Activity Routines Study Group:

Meeting One: Planning a Routine

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2:30pm-3:30pm

Facilitated by

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Developed for Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired Outreach Programs

Outreach Programs Events Update:

- For upcoming webinars: http://www.tsbvi.edu/2015-10-17-20-13-33/webinar-listings
- For upcoming workshops and conferences: http://www.tsbvi.edu/2015-10-17-20-13-33/outreach-workshops-conferences
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Housekeeping

- Download handouts and sign-in roster
- Send sign-in roster to sobeckb@tsbvi.edu or fax to 512-206-9320
- Make sure you registered and complete evaluation within 60 days including code for ACVREP/SBEC credit
- View captions in a separate window at https://tcc.1capapp.com/event/tsbvi/embed
- The code will be announced during the presentation

Adobe Connect Webinar Tour

- For tips about screen navigation go to http://www.connectusers.com/tutorials/2008/11/meeting_accessibility/
- Location of pods
- Power Point content included in your handout
- Poll participation – enter response in chat if you cannot access the poll

Link to enter room: http://tsbvi.adobeconnect.com/routines/

Activity Routines Study Group
Meeting One: Planning a Routine

Agenda

- What is an instructional routine?
- Why use instructional routines?
- Gathering information
- Student video and brainstorming
- Planning for our next session

Life is Made of Routines

- A routine is defined by Merriam-Webster as a "sequence of actions regularly followed".

- Often this term is applied only to things that one has to do, daily obligations such brushing your teeth, getting ready for work or folding the laundry. There may be somewhat of a disparaging feeling towards the term, an attitude that the routine is mundane and unremarkable. It's simply what we have to do to get by in the world.

- However, if we dig a little deeper we see that routines are present also in those events that occur on an occasional basis, including those in which we feel joy and inspiration such as watching a movie, going for a swim, listening to music or spend time with friends and family. For, even these activities, one has a set of automatic actions that allow him or her to participate in the activity while at the same time attending to novel things that arise in the moment.

Cognitive Load

- Cognitive load refers to the amount of information in working memory that an individual is required to process in order to engage in any given task. High cognitive loads reduce potential for success in a task. Routines allow a person to move information from working memory to long term memory. This supports greater independence within the task.

- For example, driving an automobile may have initially been quite challenging because the cognitive load – with the shifting, turning, turn signals, planning stops, watching out other cars, monitoring your speed, etcetera - was so great. Over time, however, it became so routine that you can now perform additional tasks, such as drinking coffee, having a conversation, searching for an address or putting on sunglasses, while driving.

- This is important for students with cognitive challenges as they can have great difficulty processing even small amounts of information. Routines allow a student to move information to long term memory, thus freeing up "brain space" that can be directed toward acquiring additional skills within that task, making him or her more independent.

What is an Instructional Routine?

In her book <u>Communication: A Guide for Teaching Students with Visual and Multiple Impairments</u>, Linda Hagood identifies seven characteristics of a well-developed routine:

1. The beginning and end steps of the activity are clear to both the teacher and the student. When you signal the beginning of the routine, you immediately begin the routine; when you signal the end of the routine, you immediately end the routine and move to the next activity.

2. The sequence of steps should be simple and predictable, especially during the initial phases of implementing the routine. Once the student begins to demonstrate greater independence and engagement, the routine may be expanded for more complexity.

3. The student should have multiple opportunities to respond within the routine. The object of the routine is not only for the student to develop ability and independence within a task but also to increase communication skills. In order to address this goal, there should be ample opportunities for the student to practice communication.

4. Interactions are reciprocal between the adult and the student. Rather than actions and interactions being primarily teacher-driven, there should be a balance between the number of turns taken by the adult and the student.

5. Objects and actions are used to cue responses from the student rather than verbal or tactual prompts. Using your voice or touch to cue a student may result "prompt dependency" on the part of the student. Focusing on the objects and actions that are a natural part of the routine will enable the student to attend to their own actions within the routine and self-prompt with greater success.

6. Rather than requiring more complex, multi-step interactions, simple responses that the student is currently able to perform are targeted. Examples of simple student responses include glancing, reaching, moving toward, vocalizing, performing a step in the routine, requesting assistance or continuation of an activity, handing an object, imitating, taking a turn, continuing to interact with the person and or object in the routine. A developmentally appropriate communication assessment can help identify simple responses to be targeted.

7. All features of the routine should be consistent each time it is implemented. This includes the people who engage in the routine with the student, the sequence of steps and interactions, the objects that are used, the location in which the routine occurs and also the time of day that the routine takes place. This consistency will provide greater predictability on the part of the student. On the other hand, while routines should be <u>consistent</u>, they should not be <u>static</u>. A routine should change as the student's skills change. When the student has shown, through demonstration of skills, that he or she is ready for more participation, the routine is modified to accommodate this.

