

# Leading Neurodiverse Schools: Lessons to Learn From Specialist Settings

**Presenter**

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20 May 2025  
FOBISIA webinar



# International schools often lack knowledge of specialist pedagogy

**Greater willingness towards inclusion in many schools BUT:**

- Needs are getting more complex
- Most schools have good knowledge of exam access arrangements
- Less awareness of methods like TEACCH and PECS
- These methods **DO** transfer well into the mainstream (if customised to the child)
- Need to try out strategies you see and make them work for you
- Lack of research to justify specialist pedagogies that work in practice
- Many children might benefit from these techniques





# My background

- **Vice Principal - Wales International School, Abu Dhabi**
- Won a TES international school award this year
- Previously **Head of Inclusion** at **ICS Amman**
- iSENCO tutor with Real Training
- Associate Member of the British Dyslexia Association
- PhD: Critical Disability Studies, particularly using specialist strategies in mainstream settings and parental engagement.



# Agenda

- Creating task flow and structure
- Emotional regulation strategies
- Establishing good classroom routines
- Breaktimes
- How to use PECS effectively

**Credit for images in this presentation:**

*Wales International School, [autismadventures.com](http://autismadventures.com),  
[bluemountaintherapy.com](http://bluemountaintherapy.com), [breezyspecialled.com](http://breezyspecialled.com),  
[autismspectrumteacher.com](http://autismspectrumteacher.com) & [simplyspecialled.com](http://simplyspecialled.com)*



