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**Beginning to Use an Object Calendar**

**Developed by Stacy Shafer**

Object Calendars can be used to help facilitate communication. Calendars also help children transition from one activity to another. The team chooses a few activities that the child does on a daily basis. They then choose an object from each activity to represent that activity. The chosen activities should include several that the child enjoys. The object that is used to represent an activity needs to be meaningful to the child. The team slowly keeps adding to the number of activities in the child's day that are represented in her calendar. You can work on joint attention, social interactions, anticipation, sequencing, object exploration, choice-making, turn-taking, etc. There are many different types of calendar systems you can use with a student. The first level of calendar system is described below:

* The team chooses a few fun activities (4-6) that the child does on a daily basis (playing with the tent, sit-and-spin, water play, jumping on a rebounder, going for a walk outside, eating a snack, etc.). Then choose an object from each activity to represent that activity. (You will have 4-6 different objects.) The object that is used to represent an activity needs to be meaningful to the child and needs to be used during the activity.
* Cue the child that an activity is about to occur by presenting the object associated with that activity to her. Allow her to handle the object and explore it as she wishes, then IMMEDIATELY take her to the area the activity is going to occur, preferably while she's still holding the object, and engage in the activity.
* Cue the child that the activity is finished by presenting a distinctive basket that is unlike any other basket in her daily life. This will be her "finished basket". For example: When it is time to end the activity, present the finished basket to her, let her tactually explore the basket, then help her take the object that represents that activity and place it in the finished basket. Then IMMEDIATELY pick up the materials or move her out of the area.
* At least once a day, present a different basket containing all 4-6 object symbols to the child and let her explore with it. When she picks up one object symbol and begins to play with it, go do that activity with her.
* When the child begins to search for the object symbol for her favorite activity, this is the beginning of pre-symbolic object-based communication and she will be ready for the next level. (Or when she places the object symbol for an activity that she doesn't like into the finished basket as soon as it is given to her.)
* The team slowly keeps adding to the number of activities in the child's day that are represented in her calendar.

The next step will be to set-up a permanent location in the classroom for the calendar system. Instead of taking the object to the child, you bring the child over to the calendar. Then while the child explores the next object in her calendar, you have a short discussion with the child about the up-coming activity, then the child takes the object with her, goes and does the activity, brings the object back to the calendar and puts it in the finished basket.

For additional information please contact Sara Kitchen kitchens@tsbvi.edu

A wonderful resource book about Calendars is now available!!

Robbie Blaha's, *Calendars for Students with Multiple Impairments Including Deafblindness* is available from the Curriculum Department at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.