Supporting Planning and Organizing by Using an Environmental Checklist

Checklists have been used in many different environments to provide guidelines regarding the necessary steps in a process or to organize tasks that need to be completed (Gawande, 2009). In healthcare and aviation, the use of checklists has been credited with a reduction in spending, injury, and loss of life (Gawande, 2009). For students with ASD, a checklist can work as a memory aid (Aspy & Grossman, 2012), and can provide information for the student regarding *what* tasks needs to be completed, *how much* needs to be done, and *when* the task is finished (Wilkins & Burmeister, 2015).

An environmental checklist can be used to *analyze* the current environment, based on specific criteria, *identify* any needed changes, and *document* when changes have been made. A checklist that clarifies environmental attributes that a student has found beneficial can be used independently by the student in new environments to pro-actively identify any trouble areas and, if needed, initiate a problem-solving strategy to deal with the problem.

Why is this important?

The function of the environmental checklist is to support the student in analyzing and identifying those environmental characteristics that lead to greater productivity and less stress. The goal of the checklist is to support the student in being more aware of those environmental conditions that are conducive to a positive work environment, whether at school, at work, or at home.

Teachers: When and How to Use a Checklist

Use the Classroom Environment Checklist to identify areas within the classroom that may be potential trouble areas for students. Develop a plan to fix any items on the checklist that are rated "no" or "partial."

Directions for Students

When and How to Use a Checklist

- It's important to know what things in the environment support your learning and ability to work the most.

- You can use the checklist (see Figure 2.17) to determine what you need to have in place to work best. You can also use the checklist to evaluate a new environment and to figure out if you might need to change some things in the environment to better support your work.

- If there are things in a new environment that are not optimum, are there things you can do to improve the environment? Use the checklist to identify any trouble spots and then work with a teacher, supervisor, or other supportive individual to identify ways the environment might be changed to meet your needs. You may choose to use the PLACE process (see the section on Problem-Solving in this chapter) to support you in solving the problem of an environment that does not meet your needs.

References

Aspy, R. & Grossman, B.G. (2012). *The Ziggurat Model (2nd ed.)*. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing Company.

Burmeister, C.; Wilkins, S.; Silva, R. *FLIPP 2.0: Mastering Executive Function Skills from School to Adult Life for Students with Autism.* AAPC, In Press.

Gawande, A. (2009). *The Checklist Manifesto*. New York, New York: Picador Publishing.

Wilkins, S., & Burmeister, C. (2015). *FLIPP the switch: Strengthen executive function skills*. Shawnee Mission, KS: AAPC Publishing.

Classroom Environment Checklist

Teacher Name: _____ Date: _____

Data collector: _____ Role: _____

Pre-assessment? ❑ Yes ❑ No   Post-assessment? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Environmental Component	Yes	No	Partial
1. Individualization and personal connection: Students are given ways to build a personal connection to the classroom. The classroom is distinctive. Notes: _____			
2. Adaptability and flexibility: The classroom design is flexible enough to allow a variety of activities *or* the design can be changed easily to accommodate different activities. Notes: _____			
3. Color and contrast: The classroom has a good balance of color and is neither too colorful nor too bland. Notes: _____			
4. Visual stimulation: The classroom offers some visual stimulation, but it is not overwhelming. No more than 80% of the wall space is covered. Notes: _____			
5. Lighting: The classroom is well lit and uses primarily natural light, augmented by electric light. If fluorescent light is primarily used, there are areas in the classroom lit by alternate means. Notes: _____			
6. Air quality: There is appropriate circulation of air in the room. Notes: _____			
7. Temperature: The temperature is neither too warm nor too cold. Notes: _____			
8. Use of space and organization: The classroom is well organized and uncluttered. The teacher is able to monitor all areas of the room. Notes: _____			
9. Sound: Classroom noise is minimized through the use of carpet r padded bottoms on chairs and tables. There is no discernable noise from the air conditioner or lighting. Notes: _____			
10. Safe place: There is a safe place available for students to access. This space is designed to provide a sensory break and has fidgets and other items available. Notes: _____			
Totals			

Student Environmental Preference Checklist

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Data collector: _____ Role: _____

Pre-assessment? ❑ Yes ❑ No   Post-assessment? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Environmental Component	Yes	No	Partial
1. Color and contrast: Color and contrast are neither too bright nor too dull and the tone is pleasing. Notes: _____			
2. Visual stimulation: The environment offers some visual stimulation, but it is not overwhelming. No more than 80% of the wall space is covered. Notes: _____			
3. Lighting: The environment is well lit and uses primarily natural light, supported by electric light. If fluorescent light is primarily used, there are areas in the room lit by alternate means. Notes: _____			
4. Air quality: There is appropriate circulation of air in the room. Notes: _____			
5. Temperature: The temperature is neither too warm nor too cold. Notes: _____			
6. Use of space and organization: The space is well organized and uncluttered, with plenty of room for movement between classroom furniture. Notes: _____			
7. Noise Level: The room is relatively quiet and there are no potentially distracting noises apparent. Notes: _____			
Totals			