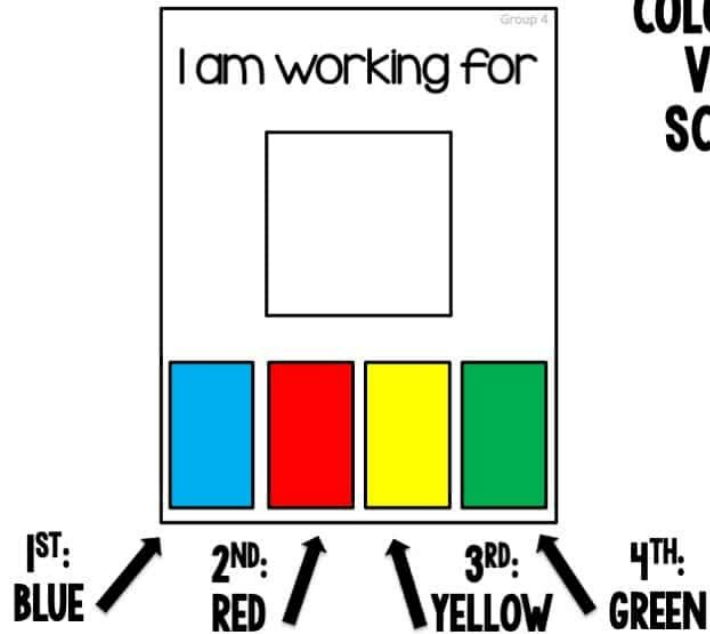


# Establishing task flow to create structure

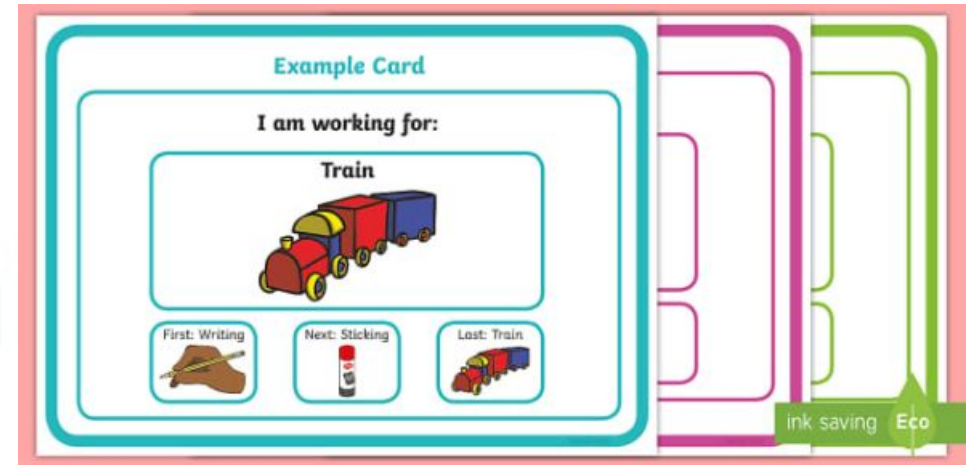
# Working towards

Motivate children without using words

## WORKING CARDS



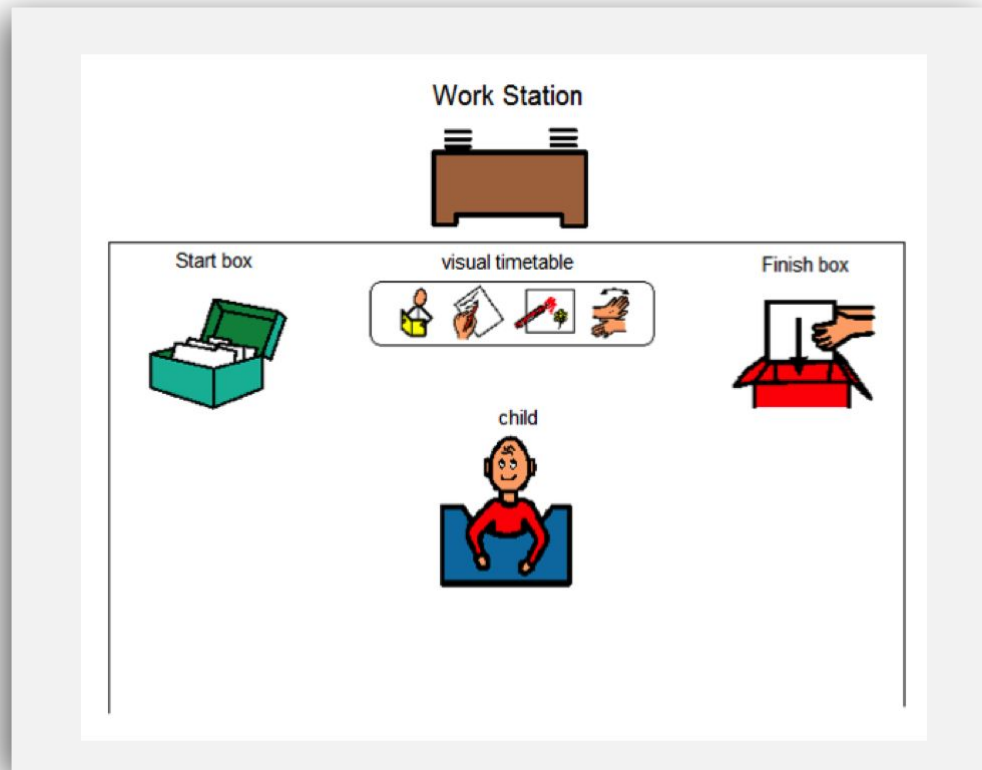
COLOR TABLE  
VISUAL  
SCHEDULE





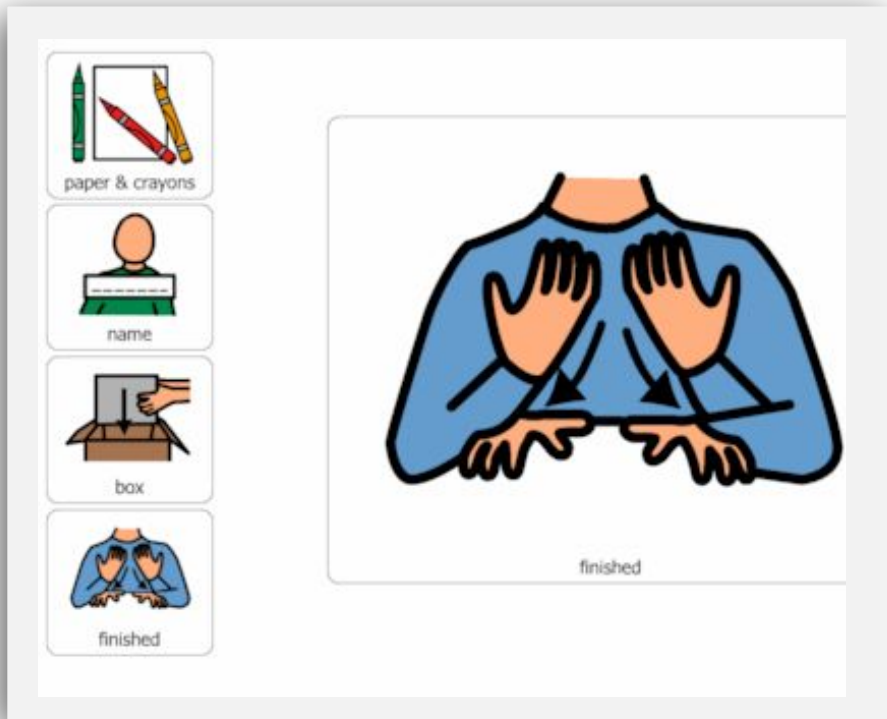
# Provide the schema of task 'start' and 'finish'

Many children are distressed by seemingly 'never-ending' or unpredictable tasks



# Finished tasks

Use visual supports to help reinforce task structure





# Group work stations



**A more inclusive alternative to individual workstations if there are several pupils at the same level**



# TEACCH task boxes

Build independence and help children follow personal task flows



1

Child checks personal schedule



2

Finds coloured-coded box and places matching detachable symbol over the velcro



3

Follows visual instructions and completes task



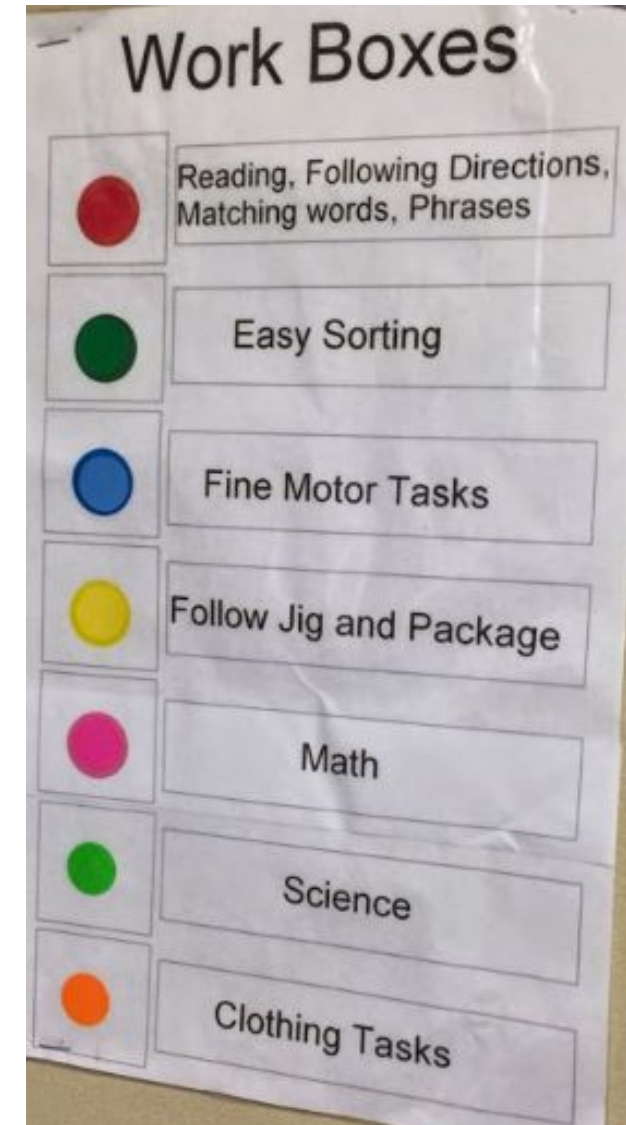
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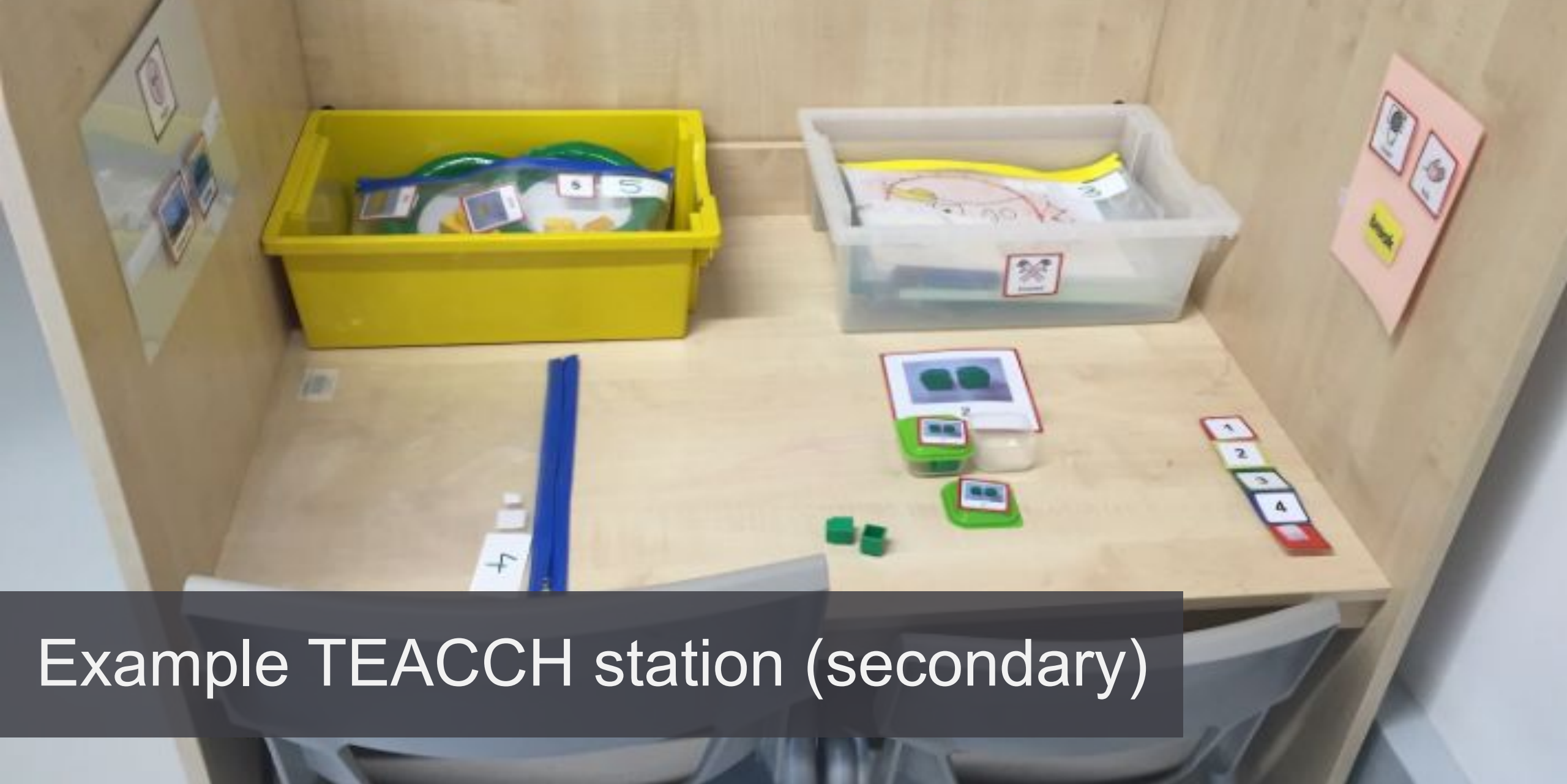
Checks work with adult then places card in 'done' box. Goes and gets the next task

