



Leveraging MTSS in the Classroom: Designing a Secondary Classroom That Runs Itself

August 2026

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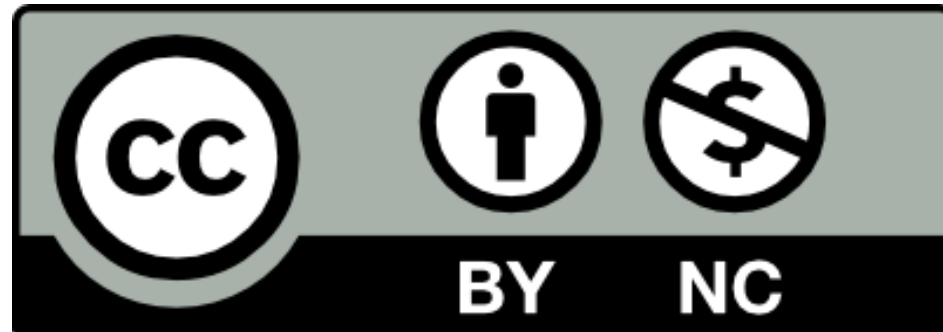


Acknowledgments

The content for this training day was developed based on the work of:

- Dr. Terrence Scott
- National Center on PBIS
- Midwest PBIS
- The START Project

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Purpose

This session will equip educators with actionable strategies to design classroom environments that promote independence and maximize engagement for adolescents through the use of age-appropriate visuals, flexible physical arrangements, and the establishment of self-managing expectations and routines.

Intended Outcomes

- Consider different classroom arrangements to maximize structure and monitoring
- Understand best practices for developing and teaching expectations and routines
- Review types of visuals that can reinforce expectations and promote independence

Agenda

1.0 Supportive Physical Environments

2.0 Expectations and Routines

3.0 Classroom Visuals

4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

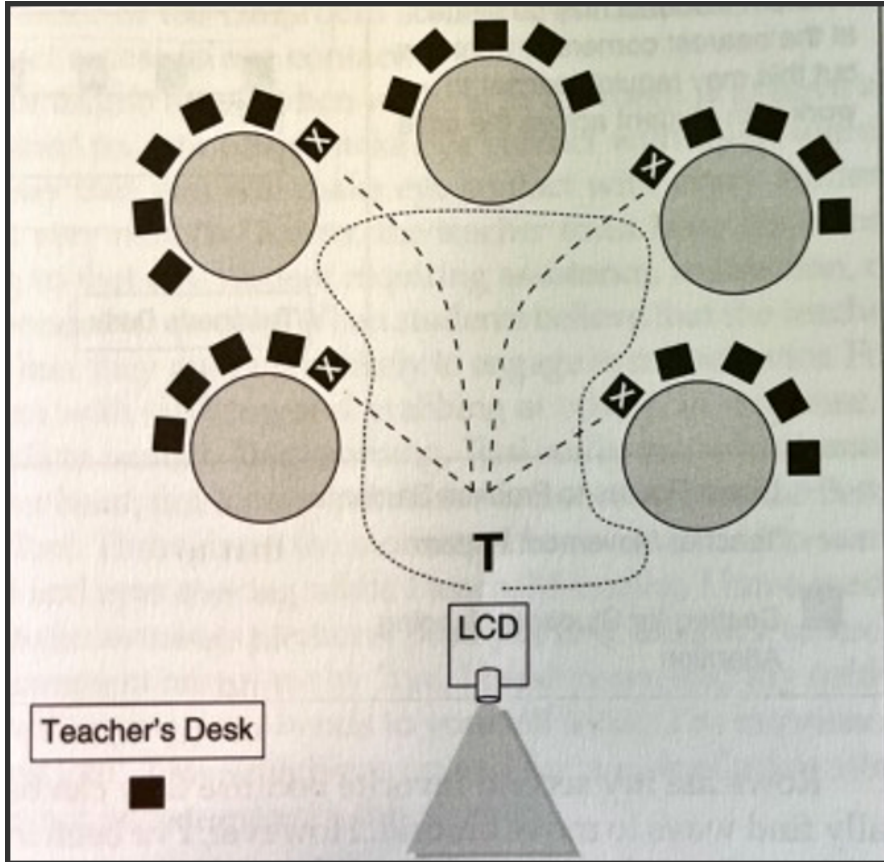
1.0 Supportive Physical Environments

Physical Environment for Safe & Predictable Classrooms

- Minimize crowding and distractions
- Arrange seating to support visibility and proximity
- Design clear pathways for smooth transitions and movement
- Establish seating and desk locations that support safety and awareness
- Include a safe space for students to relax and self-regulate
- Design the environment to prevent predictable behavior

