

Transitioning Back to School During COVID: Using Visuals and Other Evidence-based Strategies for Children with Autism




By: Amy Moore Gaffney, M.A., CCC-SLP, Educational Consultant for Indiana Resource Center for Autism

iidc.indiana.edu/irca

To say that schools have changed a lot in the past few months is an understatement. And, as a result, our students need to learn new rules and routines before they can start learning about academics. At the beginning of each school year, you typically teach this information. This year, it is much more important that you teach and practice rules and routines to protect the health of our students, ourselves, and the community. This will take time. You may find that you don't focus on academics during the first week or two of school as much you have during the past. This is good.

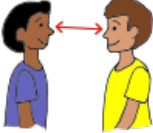

*"If you spend the first week of school directly teaching, modeling, and practicing routines, challenges in the classroom will dramatically decrease."
Kathleen Quill*



The following supports will help ALL students from preschool through high school.

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|  | These supports are evidence-based |
|  | These supports increase learning |
|  | These supports reduce anxiety |

Skills to Teach

There are four skills that students must learn to use across the school day: social distancing, wearing a mask, how and when to wash hands, and keeping hands to self.

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|  | <h3>How to Social Distance</h3> <p>It is generally accepted that in indoor settings, students should stand six feet away from each other. Students can be taught to distance themselves using boundary markers, hula hoops, or using outstretched hands as an informal measurement.</p> <p>The following resources provide information on social distancing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html• https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/What-is-Social-Distancing-A-Story-For-Children-5668223• https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/sites/afirm.fpg.unc.edu/files/covid-resources/Support%20Understanding-Giving%20People%20Space%20When%20Talking.pdf• https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/sites/afirm.fpg.unc.edu/files/covid-resources/Support%20Understanding-Giving%20People%20Space.pdf |
|  | <h3>How to Wear a Mask</h3> <p>The mask should completely cover the nose and mouth with the elastic straps tucked behind the ears. It is important to teach students, "I wear a mask to protect you; you wear a mask to protect me."</p> <p>Mask protocol and the importance of masks are discussed here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html• https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Cloth-Face-Coverings-for-Children-During-COVID-19.aspx• https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Wearing-A-Mask-Story-for-Children-5463572• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iE6L-4tO-rs• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLO1GNXKmNE |

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|  | <h2>How to Wash Your Hands</h2> <p>Experts suggest that you scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. It is important to teach students to watch all parts of their hands. For example, the most used part of the hand—the thumb—is also the least washed. The following resources teach handwashing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html• https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/resources/covid19-visuals-and-social-narratives.html• https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/sites/afirm.fpg.unc.edu/files/covid-resources/Support%20Understanding-Handwashing%20%28Clipart%29.pdf• https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/sites/afirm.fpg.unc.edu/files/covid-resources/Support%20Understanding-Handwashing%20%28Photos%29.pdf• https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/sites/afirm.fpg.unc.edu/files/covid-resources/Support%20Understanding-Handwashing.pdf |
|  | <h2>Don't Touch</h2> <p>People should avoid touching their face without first washing their hands. To prevent the spread of germs and COVID-19, avoid touching surfaces that can be touched by a variety of people, such as doorknobs, light switch, keyboards, etc. In addition, students should be encouraged not to touch each other—no high fives or holding hands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html• https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-covid-spreads.html• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8uOMXmIsgls |

Routines and Six Strategies for Teaching Them

The following are routines that children need to learn to stay safe and be active learners. Six evidence-based strategies are highlighted that can be used to teach them.

A table indicates for each routine which of the 6 strategies are effective. A brief description of ideas as well as multiple examples is included for each of the recommended strategies.