Credit: Adventures in autism



# TEACCH task boxes & flow





## Example TEACCH station (secondary)



# Emotional regulation

# Calm down kits



**Reduce vocab and add photos of children's faces so they can quickly grab personalised kits**

# Design around individual needs

**A vibrant calm down corner**



**....and a minimalist one**



Credit: Teaching with Jillian Starr



# Plan for portability & include individualised objects

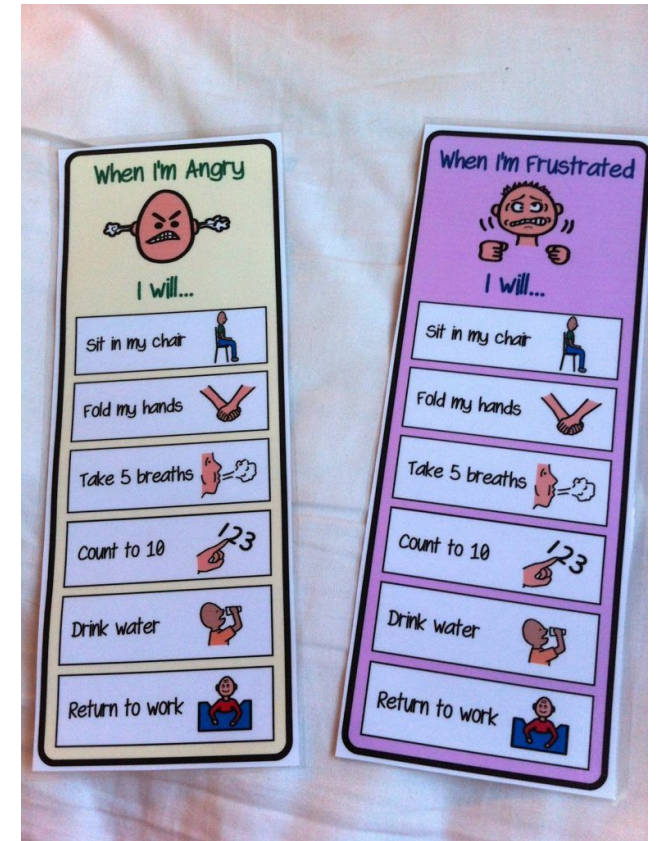
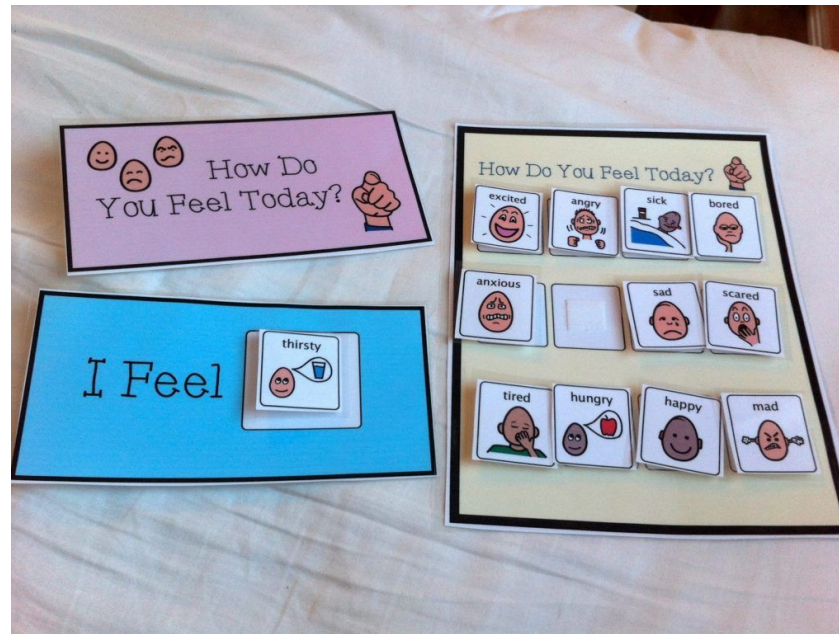
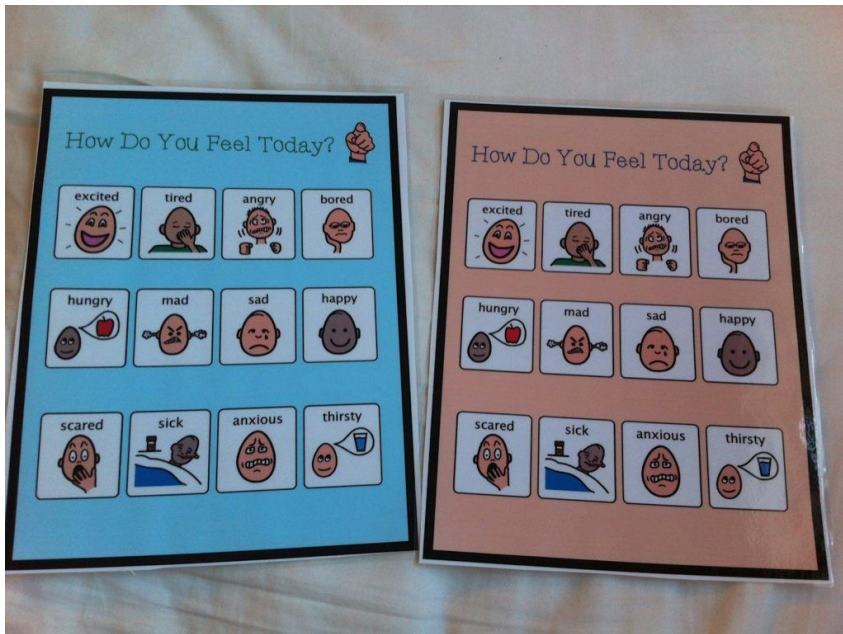


(An example key ring for the child or supporting adult to keep in their pocket. For some children, just having this key ring in their pocket is enough to remind them of what they can do to help themselves calm down – don't think they don't need it because they are not constantly looking at it).

# PECS: Less is typically more

Or provide choice of emotional regulation strategies

Use for daily check-in with feelings





# Behavioural lanyards



- Children can quickly indicate to adults what they need to calm down
- Use also for two-way comms between adult and child

**Free download: Teacherspayteachers**

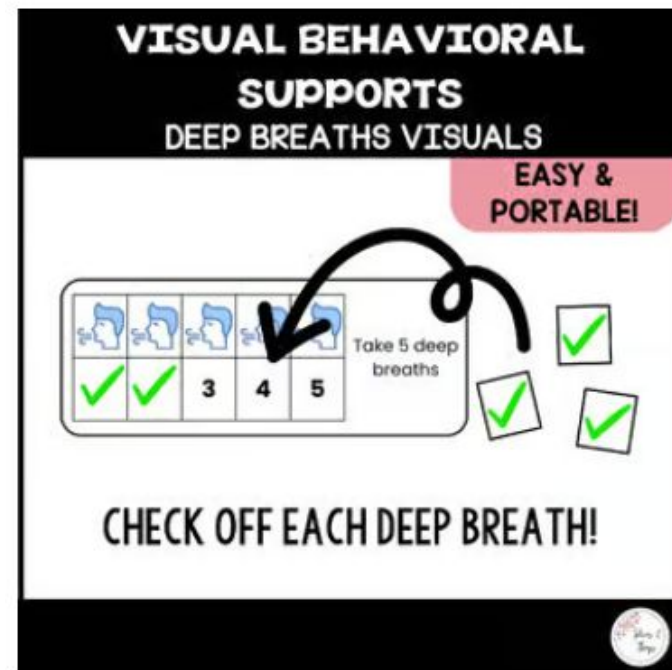


# Choice boards

Help them meet their needs to avoid dysregulation



# Breathing



Straightforward breathing technique. The simple act of physically placing the cards in the boxes can additionally help children self-regulate.

