

## **Benefits of Calendar Systems for Students who are Deaf-Blind and/or have Multiple Disabilities**

A calendar system provides a structured way in which to refer to activities that have been set up as part of a student's routine (s). This allows the student to anticipate what comes next, provides a sense of security, and facilitates increased independence in completion of the routine. Calendar systems involve the use of a series of meaningful (to the student) tangible symbols (objects/partial objects, textures, pictures, lined drawing, photos and words in print or braille), that are arranged in a sequential order, on some type of device (calendar boxes, day runner, wall calendar). Beginning calendar systems are commonly referred to as "anticipation" calendars. As the student progresses they gradually move toward the use of more abstract objects/language and consequently the use of more complex calendar systems.

### **Benefits of a Calendar System Include:**

- **Enhances both receptive and expressive language:**
  - Provides another form of communication-we all use many forms every day (speech, pictures, written words, gestures, pointing, etc.).
  - Provides a reason (function) for communication. Early reasons to communicate include:
    - Request information/people/action/objects, etc.
    - Reject people/actions/objects
    - Responding to questions
    - Engaging in social rituals, such as greetings
    - Describing/sharing information and experiences.
  - Readily identifies the topic and allows you to expand upon topics.
  - Provides a static as opposed to dynamic (fleeting) system-which allows for any necessary wait time for processing and a response.
  - Strongly reinforces the power of communication-serves as a motivator to communicate in that the student gets what they want.
  - Facilitates the ability to make choices.
  - Facilitates the process of bringing in new topics.
  - Facilitates the expansion of topic discussion by emphasizing new or additional information when presented with a familiar symbol. (i.e. pair party hat with symbol for store to indicate going to store for birthday party items).
  - Allows the student to talk about things not there (in the past or the future).
  - Individualizes a system according to the needs of the student and their likes/preferences.

- Provides a way for the student to participate in decision making regarding the day's events.
- Provides opportunities for turn taking.
- Provides a bridge for linking the symbols to the word and/or sign for vocabulary development.
- Provides opportunities for meaningful dialogue including topic expansion, social conversations, and exchange of information.
- **Addresses Time Concepts:**
  - Anticipation of upcoming events.
  - Learns about past, present, and future.
  - Facilitates transition between activities and adjustments to change in schedule.
- **Addresses Social/Emotional Development:**
  - Gives the student something to anticipate instead of being withdrawn.
  - Ensures another person is made available for an adequate amount of time.
  - Provides attention getting strategies.
  - Provides student with immediate feedback.
  - Can be structured so that the student knows what to expect, including turn taking.
  - Provides for multiple opportunities in a day to have conversations.
  - Can assist in the development of a trusting relationship.
  - Helps with notifying of changes to schedule.
  - Provides the student with a sense of empowerment and security.
- **Addresses Literacy Skills:**
  - The student learns to work from left to right/top to bottom as used in reading.
  - Provides systematic process for moving from concrete to abstract (Written/braille schedule, calendars, date book, etc.).
  - Links the symbols to activities that the student is doing, thus ensuring they have an experiential basis behind them which enhances understanding and learning.
- **Improves overall memory, concept development, and cognition.**

Resource: Calendars for Students with Multiple Impairments Including Deafblindness, by Robbie Blaha available at: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/curriculum-a-publications/1024-calendars-for-students-with-multiple-impairments-including-deafblindness>