what rate or frequency, and when to change the reinforcer.

Documentation

Documentation is the recording of objective data about specific behaviors or events that allows a person sufficient information to make determinations of progress or lack of progress on a particular goal or expectation. In concert with federal law, documentation drives decision-making in targeting skills for intervention and evaluation of effective instruction options.

Documentation is kept across programming components and is I.E.P. driven for most if not all STACI students. Goals and objectives are agreed upon at the ARD meeting and data are collected on those established criteria. Data are collected in multiple ways including frequency, duration, latency, and intensity. Data on many student goals are collected throughout the day as the student moves through his or her schedule. This is made possible by "embedding" goals into the daily curriculum thereby allowing for multiple assessment opportunities of each goal across a variety of settings.

Related Services

Related services are those services that are necessary for students to benefit from special education programming. Some common related services in the school setting may include speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, music therapy.

Related services are traditionally provided as either direct services (meeting directly with the student), consult services (meeting with instructional staff regarding the student) or both. Related service providers make available valuable information to teachers regarding daily programming suggestions to help STACI students be optimally successful in the school environment. These suggestions are frequently integrated in the curriculum to allow students to access suggested interventions routinely throughout the day and not simply utilize them in isolation.

# APPENDIX

Figure 1

Sample Classroom

This section is for teachers needing assistance with setting up a center-based classroom. It shows examples of some good classroom ideas and tools to be used in the classroom.

Sample classroom

Below is a pictorial description of a preschool classroom for children with disabilities. The space is divided into separate areas for working, playing, and eating. There are designated places for high-energy group activities and quieter ones for reading or listening. Picture and schedule cards are used throughout the room adding temporal structure and predictability to the environment.

The map below gives details for each of the classroom areas.

Classroom Map
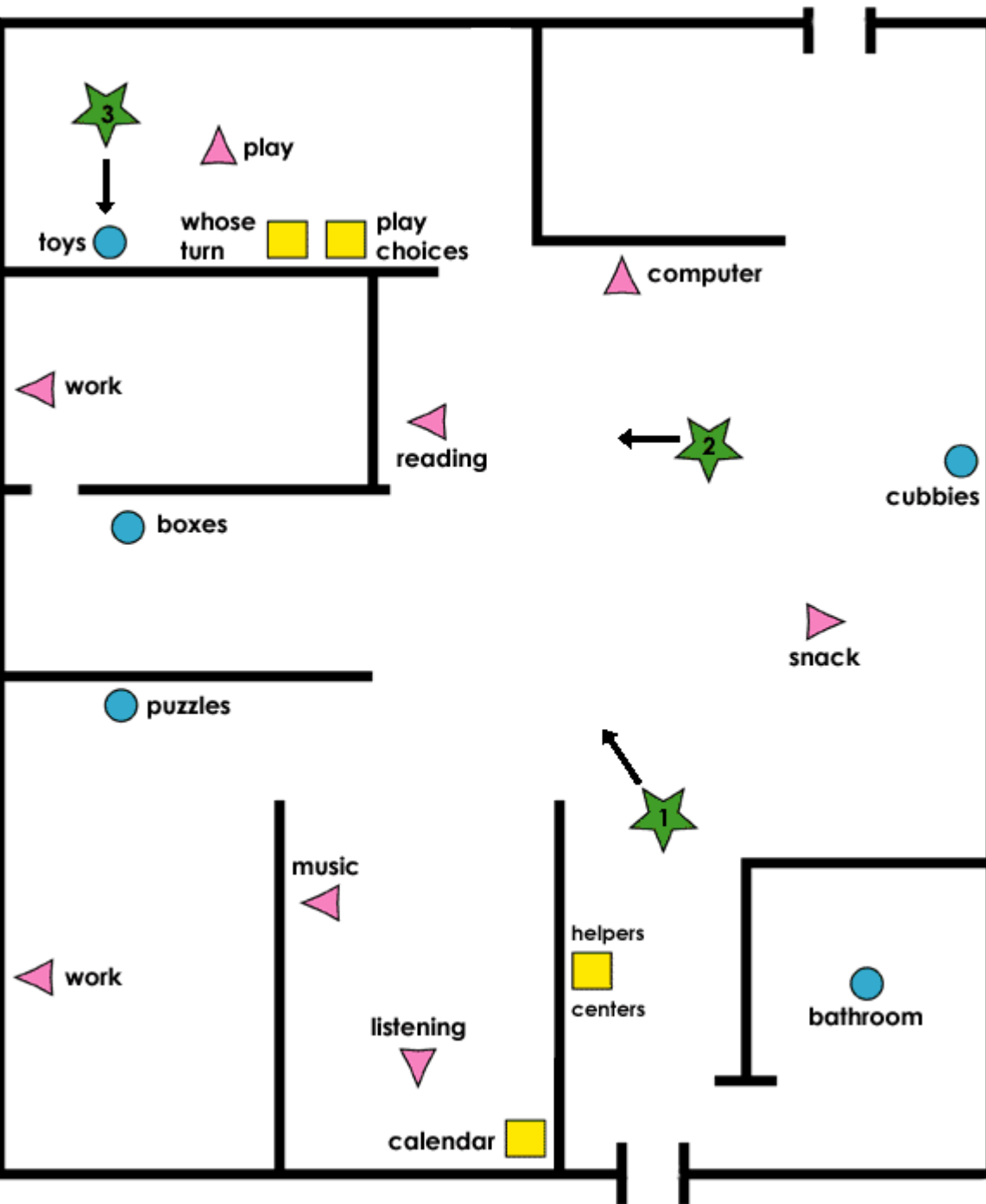
classroom views
view1
view2
view3