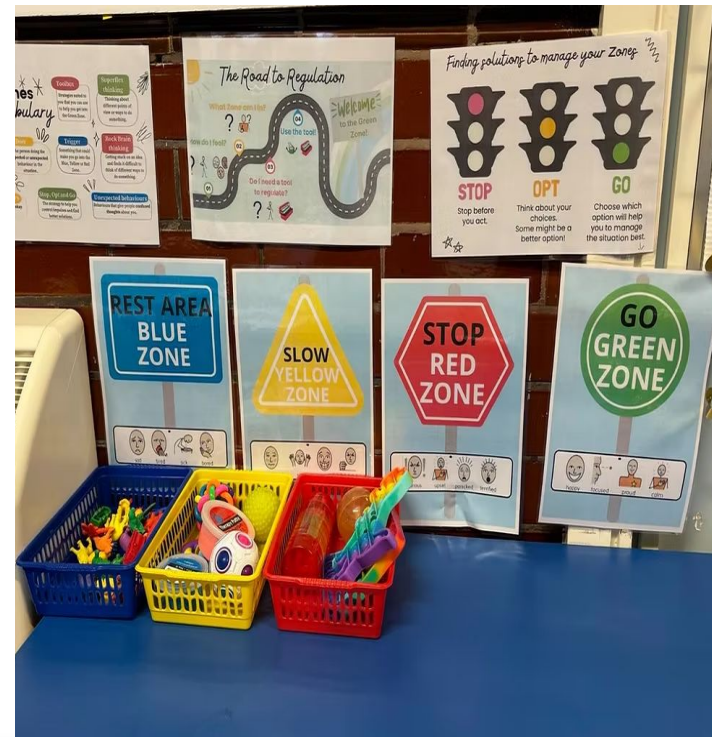
**Available: Teacherspayteachers & Twinkl**



# Zones of Regulation

Use as a remedial intervention and not just general communication tool

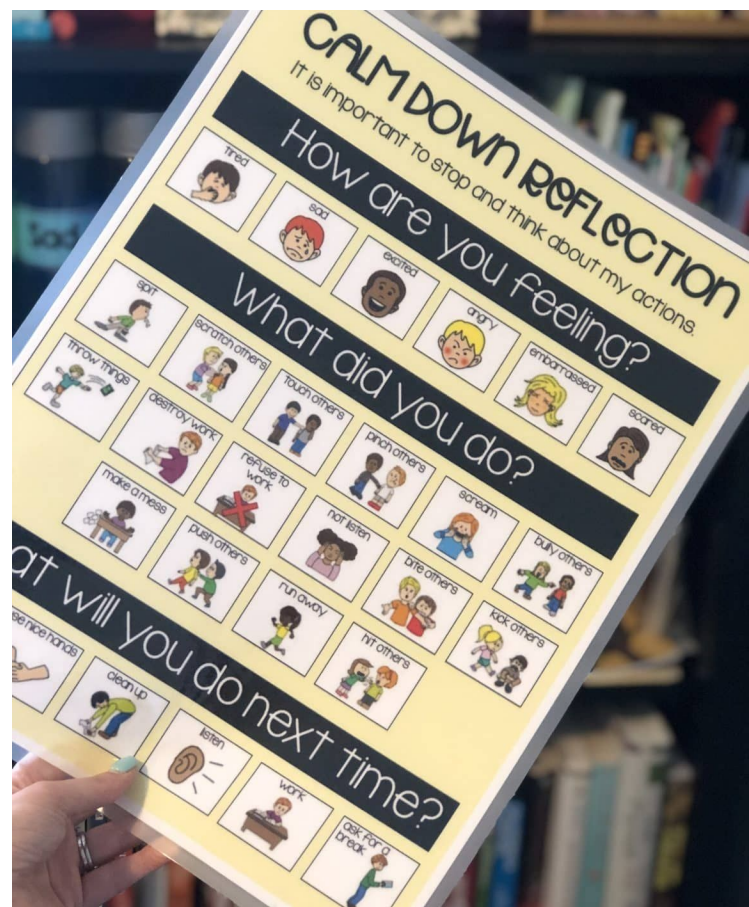
- Child-friendly height
- Place in area where behaviour might be triggered
- Add sensory boxes
- Cards to go inside: What triggers me? Where am I now? How can I calm down?





# Reflection and restorative

Guided help for what to do next time is a vital part of the process



## Behaviour Reflection Lanyard Cards

★★★★★ 2 reviews



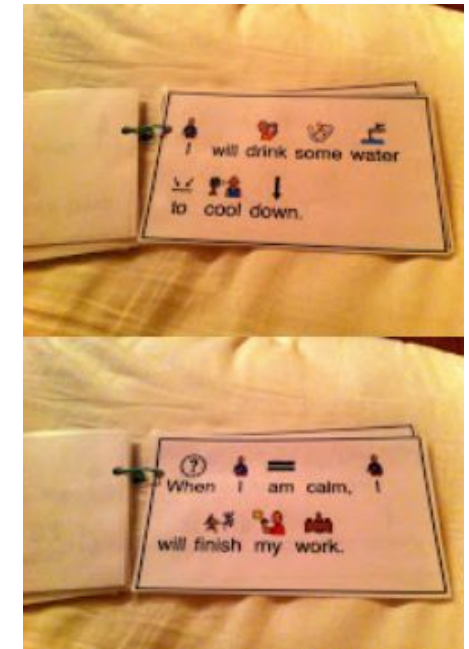
# Social stories

Most effective when the child is directly involved in creation

 <p>When I get angry I sometimes hit Mummy.</p>	 <p>This makes Mummy sad.</p>	 <p>When I feel like hitting, I need to stop.</p>	 <p>Sometimes I will need to go to the dentist. The dentist will make sure my teeth are healthy and clean.</p>	 <p>At home I might brush my teeth before I go so they look shiny and clean for the dentist.</p>	 <p>I might need to drive there in the car or go on the bus. I might go on roads I'm not used to.</p>	 <p>Sometimes I might need to wait and sit with other people visiting the dentist. It might be noisy and I might have to wait a while but this is normal.</p>
 <p>I will hold my hands.</p>	 <p>I will take 5 big breaths. This helps me stay calm.</p>	 <p>Mummy is happy when I am calm.</p>	 <p>Usually the dentist will call my name. This means I should go with my family to the dentist's room.</p>	 <p>The dentist will usually ask me to sit on a funny chair. It might be quite large and the dentist might make it go backwards. This is great fun! There might be bright lights.</p>	 <p>Usually the dentist will ask me to open my mouth. They might put their fingers or some cold tools in to my mouth. It's just like when I brush them myself.</p>	 <p>Now I've been to the dentist I can go back home.</p>