The Six Strategies

1. Schedule / To Do List
 - a. The **schedule** visually tells what activities will occur and their order. The schedule helps the student move from one task to the next.
 - b. The **to do list** visually tells what tasks the student needs to complete and in what order to complete them.
 - c. A student will benefit from a **combination** of a *schedule* and *to do lists*. For example, the student's schedule may indicate that the day begins with Morning. The to do list contains all of the tasks that should be completed during Morning Work time.
2. Physical Structure
 - a. Physical structure refers to the way furniture and materials are arranged to help students understand what happens each area.
3. Social Narrative
 - a. Social narratives are stories that use words and sometimes pictures to explain a variety of social situations. These can be read over and over. Often written in first person, the social narrative typically tells the reader what to expect to do, what others will do, and how people will react. The social narrative is written positively to encourage the person to do what is expected.
4. Video Modeling
 - a. Video modeling is a visual teaching strategy that demonstrates a skill, routine, or behavior to a person. The person will often re-watch the video in order to put the target skill, routine, or behavior into practice.
5. Signs / Cards
 - a. Signs or cards visually present information to support comprehension. These visuals are static, allowing for multiple opportunities to reference to support recall.
6. Reinforcement
 - a. A preferred item is provided following a desired behavior to increase the likelihood that the behavior will occur again.

Related Resources



The Indiana Resource Center for Autism website offers free edit-and-print Word documents of visual supports and social narratives, along with examples of visual schedules and structure that can be found at:

iidc.indiana.edu/irca/resources/visual-supports



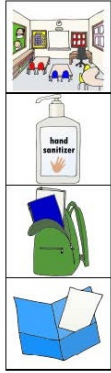



COVID-19 specific visual supports and social narratives can be found at:

iidc.indiana.edu/irca/resources/covid19-visuals-and-social-narratives.html


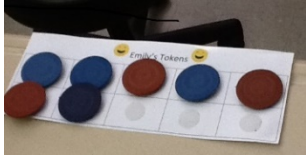
Arrival

The recommended strategies for this routine are:

1. Schedule / To Do List
2. Physical Structure
3. Social Narrative
4. Video Modeling
5. Signs / Cards
6. Reinforcement

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|  | <p>Schedule / To Do List</p> <p>When the student arrives, he may need a To Do List of tasks to complete, especially if there is a change in the routine. This may include using hand sanitizer when he enters the room or hanging up his backpack in a new location.</p> |
|  | <p>Physical Structure</p> <p>Ropes and guides may be used to divide the hallway to keep students lined up in orderly queues or out of restricted areas.</p> |
|  | <p>Social Narrative</p> <p>A narrative can explain expectations such as how to distance when walking, which path to take, how to greet others, where to put belongings, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Video Modeling</p> <p>A video demonstrates which door to enter, the proper way to walk in the building, the path to take and what she will pass on the walk to her classroom, how to greet others, and where to put belongings</p> |

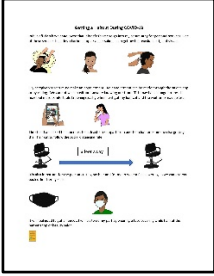



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|  | <p>Signs / Cards</p> <p>Use visual signs to indicate which door to enter, which side of the hall to walk on, and a reminder to social distance and to wear a mask.</p> |
|  | <p>Reinforcement</p> <p>A reinforcement system lets the student know he has followed the routine, used appropriate behavior, completed arrival tasks independently, etc.</p> |

Bathroom

The recommended strategies for this routine are:

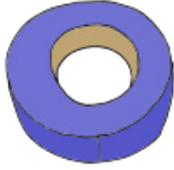




1. Social Narrative
2. Video Modeling
3. Signs / Cards
4. Reinforcement

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|  | <p>Social Narrative</p> <p>This narrative can explain expectations such as where to stand and wait, how many people are allowed in the bathroom, reminder to wash hands for 20 seconds, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Video Modeling</p> <p>A video can show all of the steps of the bathroom routine, from where and how to stand in line, to demonstrating good bathroom behavior, the hand washing routine, and leaving the bathroom appropriately.</p> |
| <p>Washing Your Hands</p>  | <p>Signs/Cards</p> <p>Post the handwashing routine above each sink, place a sign on the paper towels to remind students how many to take, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Reinforcement</p> <p>A reinforcement system lets the student know he has followed the routine and used appropriate behavior.</p> |

Bus

The recommended strategies for this routine are:






1. Physical Structure
2. Social Narrative
3. Video Modeling
4. Signs / Cards
5. Reinforcement

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|  | <p>Physical Structure</p> <p>Place tape on the floor or seats to show students how to space themselves apart. Using a rope or tape across seats where students should not sit can also be helpful.</p> |
|  | <p>Social Narrative</p> <p>This narrative can explain where to stand and wait for others to get on the bus first, where to sit, what to touch, when to wear masks, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Video Modeling</p> <p>A video can show all of the expectations for good bus behavior, such as how to get on while socially distancing, where to sit, and how to wear masks on the bus.</p> |
|  | <p>Signs / Cards</p> <p>Signs or cards list bus rules, including sitting down, not touching others, wearing a mask, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Reinforcement</p> <p>A reinforcement system lets the student know he has followed the routine and used appropriate behavior.</p> |