(Scott, 2018; The National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network, 2017)

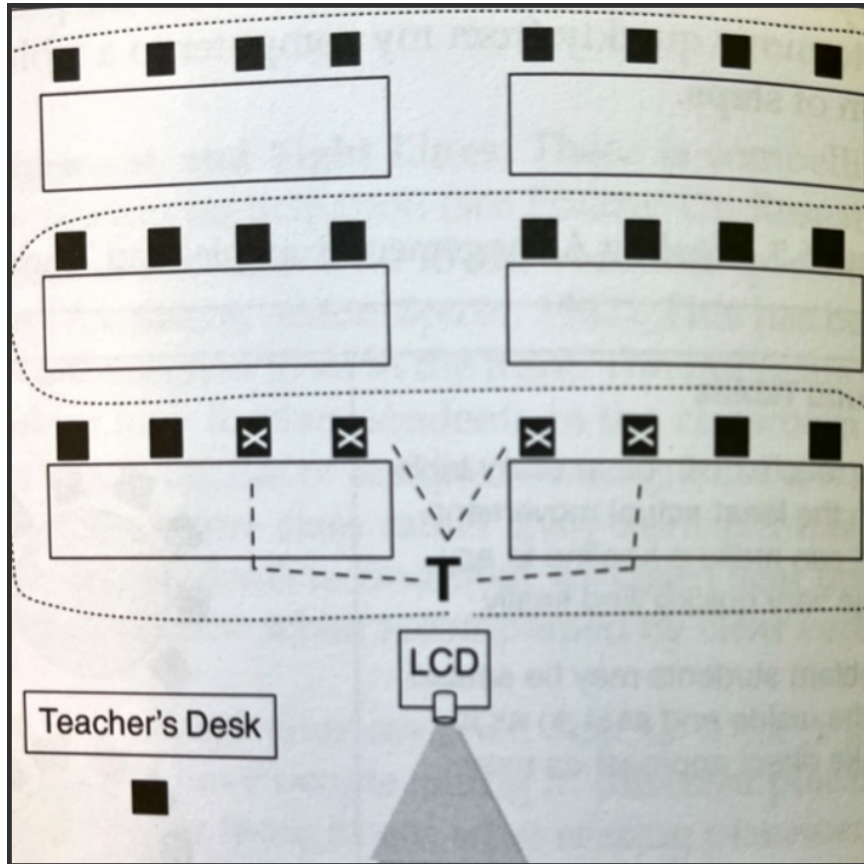
Round Tables or Clusters



- Maintain proximity to all groups with minimal movement
- Move quickly and directly between tables or clusters
- Seat students who need more support in positions for easy teacher access

(Scott, 2017; p. 89)

Long Tables



- Requires more movement and can be restrictive—must make large circling routes to see every student
- May require working across the table to provide direct support
- Seat students who need more support nearest corners or front row

(Scott, 2017; p.90)

Visual Proximity: Dr. Terrance Scott



Activity 1.1

Pause and Process:

- Briefly review the *Checklist for the Classroom Physical Environment*
- Consider the prompts based on your classroom or one that you support
- Identify 1 or 2 priorities for improving the physical environment:
 - What is currently working well?
 - What might be an opportunity for improvement?
 - Note any action items for the upcoming school year

2.0 Expectations and Routines

Expectations, Routines, and Procedures

- Expectations
 - The broad, school-wide values and beliefs that guide adult and student behavior.
- Routines
 - The predictable patterns of how the classroom operates over time. They create structure and consistency for how the day or class flows.
- Procedures
 - The explicit, step-by-step directions for how to complete specific tasks or routines.