Credit: My Care Space

Credit: Caudwell Children



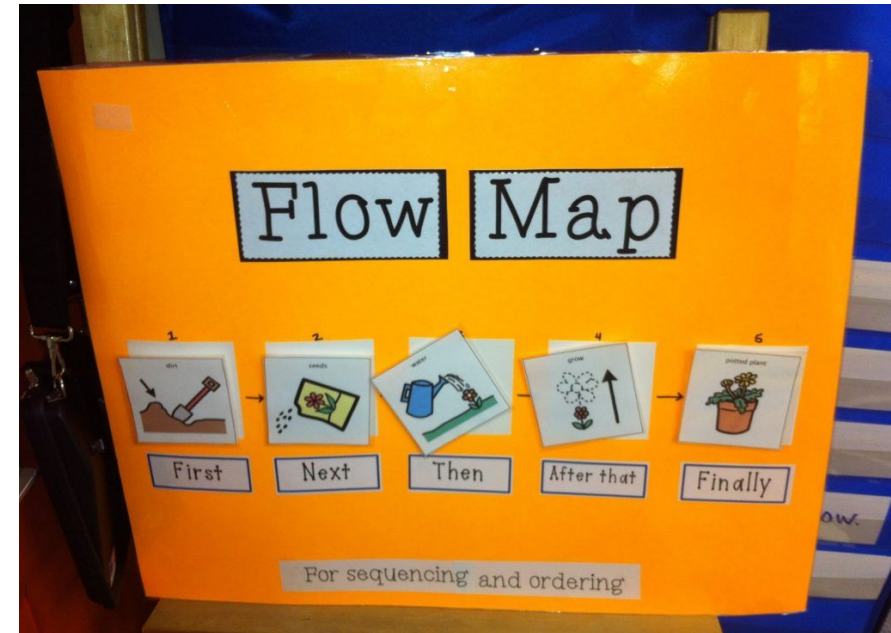
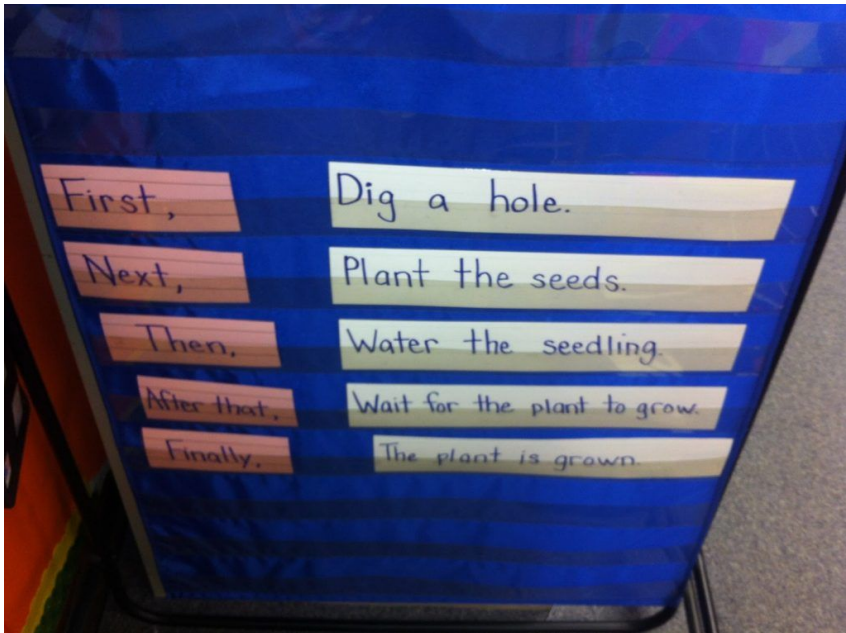
Credit: Autism Adventures

# Classroom routines



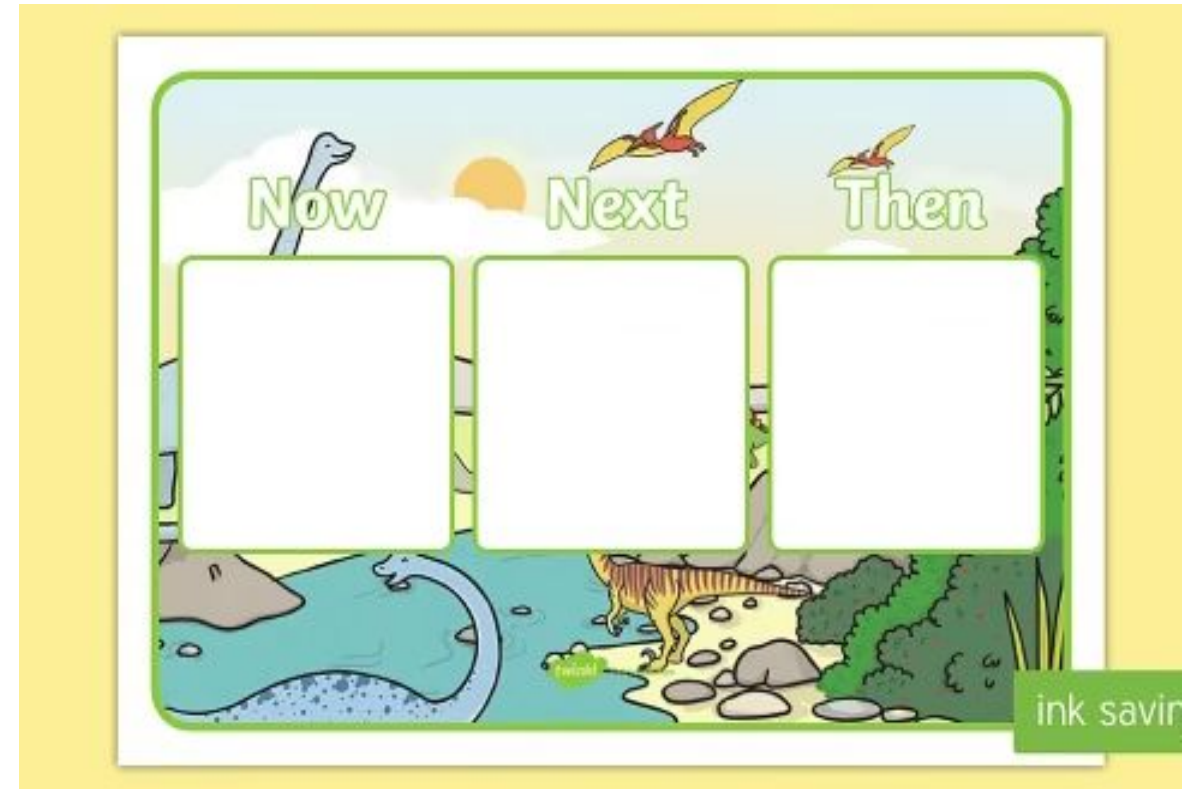
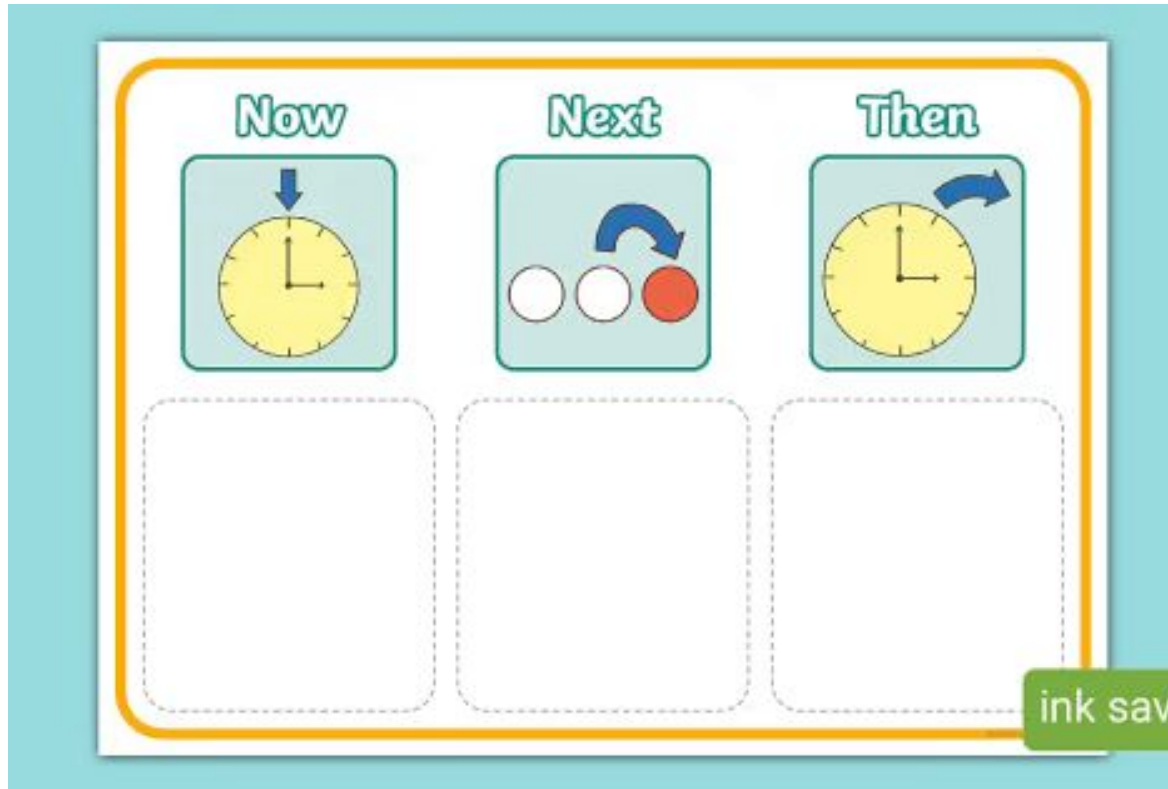
# Flow maps: Make them specific