Cleaning Workspace

The recommended strategies for this routine are:

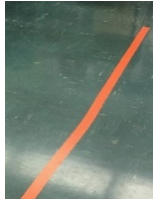
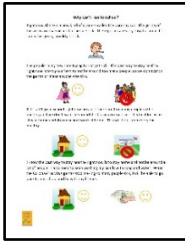

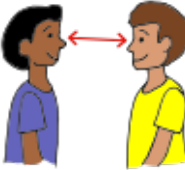

1. Schedule / To Do List
2. Social Narrative
3. Video Modeling
4. Signs / Cards
5. Reinforcement

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|  | <p>Visual Schedule / To Do List</p> <p>Give student a To Do list of the steps to clean the workspace.</p> |
|  | <p>Social Narrative</p> <p>This narrative explains why it is important to clean the workspace, how to clean it, and when this should be done.</p> |
|  | <p>Video Modeling</p> <p>A video can easily show how to complete the steps to clean the workspace, including how many wipes to use, how long to wipe, and what area to clean.</p> |
| <p>Take 1 wipe</p>  | <p>Signs / Cards</p> <p>Post visuals to tell students how many wipes to take, where cleaning materials are kept, how much hand sanitizer to use, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Reinforcement</p> <p>A reinforcement system lets the student know he has followed the routine and used appropriate behavior.</p> |

Common Areas

The recommended strategies for this routine are:



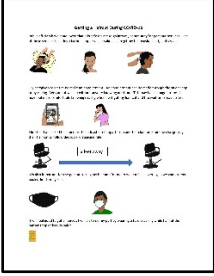

1. Physical Structure
2. Social Narrative
3. Video Modeling
4. Signs / Cards
5. Reinforcement

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|  | <p>Physical Structure</p> <p>Mark spaces on the ground to indicate where students can stand. Space seats apart to add distance.</p> |
|  | <p>Social Narrative</p> <p>This narrative explains rules in the common area, such as how to use the area, when and how a mask must be worn, socially distancing, some areas that can no longer be accessed, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Video Modeling</p> <p>A video can show the expectations while in common areas, such as what social distancing looks like, where to stand, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Signs / Cards</p> <p>Post signs to tell students to social distance, wear masks, and where it is ok to stand.</p> |
|  | <p>Reinforcement</p> <p>A reinforcement system lets the student know he has followed the routine and used appropriate behavior.</p> |



Dismissal

The recommended strategies for this routine are:

1. Schedule / To Do List
2. Physical Structure
3. Social Narrative
4. Video Modeling
5. Signs / Cards
6. Reinforcement

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|  | <p>Schedule / To Do List</p> <p>A dismissal to do list of tasks is essential because dismissal procedures are likely to have changed dramatically. The list may include using hand sanitizer when leaving the room, which folder to put in the backpack, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Physical Structure</p> <p>Ropes and guides can be used to divide the hallway to keep students lined up in an orderly manner. They may also be used to mark restricted areas.</p> |
|  | <p>Social Narrative</p> <p>This narrative should explain the expectations such as how to distance when walking out of the building, which path to take, how to say good-bye to others, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Video Modeling</p> <p>A video can demonstrate how to follow a dismissal to do list, pack a backpack, how to exit the classroom and building, and how to walk to the bus.</p> |




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|  | <p>Signs / Cards</p> <p>Visual signs indicate which door to exit through, which side of the hall to walk on, how to social distance and when to wear a mask.</p> |
|  | <p>Reinforcement</p> <p>A reinforcement system lets the student know he has followed the routine, used appropriate behavior, completed dismissal tasks independently, etc.</p> |

iPad / Computer Use

The recommended strategies for this routine are:



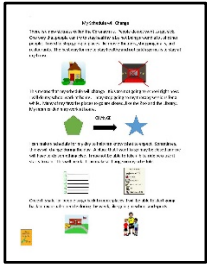
1. Social Narrative
2. Video Modeling
3. Reinforcement

