

Behaviour Strategies and Tools

FIRST – THEN

The purpose of the “First-Then” strategy is to provide information verbally and/or visually to increase the child’s understanding and motivation in order to complete a less preferred task or activity. It teaches skills, helps a child understand expectations, and manages resistance in order to ensure follow through.

- “First” represents the task that the child is expected to complete.
- “Then” represents the preferred item/activity that will motivate the child to complete the task.

IMPLEMENTATION

The teaching team will:

- Observe and identify which child would benefit from this strategy.
- Determine the task or activity to be completed.
- Determine the level of assistance that is required depending on the child’s skill and learning style.
- Identify and maintain a list of preferred activities, items or routines that motivate the child.
- Clearly communicate verbally and if needed, visually, the “First-Then” statement (e.g., “**First** finish puzzle, **then** play-dough.”, “**First** put away the toys, **then** snack.”).
- Remain focused on the objective and ensure follow through by providing support as needed.
- Provide additional reminders if needed using as few words as possible.
- Direct the child to the preferred item/activity once he has completed the task.
- Provide positive reinforcement to the child.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Create a board with pictures or words to support the child in understanding the “First-Then”. This can eliminate the need to repeat instructions and support a child who needs constant reassurance.
- Concrete objects can be used to demonstrate “First-Then”.
- Keep a “First-Then” board available for the child to refer to at all times.
- The use of a “First-Then” board can be the first step towards learning to follow a visual schedule.