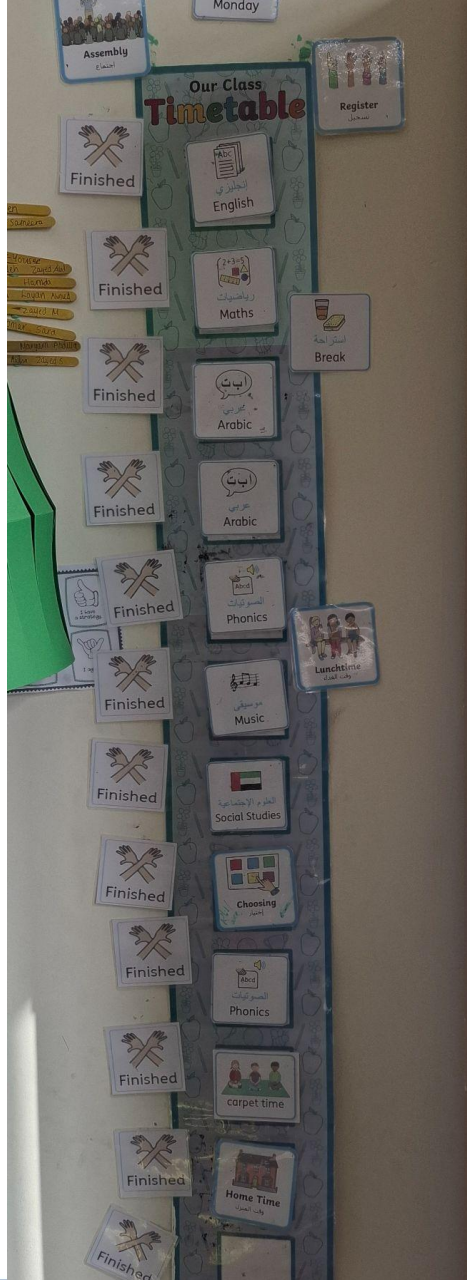
Provide as much information about the structure of a lesson in real time



# Now, next, then boards

Communicate and manage expectations around transitions



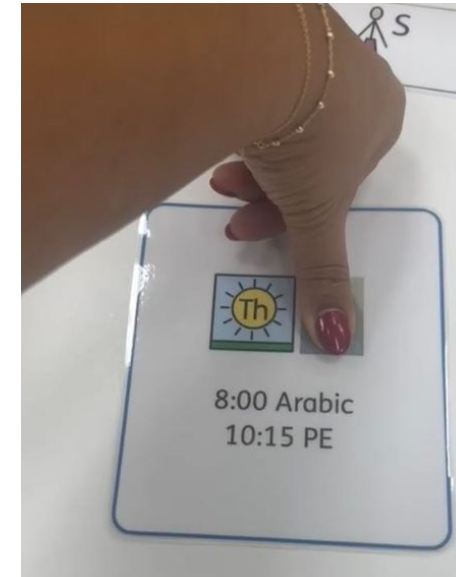
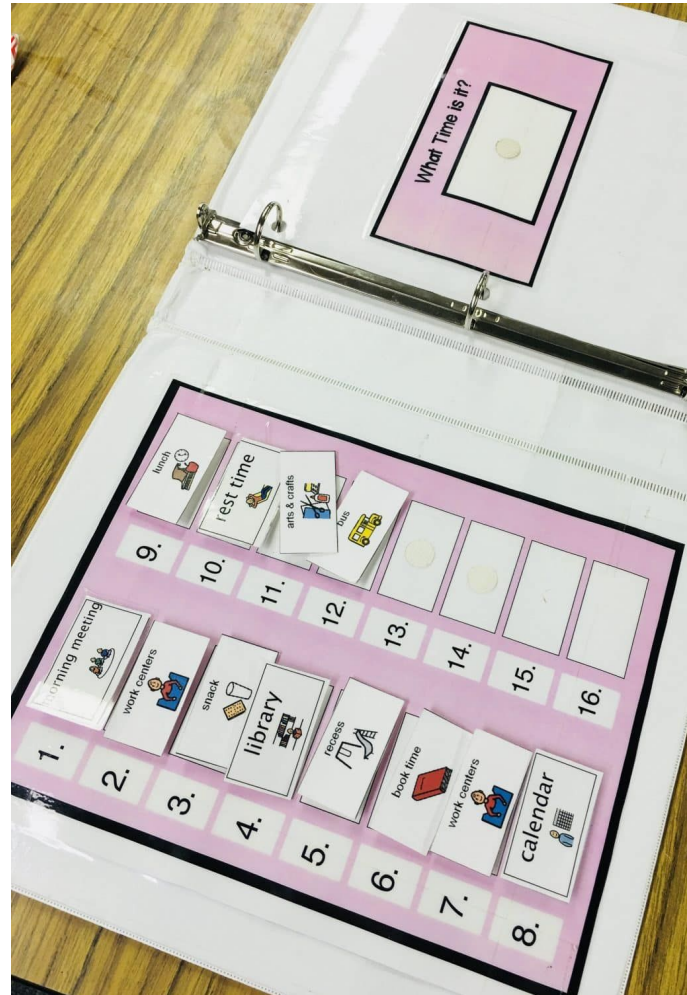


# Daily schedule

Take each activity off as the day is progressing and put it in the finished section/tray



# Real picture schedules



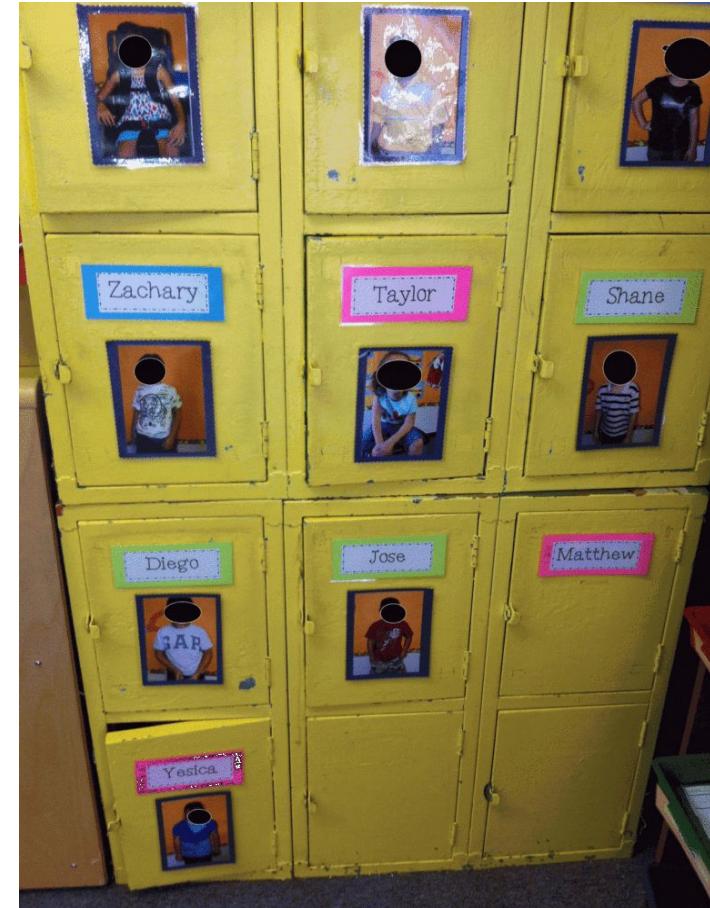
**Before you start using Widgit or other symbols use real photos for easier understanding**