Example HS Way	Welcome/Arrival	Group Work	Whole Class Work	When You Feel Upset
Respectful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greet the teacher & classmates • Walk directly to your designated seat • Talk softly • Keep hands, feet, & belongings to myself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to understand • Take turns speaking • Say, "I like that idea, AND..." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to understand • Take turns speaking • Follow directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for a break when you feel upset • Express feelings making "I statements"
Organized & Achieving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk directly to your designated seat • Bring your materials to class • Turn in homework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete group activity/task in allotted time • Clean up the area when time is up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay on task • Participate by responding to teacher prompts/questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask my teacher to break down the assignment into smaller chunks • Ask to talk to someone if it will make you feel better
Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrive to class before the tardy bell • Start bell ringer activity • Ask for help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Jump in" to help others • Manage time carefully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean up the area when time is up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use cool off strategy (count to 25, deep breaths) as needed
Teacher's Role (Conditions for Learning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervise all areas of the classroom • Greet students warmly • Post bell ringer activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide relationship opener for groups • Actively supervise small group activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared for class with lesson plans and learning outcomes identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model cool off strategies • Listen to understand • Show genuine interest in students

Teach Expectations and Routines Explicitly

- Be clear and explicit about expectations
 - “When we transition from whole group instruction to lab, voices are off and materials are put away within 30 seconds.”
- Model what expectations look like and sound like
 - Demonstrate how to transition from desks to the lab, check the safety protocol, and get started with lab assignment.
- Show examples and non-examples
 - Act out a correct transition vs. an incorrect one and have students identify the differences.

Practice and Build Consistency

- Provide regular opportunities to practice routines
 - Build in time for students to rehearse transitions or procedures multiple times during the first weeks.
- Give feedback in the moment
 - “Excellent! You handled the equipment carefully and followed the safety steps. That’s exactly what I am looking for.”
- Reinforce and re-teach when needed
 - “Let’s pause and try that again. Use all of the steps in the lab procedure to make sure you are safely using the materials.”

Reinforce and Acknowledge

- Use behavior-specific praise to recognize when students meet expectations
 - “Jamie, thanks for being careful and holding the beakers with both hands.”
- Use consistent language for expectations
 - “Remember, during lab, goggles stay on at all times.”
- Reinforce what you want to see more of
 - The behaviors you attend to the most are the behaviors you will see the most of in the future.

Teaching Procedures Video



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7GzWs0nJig>



Activity 2.1

Pause and Process:

- Expectations: Do these exist in your school? What 3-5 expectations are most important for your students this school year?
- Routines: Which routines will students need to understand to meet these expectations?
- Procedures: How will you explicitly teach and practice these routines so students can succeed?

