

Managing the Classroom: Schedules and Routines

Narrator: Hello, and welcome to this short module on "Managing the Classroom: Schedules and Routines." This presentation highlights the importance of schedules and routines, the benefits to children's learning, and offers some ideas for establishing schedules and routines in your classroom. This is one in a series of modules on creating a well-organized classroom.

The National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning uses the House framework to organize our thinking about the important practices that support school readiness for all children. The foundational practices are effective and engaging interactions and environments. The pillars of the House represent research-based curricula and teaching practices. And the roof of the House represents highly individualized teaching and learning. This module fits into the foundation of our House. More specifically, the use of a daily schedule and established routines is an important component of a well-organized classroom. Classrooms and other learning environments function best and provide the most opportunities for learning when they are organized and when children have interesting things to do.

Schedules and routines help children know what to expect. They provide predictability. Schedules and routines enhance children's feelings of security. Children feel more secure and comfortable, when they know what to do and what happens next. Schedules and routines can increase children's participation and engagement in learning activities. And so, schedules and established routines influence children's cognitive and social development. The schedule organizes the day. The main activities, such as arrival, group times, snacks and meals, free choice time, outdoor time, and departure, are divided into units of time. These time units provide enough time for the activity and they occur in a regular and expected way.

Teacher: What about circle?

Students: Almost done!

Teacher: Not quite yet. We've got some time. Then we go to play court and the bathroom. And we sit down to eat...?

Students: Lunch.

Narrator: When planning the schedule, the teacher considers the important activities that need to happen each day as well as the sequence of the activities. The teacher also thinks about the importance of balance: Balancing or alternating active times and quiet times, small groups and large groups, and teacher-led activities with more child-initiated activities.

Noreen Stout: Our daily routine runs from 7:30 to 5:30. The children arrive in the classroom. They will sign their names in saying that they're here at school, no longer at home. They put their backpacks in their cubbies. And once they've washed their hands, they decide what activities that they would like to go to.

Narrator: Routines are activities or procedures that occur regularly and involve a series of behaviors. Think about such common classroom routines as washing hands and getting ready for snack, or arriving in the classroom, putting away backpacks and coats, and getting ready to play. Routines also provide children with a sense of security and the knowledge of what comes next. Children don't automatically know the classroom schedule or routine. We need to teach them and let them practice.

Teacher: So, let's see, Sammy, how should we move our bodies to our table today?

Sammy: Um, hop.

Teacher: Oh, we're all about hopping today. Hop to your planning tables. Hop, hop, hop.

Narrator: One way that we teach schedules and routines is to use visual supports.

Teacher (singing): All right, read aloud is over.

Students: Finished!

Narrator: We post the schedule and use words and pictures to help children learn the sequence. We also model or demonstrate following the schedule or doing the routine. And we provide children with positive feedback, as they remember and follow the schedule and do the steps of the classroom routines.

This short presentation highlighted the importance of schedules and routines and the ways that schedules and routines contribute to a well-organized classroom and to children's learning. Schedules and routines provide children with the comfort and predictability that allows them to engage and focus their attention on learning activities to explore, persist, and extend their learning. For more information and more examples of establishing and using schedules and routines and guidance for promoting a safe and fun place to learn and thrive, check out our tips, tools, and resources. Have fun, and thank you for listening.