centers
work
play
music
listening
reading
computer
snack

storage
bathroom
toys
cubbies
boxes and puzzles

picture card use
helper center
calendar
play choice and whose turn

Figure 2

Work System or "To Do List" Order can be left to right or top to bottom.

Setup design for work system:

A work system is a concrete, visual way to tell your child:

1) What he has to do.

2) How much he has to do.

3) When he is finished.

4) What happens next.

How this helps:

▪Helps children who have trouble following verbal directions and remembering steps in an activity.

▪Uses organizational as well as visual supports.

▪Allows the individual to get the activity done with little frustration.

▪Teaches specific skills in an organized and structured way.

▪Teaches flexibility by using the same materials for different tasks. For example, one could use the same objects in a task for sorting by color, sorting by shape or sorting by function.

▪Work systems can be used for any activity that has more than one step, such as washing hands, making a sandwich, getting dressed, etc.

Note: Thanks to Michelle Migden, therapist, Chapel Hill TEACCH Center

Figure 3

Techniques and materials that may increase student interest in activities as well as helping them manage their behavior in each classroom center.

Independent Work Center:

- Wicky Sticks
- Magna Doodles
- Variety of Paper (weight/size/texture)
- Add paper on wall (use climbing block so they have to get up high or crawl through); add texture behind paper (leaves, yarn, bubble paper, etc.)
- Smelly "scented" markers
- Cover table with different papers (texture can be added under this)
- Squiggly pens
- Small chalkboards
- Large chalk/wet chalk
- Tape large box to the table or several small shoe boxes (covered in paper)
- Sponge/Mop painting
- Small pencils (used for golf and bowling scoring)
- Styrofoam boards
- Tape letter pieces
- Felt letters
- Preformed letter/number components
- Lotion in bags with stencils

Books / Library Area:

- Heavy weighted pillows available at discount department stores.
- Textured books (i.e. Pat the Bunny, Pat the Cat)
- Musical / sound books (i.e. Circus, Household Sounds, Transportation, Farm Animals – Baby Animals)
- Singing books / books with rhythm (commercial/teacher-made) ie. Wheels on the Bus, Mary Wore a Red Dress, I went Hiking (teacher-made) based on I Went Walking
- Various textures of pillows (i.e. silk, felt, corduroy, fake fur, vinyl etc)
- Blanket with various textures
- Barrel, boxes, climber, tents added for variation in the reading area
- Seating variations (large soft blocks, bean bags, sleeping bags, mat, large pillows, toddler mattress, air pillow and body pillow.

