



Infant-Toddler Specialist Network (ITSN)



Proactive Strategies to Support Classroom Routines and Schedules: Understanding Routines and Schedules

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UNDERSTANDING ROUTINES AND SCHEDULES

REFLECTION: Take a moment to write down two or three routines/schedules that happen in your classroom or program every day. Currently, how do you teach and/or support these routines/schedules with the children in your classroom or program?

Dictionary.com defines Routines and Schedules as:

ROUTINE = a customary or regular course of procedure; commonplace tasks, chores, or duties as must be done regularly or at specified intervals, typical or everyday activity; regular, unvarying, habitual, unimaginative, or rote procedure; an unvarying and constantly repeated formula, as of speech or action; convenient or predictable response

SCHEDULE = a plan of procedure, usually written, for a proposed objective, especially with reference to the sequence of and time allotted for each item or operation necessary to its completion; a series of things to be done or of events to occur at or during a particular time or period

What is the difference between these two definitions? One could argue there is no difference. While, yet another might suggest that a routine falls within a schedule. I don't always go to bed at the same time (schedule), but I always do the same things to get ready for bed (routine). For the purpose of this packet, the terms ROUTINES and SCHEDULES will be referred to interchangeably.

When we further define routines and schedules through an early childhood educator lens, we see that they are:

- Regular, essential, sometimes boring, maintenance activities: free play-time (getting engaged/staying engaged), meal time, transitions, washing hands, using the bathroom, greetings, good-byes, etc.
- Powerful and dynamic teaching tools that can help children learn positive, responsible behavior while teaching language and social skills.
- Can be supported using pictures and/or objects.
- Allow opportunities for children to make choices by providing guidance on who will do what, when they will do it, and how they might do it.
- Should take into account: the balance of activities (loud/quiet), the tempo or pace of activities, children's attention spans, children's moods/alertness, how many adults will be in the room during that time, any other activities happening in the room (i.e. speech therapist).

Defining routines and schedules helps us better understand their importance in our classrooms and programs. However, it isn't enough just to know what they are, or even just to implement them, we must be consistent in our development and implementation of classroom routines and schedules.

Consistent routines and schedules:

- Provide children and adults comfort and a sense of safety when they are able to anticipate/know what will happen next.
- Influence children's social, emotional, and cognitive development by building self-confidence, curiosity, social skills, self-control, communication skills, and more.
- Help children and adults understand the expectations of the environment and reduce the frequency of unsafe/undesired behaviors.
- Help children and adults become, and stay, more engaged throughout the day.
- Help children to develop time concepts as they anticipate what comes first in the day, second, next, and last.

REFLECTION:

The definitions noted above will guide you as you explore the roles developmental and brain-based knowledge, relationships, and observation have in enhancing routines and schedules.