Why Use Instructional Routines?

FOR THE STUDENT

A student with multiple impairments often has difficulty understanding the expectations of his or her teacher, which results in a concurrent lack of success in classroom activities. Use of routines helps to alleviate these impediments through providing the following components to the student's day:

- Predictability: The student knows what is going to happen from start to finish.
- Consistency: The student understands what they are supposed to do.
- Anticipation: The student knows that the occurrence of one specific action indicates that he or she should be prepared for another specific action.
- Practice: Repeated opportunities to engage in a task help the student to remember what was done (cognitive load) so he or she is able to undertake an even larger share of the task the next time.

FOR THE TEACHER

In addition to the benefits for students, a teacher will find that implementing routines will promote a number of positive aspects for his or her own daily practice.

- A teacher may feel at a loss as how to make the school day more meaningful for a student with multiple impairments. Programming can be a challenge. Involving the student in even an adapted academic curriculum may be inadequate and ineffective. The student often shows limited engagement and independence and ends up having an excessive amount of down time. This lack of engagement may begin to impact the overall structure of the class. Activity routines allow the teacher to build greater structure for that student, increasing the overall structure and flow of the classroom.

- Without some kind of consistent background, it can be difficult to gauge the progress of a student with multiple impairments; it can be hard to parse out what factors are impacting performance. A routine addresses this routine by providing a context in which to evaluate the student's progress. Once the teacher has a focus of instruction, as provided by the routine, he or she is better able to attend to slight changes in the student's behavior. By modifying instruction based on these smaller increments, the teacher can provide better intervention and document progress.

- As students become familiar with their routines, there is often a noted decrease in incidents of negative behavior. This is due to two factors: First, the student experiences greater success and a greater sense of control in their lives; second, through promoting positive, collaborative interactions, teacher and student develop trust and bonding for one another.

The Importance of Having Fun Together

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." - Maya Angelou

- Many students with multiple and visual impairments are at the sensory-motor or pre-operational stages of development. For these children building social/emotional strength and resiliency through bonding with others is their primary need. Without confidence and

trust, children tend to withdraw and resist engagement with the world and with people. Bonding is one of the greatest means to empower your students.

- Having fun together is one of the most powerful ways to build bonds. Play engenders positive attitudes not only toward one's partner but also contributes to overall enthusiasm and motivation that can generalize to other activities throughout the day. By making a routine fun, not only for the student but for the yourself as well, you enhance learning and increase success… not to mention making the day more pleasant. Look for your student's sense of humor and find your own as well. Discover the values that the two of you share.

- Once a bond is established, your presence no longer signals demand to the student. Your presence signals fun memories. The student is more likely to be open to participating in anything at all with you and may consider your directives in a more pleasant light.

Gathering Information to Create an Instructional Routine

Likes and Dislikes:

- A routine has greater potential for success if it incorporates a student's existing interests. To determine these interests, the teacher can complete a likes/dislikes inventory. Information for the inventory can come through direct observation and also from interviewing persons who are familiar with the student such as family members. Items for the inventory may vary considerably and could include types of sounds or music, smells, foods, types of touch, tones of voice, interactive games, physical activities… Really, just about anything that either attracts or repels the student.

- Students with multiple impairments often progress through different areas of skills development at varying speeds. For example, it is not uncommon that a student with a fairly typical profile of physical development is functioning at a much earlier developmental level in the cognitive and emotional areas. It is the emotional developmental level that has greatest impact on whether an activity is meaningful and motivating for the student. A child's preferences reveal a great deal about his or her emotional developmental level.

- Notice in what actions and objects in which a student shows interest during free time. Pay attention to the small details. This is particularly important with those students who don't appear to demonstrate much engagement with people or the environment – the children about whom is sometimes made a comment such as, "He doesn't like anything." In all likelihood, this student does have preferences but they are so subtle and/or idiosyncratic that they are overlooked during casual observation.

- The information from the likes/dislikes inventory will provide the teacher with a starting point in determining what might work and what probably won't work. This can be applied not only to what type of overall activity might be appropriate for a routine but also what kinds of interactions and materials could increase a student's involvement in any given routine. For example, if a student likes bouncing a ball, you could create a ball bouncing interactive game routine but you could also find a way that bouncing a ball is included in

tooth brushing or toileting. Or perhaps bouncing a ball would occur at the end of a routine in order to increase the student's anticipation.

- Formal assessment information such as those provided by occupational and physical therapists and speech language pathologists, need to be considered. A student's fine and gross motor abilities and communication needs could have significant impact on the student's ability to engage in the actions and interactions of the routine. A communication assessment will also be helpful in determining what kinds of student responses should be targeted.