Dramatic Play:

- Add as many textures and various weights of materials as possible
- A rug, fuzzy slippers, rubber boots, terry cloth slippers, vests, back packs, suitcases, lunch boxes, real items that add weight (e.g. camera, pots, logs, flashlights, etc.)
- Flat wood panels
- Cheese board – add textures on top / under
- Laminating scraps to make a window
- Foam
- Mats (entry door, non-skid [bubbled and textured/pressure activated for sound])
- Toddler mattress
- Tents
- Boxes
- Tubs
- Small climber
- Ball pool
- Wading pools
- Large cubes
- Wedges (e.g. Jack & Jill)
- Balance beam (e.g. 5 elephants went balancing)
- Steps
- Soft, large blocks
- Clothes line

Motor:

- Scooter boards
- Fun noodles
- Floor tape designs on floor
- Climber – add materials under it (i.e. rug, blanket, Velcro strips, bubble paper)
- Mini-trampoline
- Tunnel
- Hula-hoops
- Spinning top
- Barrel – line it with fake fur, felt, spandex on end of barrel, etc.
- Blankets of various weights/textures
- Use long step bench – textures on and in front
- Boxes (attached in different ways)
- Bolsters
- Bean Bags – different shapes and textures (e.g. frogs)
- Balance beam – tape bubble paper on/under it
- Dizzy Discs and Saucers
- Scarves / ribbon
- Velcro Tag
- Lycra Bands (Coop Band and Body Shapers)
- Hand/foot prints
- Cardboard tubes
- Rain sticks
- Water snake
- Parachute (large and small)
- Large and small balls
- Suspended rice-filled balloon

Body Awareness:

- Cardboard blocks (secure with Velcro on one side)
- Bubble paper
- Wrapper snappers
- Weighted snakes
- Bean bag square
- Suspend balloons/streamers
- Basket of mittens and gloves (secure to floor/wall with Velcro)
- Colored wrist and ankle bracelets (soft and hard) of different weights
- Vibrating toys
- Body socks
- Tubs with balls/leaves
- Mirrors
- Path Sensation

Tactile:

- Finger-painting: mashed potato; jelly; warm sago; goop; soap snow; yogurt; tomato sauce; whipped cream; pudding; sparkle toothpaste; slime + sparkles
- Dough – magic dough; salt dough; play dough
- Add popcorn kernels, rice, beans, parsley flakes, etc. to your dough and cream gelatin
- Play dough pressed on wall
- Clay

- Shaving cream (dance in it to music on bubble paper!)
- Zinc on backs of hands; nose and feet
- Hand lotion
- Feather duster; lamb skin; vibrators to tickle body parts
- Texture blanket
- Printing with dish mops, scourers, loofahs and curlers
- Bubble blowing
- Animal sponges in water
- Washing clothes/dishes
- Ice-block painting
- Cooking
- Balloon filled with corn flour
- Goop balls

Sensory Table (table can be lined with paper, cloth or bubble wrap)

Use little cloth bags with different closures, in addition to usual firm containers:

- Use variety of different weighted containers, scoops, lids, counters, magnetic letters and numbers
- Clear plastic tubing, PVC pipe, balls (koosh, rubber, ping pong, etc.)
- Cardboard tubes, funnel board, large and small funnels

Beans	Lentils	Peas	Mulch
Oatmeal	Buttons	Pea gravel or Aquarium gravel	Poppy seeds
Rice	Pasta	Dirt / Sand	Chalk
Plastic bottle caps, Lego's, Cars	Bird Seed	Artificial snow	Scent / color the water, add colored ice cubes
Popcorn	Crunching cornflakes/	Deodorant bottle / Shaving brush painting	Suds on a tray
Leather Buttons	Empty spools of various sizes	Flour and water	Indian corn

Cutting Activities:
- Different textures & weight of paper (magazines, construction, sandpaper, tissue paper, wrapping paper, etc.)
- Add to paper:
    - Popsicle sticks
    - straws
    - dry macaroni
    - colored dots
- Play dough
- Tape paper on wall, blackboard or easel (mark with straight/curved lines, etc.)
- Small boxes secured to table for 3D
- Yarn stiffened with glue or starch
- String
- Fabric pieces stiffened with glue or starch