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|  | <p>Social Narrative</p> <p>This narrative can explain when to use the iPad/computer, the importance of using hand sanitizer before and/or after use, what programs the student will use, where the student should sit with the iPad, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Video Modeling</p> <p>A video can demonstrate how to use the iPad appropriately, how to log on to the iPad/computer, how to turn off the computer or charge the iPad, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Reinforcement</p> <p>A reinforcement system lets the student know he has followed the routine, used appropriate behavior, and used appropriate behavior with technology.</p> |




Lunch

The recommended strategies for this routine are:

1. Schedule / To Do List
2. Physical Structure
3. Social Narrative
4. Video Modeling
5. Signs / Cards
6. Reinforcement

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|  | <h3>Schedule / To Do List</h3> <p>A schedule will guide the student through the lunch time activities, that may include, getting lunch box, lining up, going to cafeteria, sitting in the assigned seat, eating, throwing away trash, lining up, and going to classroom.</p> |
|  | <h3>Physical Structure</h3> <p>Ropes and guides can be used to divide the hallway to keep students lined up in orderly queues to go through the lunch lines or out of restricted areas. Place table and chairs apart for social distancing.</p> |
|  | <h3>Social Narrative</h3> <p>This narrative can explain how to wear a mask, when to take off the mask, how to make a lunch choice, where to sit, etc.</p> |

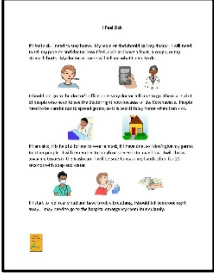

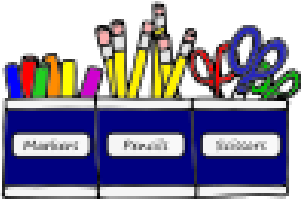

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|  | <p>Video Modeling</p> <p>A video can show the student which path to take to the cafeteria, which doors to enter and exit, how to go through the line and make choices, where to sit, how to throw away trash, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Signs / Cards</p> <p>Post visual signs to indicate which door to enter or exit through, where to stand in line, food choices, cafeteria rules, and a reminder to social distance and wear a mask.</p> |
|  | <p>Reinforcement</p> <p>A reinforcement system lets the student know he has followed the routine, used appropriate behavior, and used good manners.</p> |

Managing Supplies

The recommended strategies for this routine are:






1. Social Narrative
2. Video Modeling
3. Signs / Cards
4. Reinforcement

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|  | <h3>Social Narrative</h3> <p>This narrative should explain the expectations such as the importance of not sharing supplies, when to sharpen a pencil, what supplies I should have, what to do if I can't find something, etc.</p> |
|  | <h3>Video Modeling</h3> <p>A video can provide a tour of the classroom, focusing on where supplies are kept, how to sharpen a pencil or where to find extra paper.</p> |
|  | <h3>Signs / Cards</h3> <p>Label drawers and baskets so students can easily see where school supplies are kept. Post a desk map to show students how to keep their materials organized.</p> |
|  | <h3>Reinforcement</h3> <p>A reinforcement system lets the student know he has managed his school supplies appropriately, such as having a sharpened pencil ready for writing.</p> |

Nurse's Office

The recommended strategies for this routine are:






1. Physical Structure
2. Social Narrative
3. Video Modeling
4. Signs / Cards
5. Reinforcement

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|  | <p>Physical Structure</p> <p>Placement of chairs and dividers can be used to space apart students.</p> |
|  | <p>Social Narrative</p> <p>This narrative can explain when to go to the nurse's office, what to do when entering the nurse's office, and what the nurse will do if you are ill.</p> |
|  | <p>Video Modeling</p> <p>A video can show how to enter the nurse's office and check-in, where to sit, and how the nurse will assess help the student.</p> |
| <p><i>Please Knock to Enter</i></p>  | <p>Signs / Cards</p> <p>Post signs to indicate which door to enter and exit through, where to stand, wear a mask, and the rules for the nurse's office.</p> |
|  | <p>Reinforcement</p> <p>If a student must go to the nurse's office on a regular basis, a reinforcement system lets the student know she has followed the routine and used appropriate behavior.</p> |

