

PEACE POWER TOOLS

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Universal Signals for Quiet and Transition

Summary:

Universal signals for quiet and transitions are nonverbal cues and warnings used for managing transitions (e.g., between play and classroom time, circle time to outdoor time, dismissal) and for focusing children's attention. Universal signals for quiet and transition are often part of a school-wide positive behavior program and are effective if used by all staff in a consistent manner.

Resources Needed:

- None

Implementation Steps:

1. Staff determine signal to be used. For example, when a staff member raises her or his hand, everyone in the room raises their own hand and becomes quiet.
2. Students are taught the signal, and practice how to respond (raising own hand, becoming quiet, attention to teacher); correct responding is praised.
3. Staff uses the signal in a consistent way. It is critical that staff also honor the signal if they are in the room; if staff chat in the back while students are quiet, for example, the power of the procedure will erode.
4. On a regular basis (though not every time after the procedure is established), staff should recognize students' response, and thank them.
5. Activities proceed when everyone is quiet. Here it is important to avoid jumping in before quiet and attention are established, or student responses will erode.

Variations:

- Turning the lights off and on has been used as a universal signal.
- Similarly, a bell ring, piano sound, buzzer, and so forth can be established as universal signals for transition.
- Raising the hand in a Peace Sign ("V" with index and middle finger) has been used as the universal signal.
- A teacher or appointed child may give a light touch on a child's shoulder as a signal for dismissal or transition.
- A teacher or appointed child can hand out items, such as colored or labeled (number or letter) bracelets or necklace to signal pre-identified destinations or tasks.
- Also, a teacher or appointed child may pass out cards with symbols that represent an intended destination or activity.

Rational and Evidence Base:

There is evidence that universal signals for quiet and transition can help youth manage daily change between activities. Research indicates that teaching youth transition skills is worthwhile, as some students do not learn from observation very quickly. In fact, if transition skills are taught to youth in a planned and structured manner, youth are given the opportunity to learn and practice important self-management skills. There is evidence that when transition skills are learned, disruptions during transitions can be reduced.

Embry, D. D. (2004). Community-Based Prevention Using Simple, Low-Cost, Evidence-Based Kernels and Behavior Vaccines. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 32(5), 575.

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Rosenkoetter, S. E., & Fowler, S. A. (1986). Teaching Mainstreamed Children to Manage Daily Transitions. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, v19 n1 p20-23 Sep 1986.