- Styrofoam trays
- Streamer rolls

Visual-Motor Games:

- Boom racquet
- Tic Tac Toe
- Flower Bean Bag Target
- Velcro Toss –Apple Tree
- Under the Table Letter Game
- Toss & Match
- Balloon Game + fun noodles
- Musical Chairs
- Dice Games: 2 large dice – one with COMPIC movement symbols one with dots. To develop movement; counting; one-to-one correspondence; turn taking; number/numeral recognition.
- Visual Obstacle course - COMPIC
- Block Floor Puzzle – (math)
- Look / See / Do

Other Items:

- Large tin lined with paper, Dip ping-pong balls in paint. Place balls in tin and roll it. Result: marble painting.
- Koosh balls
- Sand balloons
- Flour
- Small textured balls / cat balls with bells
- Weighted snake (fill with rice)
- Bubbles
- Small cylinder bolsters
- Sandwich bags filled with finger-paint, cornstarch, water and sealed with clear tape

Figure 4
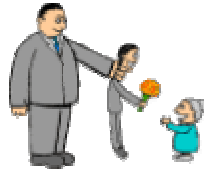
Social Stories are an additional option to provide students with individualized opportunities to understand and practice specific social situations

Social Stories Template

- Social stories are made up a ratio of **1 directive** or **control** sentence to every **2 to 5 descriptive** or **perspective** sentences.

- **Descriptive Sentences:** Describe the situation. Tell what is. These are the backbone of the social story and contain the objective information that is free from opinion.

    Example: the bell rings for the children to come in from recess. The children go to their classroom where the teacher reads a story
    Sample words:
    Sometimes I_____
    This happens _____
    I am_____
    Many people do _____

- **Perspective Sentences** presents others' reactions to a situation so that an individual can learn how others' perceive various events. They can contain thoughts, feelings, opinions, beliefs, and motivation inferences.

    Example: When the bell rings for recess to end, the teacher is happy to see all the children line up quietly and walk to their classroom. Many of the children are excited that they get to hear a story. The teacher likes to see the children listen. The teacher likes it when children are quiet during the story.

    Sample wording:
    Others around me will like it if I _____
    People do this because _____
    During (what may be different) _____

There may be _____
Sometimes people decide to _____
My friend usually likes
Also (how other people might respond) _____

- **Directive** or **control** sentences may be omitted entirely depending on the person and his or her needs

- **Directive sentences**: direct a person to the appropriate desired response in positive terms. The greater number of directive statements, the more specific the cues for how an individual should respond
  a. **Example**: I am playing during recess. The bell rings for me to come in, I stop playing and line up to come in. I follow the other children and quietly go in the classroom, I go to my desk and sit down, I listen as my teacher reads the story

OR

- **Control Sentence** identifies the suggested strategy the person can use to facilitate memory and comprehension of the social story. The words are gently so they are not interpreted too literally and may not work. The individual adds these sentences after reviewing the story.
  Example: I remember that the bell means its time for recess to end by thinking of a teapot. I know when it whistles, the water is done. The bell is like a whistle; when it rings, it is done.

  Sample words:
  Soon I will_____
  I will try to _____
  I will remember that _____
  I may ask _____

  Affirmative Sentences: enhance the meaning of the surrounding statements, often expressing a commonly shared value or opinion within a given culture.
  Examples:
  Most people ____: **This is a good idea**
  Most people ____: **This is a safe thing to do**
  Most people ____: **This is okay**

_____ : **This is important**

Further guidelines can be found in Carol gray's Social Stories texts.

Introducing the social story:
For the reader, read it through twice with the student and then have the student read it independently once a day before the events or close to the event.

For the nonreader, record on audio tape

Sometimes I (What is or describe the situation)
Or
I am (What is)

This is because

Also (How other people might respond)

For Example

During (What may be Different)

This Happens

There may be

This is okay
People do this because

I will try to

Others around me will like it if I

Soon I will

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