# Take a break visuals





# Give pupils roles and use faces to guide them



School-wide trails

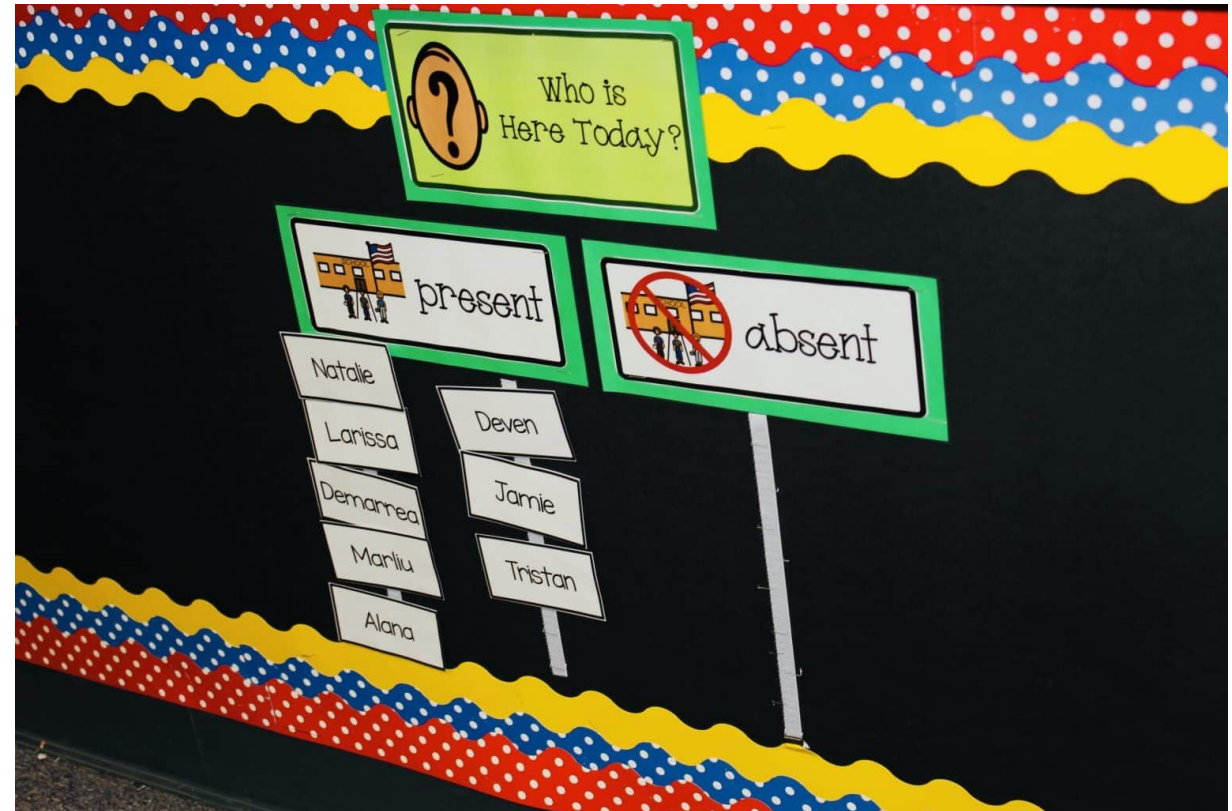


# Morning meetings - what would we expect?

## How to introduce yourself



## Reduce shock of peers not being present



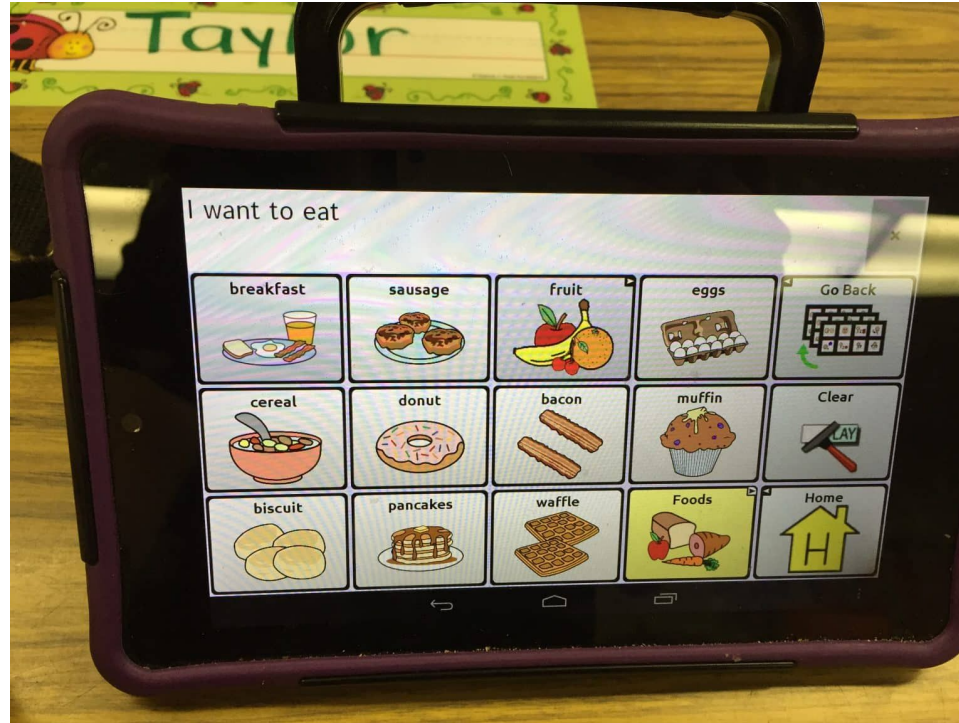


# Breaktimes

# Maximise opportunities for communication



Talk button - records instruction so pupils can listen back as required



Engage children while they are eating so they learn to link symbol with outcome



Velcro boards to help them align objects to "I want"





Symbols at playtime



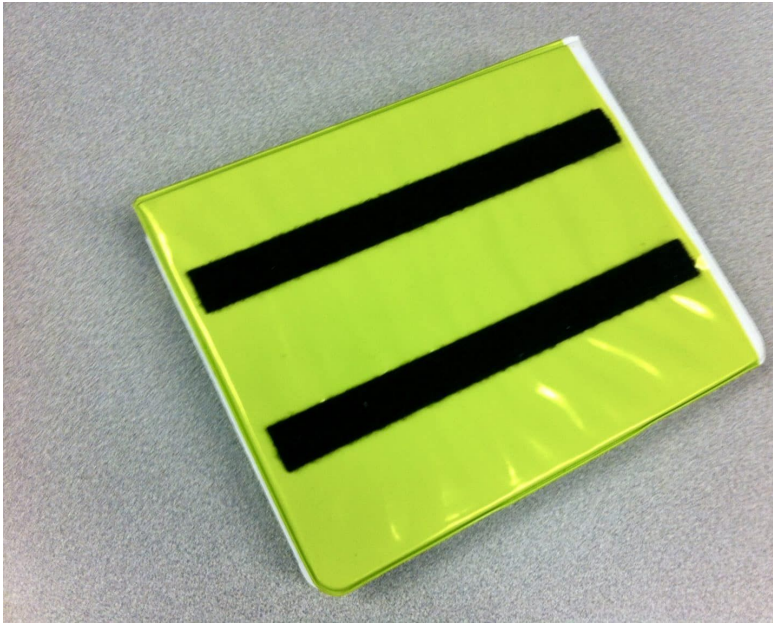
# Help everyone learn Widgit





# (PECS) Picture exchange communication systems

# Picture Exchange Communication Systems



Velcro PECS board



Start with one or two pictures



Increase so children can indicate what they want

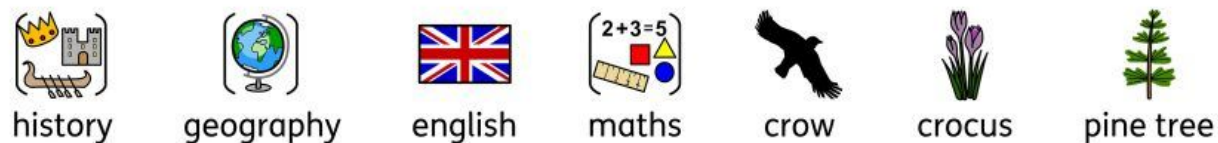
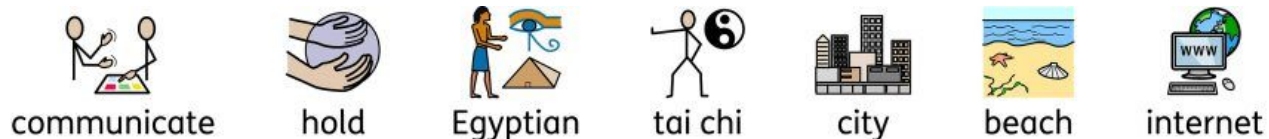


