

MONTHLY VISUAL SUPPORT

**May 2013**

Successfully Structuring Field Trips for Students on the Autism Spectrum

By: Peggy Lawrence, TASN - ATBS Technical Assistance Coordinator

For many classrooms, the end of the school year, means end of the school year field trips! Field trips can be educational and exciting for students. However, for children on the autism spectrum, field trips mean a change in schedule and routine. Changes in schedule and environments can be overwhelming, over stimulating and confusing for some students. Here are some simple tips to prepare students with autism for end of the year schedule changes and field trips.

Prior to the field trip:

- If available, get a brochure or print information from the website. This might include pictures of what the student may see on the field trip, special rules, etc.
- A few days beforehand, allow the student to visit the destination's website. Some websites have virtual tours.
- Write a social narrative or storybook describing what the student may experience on the field trip (see Social Narrative-Zoo Field Trip).
- Prepare a "travel bag" for the student, which can include fidget items, special diet items for lunch, etc.
- Prepare for sensory issues such as sunglasses, hats, sunscreen, bug repellent wipes, etc.
- Provide the student with a disposable camera. On the camera, place a label that contains phone numbers and addresses.
- Create a daily calendar so the students can visually see how many days before the field trip. (see zoo calendar)
- Starting a week prior to the trip, on a daily basis, revisit calendar, social narrative, etc. to prepare the student.
- Have all students make a field trip necklace or wrist band that contains school information, contact numbers, etc. to wear on the field trip.

The day of the field trip:

- Read social narrative/storybook.
- Review visual rules (see Zoo Field Trip Visual Expectations).
- Provide the student with a visual travel schedule. (see Zoo Schedule and Zoo Schedule 2)
- Remember to give the student transition countdowns. (i.e., "We have one more minute to look at the elephants, next is giraffes".)
- If the student is not accustomed to a bus ride, provide them with simple pictures of rules for the bus (walking feet, quiet voices, buckle up, etc.). For more concrete students, die cut a school bus, or, give them a toy school bus to hold. (see Bus Rules)
- Depending upon the student, assign him a "trip buddy".
- Provide a way for the student to be engaged in the activity. (See Zoo Check Off List I see)

After the field trip:

- Provide all students a way to communicate with their parents what they saw on the field trip, how they liked it, etc. (See Today at the Zoo I saw)