Passing Time / Walking in the Hall

The recommended strategies for this routine are:




1. Physical Structure
2. Social Narrative
3. Video Modeling
4. Signs / Cards
5. Reinforcement

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|  | <p>Physical Structure</p> <p>Ropes and guides may be used to divide the hallway to keep students moving in orderly queues or out of restricted areas.</p> |
|  | <p>Social Narrative</p> <p>This narrative can explain expectations, such as the length of the passing period, which side of the hall to walk on, how the hallway may sound or feel, how to wear a mask, and how to socially distance. The narrative can also what the student can do during this time, such as refilling a water bottle, going to locker, going to the restroom, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Video Modeling</p> <p>A video can show the student how to navigate the hallway, where some important places may be, such as his locker or the bathroom, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Signs / Cards</p> <p>Post visual signs to indicate which side of the hall to walk on, rules about standing in the hallway, reminder to social distance and to wear a mask.</p> |
|  | <p>Reinforcement</p> <p>A reinforcement system lets the student know he has followed the routine, used appropriate behavior, and got to class on time.</p> |

Playground

The recommended strategies for this routine are:

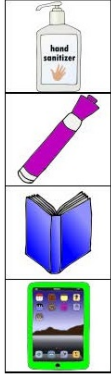



1. Social Narrative
2. Video Modeling
3. Signs / Cards
4. Reinforcement

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|  | <p>Social Narrative</p> <p>This narrative should explain the expectations for what to do on the playground, when the class will go out to the playground, if a mask should be worn, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Video Modeling</p> <p>A video can show where the playground is, what equipment and activities can be used on the playground, if a mask should be worn</p> |
| <p>3</p> | <p>Signs / Cards</p> <p>Post visual signs to indicate how many students can be on a piece of equipment, a stop sign to indicate an area is closed, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Reinforcement</p> <p>A reinforcement system lets the student know he has followed the rules and played safely on the playground.</p> |



Small Group

The recommended strategies for this routine are:

1. Schedule / To Do List
2. Physical Structure
3. Social Narrative
4. Video Modeling
5. Signs / Cards
6. Reinforcement

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|  | <p>Schedule / To Do List</p> <p>Give the student a list of small group activities, such as using hand sanitizer, getting supplies, watching a video, reading a story, cleaning his workspace before leaving, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Physical Structure</p> <p>Space out chairs for social distancing. Use tape to define student work area.</p> |
|  | <p>Social Narrative</p> <p>This narrative should explain where the group will work, when to use hand sanitizer, where to sit, the importance of personal space, group rules, and wearing a mask.</p> |
|  | <p>Video Modeling</p> <p>A video can demonstrate group activities, what the space looks like, how to use a to do list for the group, etc.</p> |

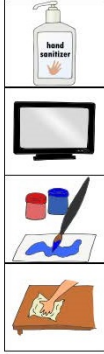



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|  | <p>Signs / Cards</p> <p>Post visual signs to indicate where materials are kept; use name tags for seats, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Reinforcement</p> <p>A reinforcement system lets the student know he has followed the routine, used appropriate behavior, such as staying in his designated space.</p> |



Specials

The recommended strategies for this routine are:

1. Schedule / To Do List
2. Physical Structure
3. Social Narrative
4. Video Modeling
5. Signs / Cards
6. Reinforcement

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|  | <h3>Schedule / To Do List</h3> <p>Give the student a list of what activities, including using hand sanitizer, getting supplies, watching a video, reading a story, cleaning his workspace before leaving, etc.</p> |
|  | <h3>Physical Structure</h3> <p>Space out chairs for social distancing. Use tape to define student work area.</p> |
|  | <h3>Social Narrative</h3> <p>This narrative can explain when to use hand sanitizer, where to sit, the importance of personal space, the routine for the special, and wearing a mask.</p> |
|  | <h3>Video Modeling</h3> <p>A video can show the student activities that may be done in the class, what the space looks like, how to use the to do list for the class, etc.</p> |

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|  | <p>Signs/Cards</p> <p>Post visual signs to indicate where materials are kept. Use name tags or shapes to indicate where students should sit, etc.</p> |
|  | <p>Reinforcement</p> <p>A reinforcement system lets the student know he has followed the routine, used appropriate behavior, such as staying in his designated space or wearing a mask.</p> |