# Move to symbols and increase volume



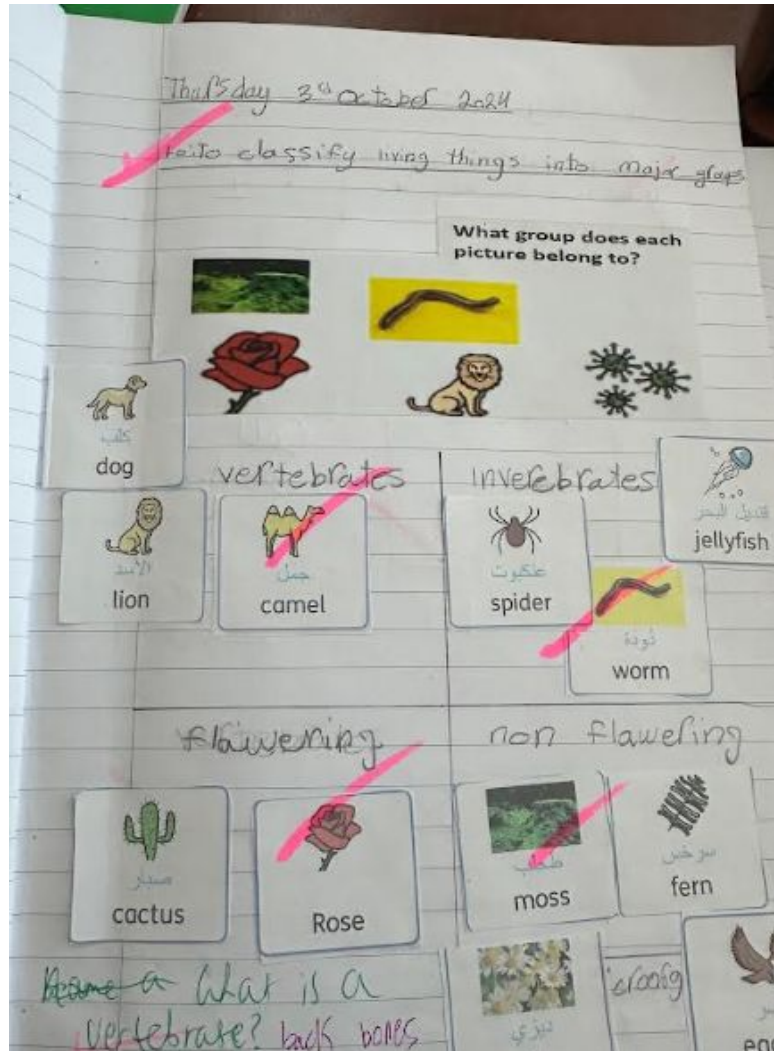
Add symbols and corresponding words.  
Start building into sentences using support from categorised folders.

# Move to





# Build entire essays



**1** Where is Sam Rabbit at the start of the story? Tick one box.



In the kitchen



In the garden



At the shops



**2**



What



does



Sam



need?



Draw a circle



round



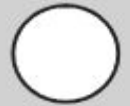
the correct








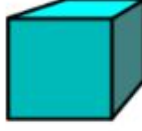

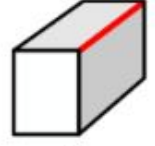

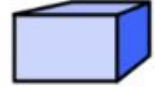

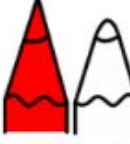
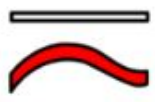


picture.



1



# Vocabulary mats

<p>يتعرف على</p>  <p>recognise</p>	<p>الأشكال ثلاثية الأبعاد</p>  <p>3D shapes</p>	<p>نوع</p>  <p>sort</p>	<p>تعريف</p>  <p>identify</p>	<p>جسم كروي</p>  <p>sphere</p>	<p>مكعب</p>  <p>cube</p>
<p>وجه</p>  <p>face</p>	<p>حافة</p>  <p>edge</p>	<p>الأشكال ثلاثية الأبعاد</p>  <p>3D Shapes</p>		<p>مكعب الشكل</p>  <p>cuboid</p>	<p>مخروط</p>  <p>cone</p>
<p>نقطة</p>  <p>point</p>	<p>منحني</p>  <p>curved</p>			<p>هرم</p>  <p>pyramid</p>	<p>اسطوانة</p>  <p>cylinder</p>



# Conclusion

- Create clear task flows and structured classroom environments
- Plan portable emotional regulation strategies, available at key points of the day
- Have clear classroom routines which go across teachers and classes
- Use structured approaches to breaktime
- Introduce PECS like Widgeit to scaffold just about everything

**Credit for images goes to:**

*Wales International School, autismadventures.com,  
bluemountaintherapy.com, breezyspecialled.com,  
autismadventures.com, & simplyspecialled.com*

# Some of our online courses.....

## MEd SEND and Inclusion

Deepen your understanding of neurodiversity and learn how to evaluate SEND provision in your setting. Identify areas for development, undertake research projects and work on practical projects that deliver real change for students and staff alike.

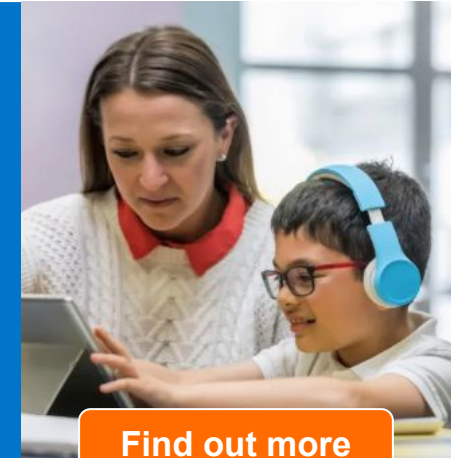
- Ideal for teachers, SENCOs and Inclusion leads
- Large range of modules to choose from:
  - Cognition and Learning
  - Cross-cultural issues in SEND
  - Auditing & Leading Improvement
  - Speech Language & Communication needs
  - Educational testing & assessment
  - SEMH
  - Autism
  - Maths difficulties

[View full range of MEd courses](#)

## Autism training: 30/60 credits

Explore current research on autism and how to best meet the needs of your autistic students.

Ideal for teachers, SENCOs and Inclusion leads. Can be taken as a standalone course or as part of PGcert, PGDip, of full MEd.



[Find out more](#)

## iSENCO: 60 credits (QTS not required)

Specifically for SENCOs/SEN teachers/Inclusion Leads in international settings.

Gain the knowledge and leadership skills to strengthen inclusive practice in an international context e.g. working with EAL, third culture kids, cultural attitudes towards SEND etc.



[Find out more](#)



# Helpful resources

[autismadventures.com](http://autismadventures.com)

[bluemountaintherapy.com](http://bluemountaintherapy.com)

[breezyspecialled.com](http://breezyspecialled.com)

[autismspectrumteacher.com](http://autismspectrumteacher.com)

[simplyspecialled.com](http://simplyspecialled.com)

[aulawabisabi.com](http://aulawabisabi.com)

[twinkl.com](http://twinkl.com)



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# Questions?

Dr Matthew Lee, iSENCO Tutor

Real Training

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/matthewleephd/>