- Adaptations and accommodations, as identified by the team, must be in place. Consider the level and form of the student's receptive and expressive language. Does the student use tactile symbols? Objects? Pictures? Does he or she respond to simple verbal utterances? Manual sign? Gestures? Will the environment need to be structured to reduce auditory or visual input? Can the student physically access the materials and environments? What is a realistic expectation for the amount of time the student will be able to stay engaged? Will the teacher set up the materials or should the student go get the materials?

- Proactive behavior considerations should be part of the structure of the routine from the very beginning. Make every effort to prevent a negative situation from occurring. Think about what steps can be taken to maximize success and minimize distractions or difficulties for the student. Consider such aspects as: Can the student walk the required distance? Is the student highly sensitive to noise, touch or other sensory input? How many people can the student tolerate in his or her space? Remember that motivation is plays an enormous role in the success of a routine so and a student will often walk further and engage for longer periods with a favorite person, object or activity. Responses to behaviors, should they occur, also need to be identified so that there is consistency in this area as well.

Discussion: Evaluating the Routine

- When assessing the effectiveness of your routine and thinking about how it might be enhanced, ask yourself the following questions:

  o Were Linda Hagood's characteristics of a good instructional routine included?

    ▪ Is there a clear beginning and ending to the routine?
    ▪ Is the sequence of steps simple and predictable?
    ▪ Does the student have ample opportunities to respond?
    ▪ Are interactions between adult and student reciprocal?
    ▪ Are there opportunities to use object or action prompts rather than voice or touch cues?
    ▪ Are simple student responses targeted? Is the student able to perform the expected responses?
    ▪ Has the routine been implemented consistently over time? Are there modifications to your schedule or organization that could increase consistency?

o   Were the student's interests incorporated into the routine?
o   Did the adult and student enjoy the routine? Was there evidence of bonding and value-sharing?

o   Will the teacher be able to document progress based on the student's participation in the routine?

- It may also be helpful to use the insights gained from the routine combined with knowledge from the likes/dislikes inventory and other sources to explore whether there other routines that could be motivating and engaging for this student.

Future Study Groups: Focus on Your Student

- Provide a three to five-minute video of your student engaged in any activity. This may not be the same activity for which you ultimately decide to design an instructional routine but it will provide to be better acquainted with your student.

- Complete a likes/dislikes inventory for the student. This information will also help group members in providing relevant and helpful feedback and ideas.

- The video and the likes/dislikes inventory should be shared with TSBVI at least one week prior to the next webinar so that we can ensure it is included in the materials for that session.

- Be prepared to share other relevant information about the student. This can include data included in formal assessments as well as that derived from your own informal observations and discussions with other team members and family.

- At subsequent meetings, you may share additional video of your student so that we can observe how the routine evolves over time and provide one another ongoing support and ideas.

Dates for Future Study Groups

- November 28th, 2017
- January 30th, 2018
- March 27th, 2018
- May 22nd, 2018

Further Reading

- [Communication: A Guide for Teaching Students with Visual and Multiple Impairments, by Linda Hagood](#)

- [Smith, Millie, Why Are Routines Worth the Trouble?](#)

- [Communication for Children with Deafblindness, or Visual and Multiple Impairments, Routines](#)

- [New Teacher Series: Getting Started with Activity Routines, Ann Rash and Nancy Toelle](#)

- [Play is More than Just Fun, Stuart Brown](#)

This project is supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Special Education Program (OSEP). Opinions expressed here are the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the Department of Education.

Figure 1: IDEAs That Work logo and OSEP disclaimer

Figure 2: The Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired logo

Likes / Dislikes Inventory

Fill one sheet out for each child. Over a period of time through listening to stories from others and through observation of the child, simply list things the child likes and things he doesn't like. We all enjoy things that we are good at and that we understand. The child's "Likes" will be his areas of strength and indicates sensory channels that are working. His "Dislikes" will be areas of weakness and indicates sensory channels that may not be working efficiently. The information gathered on this form will give you underlying themes that you can use for modifications, teaching strategies, topics for communication, and activities.

Child's Name: _____ Date: _____

Likes	Dislikes

Summary Information:

1. What sensory channels is the child using the most?

    ❑ Vision for ex.:

    ❑ Hearing for ex.:

    ❑ Touch for ex.:

    ❑ Smell for ex.:

    ❑ Taste for ex.:

    ❑ Proprioceptive for ex.:

    ❑ Vestibular for ex.:

2. What are possible topics for communication?

Units/Themes:

Routines (i.e. joint action/turn-taking; vocational; daily living skills):

3. What are some activities you typically do that the child might find aversive?

4. What other modification, strategies, choice making opportunities are suggested by the above information?

Form developed by Kate Moss and Jenny Lace Texas Deafblind Outreach rev. 11-06

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