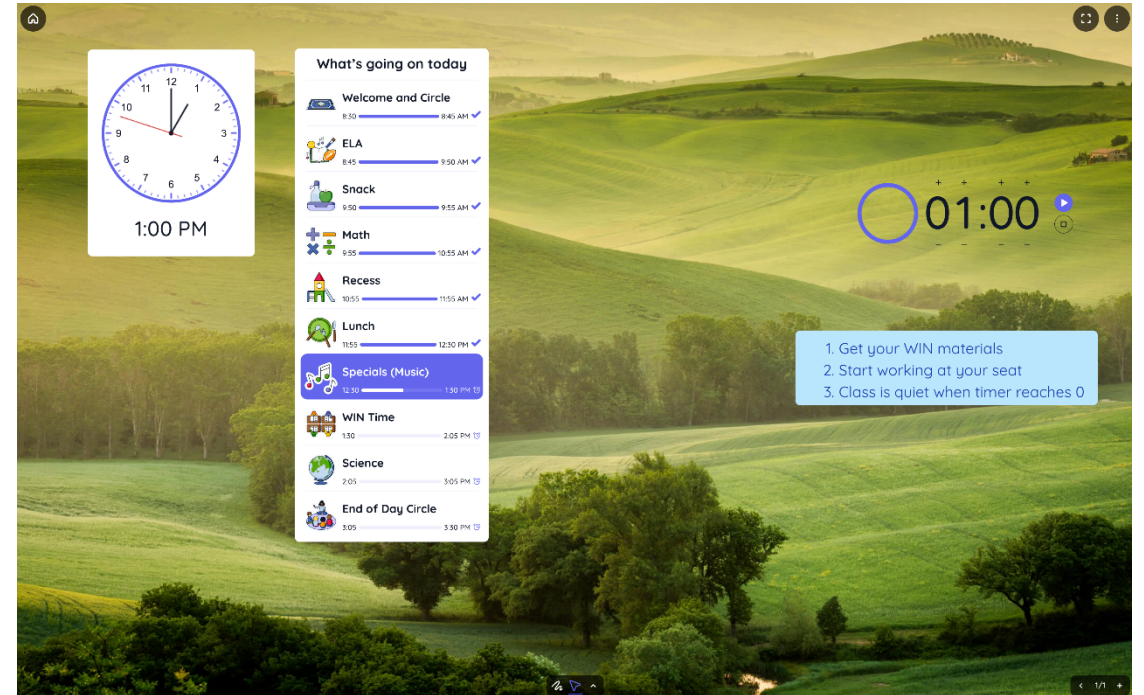
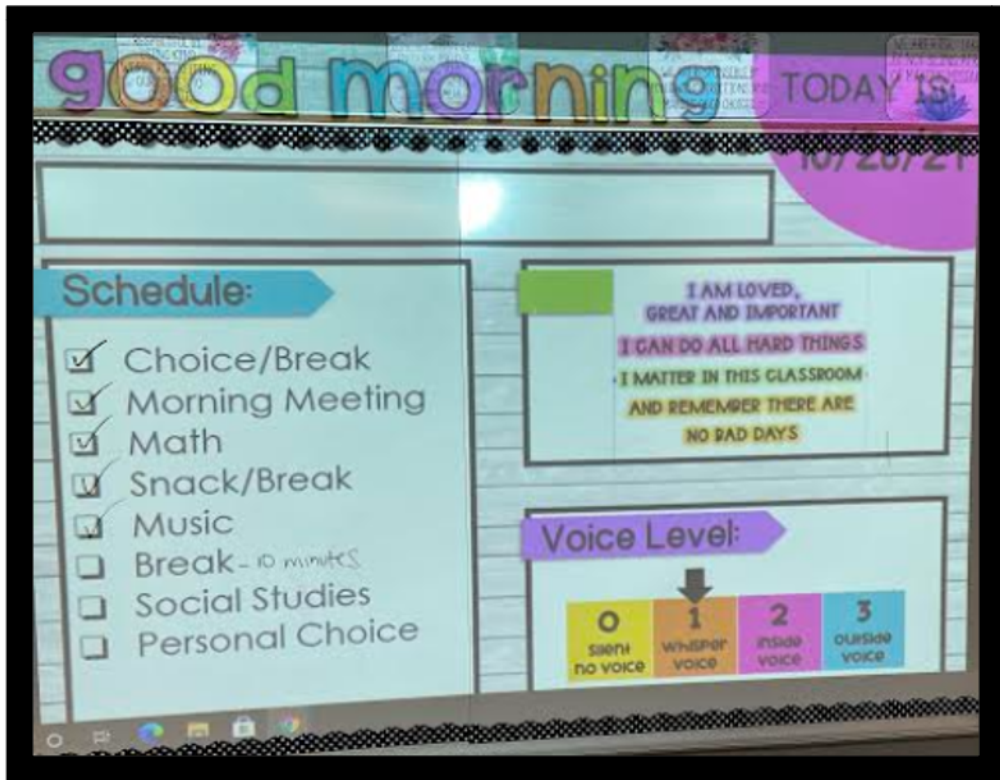
3.0 Classroom Visuals

Visuals

- They don't disappear
- They make abstract concepts concrete
- They promote independence
- Ignore interfering behaviors without ignoring the child

(Cohen & Demchak, Council for Exceptional Children)

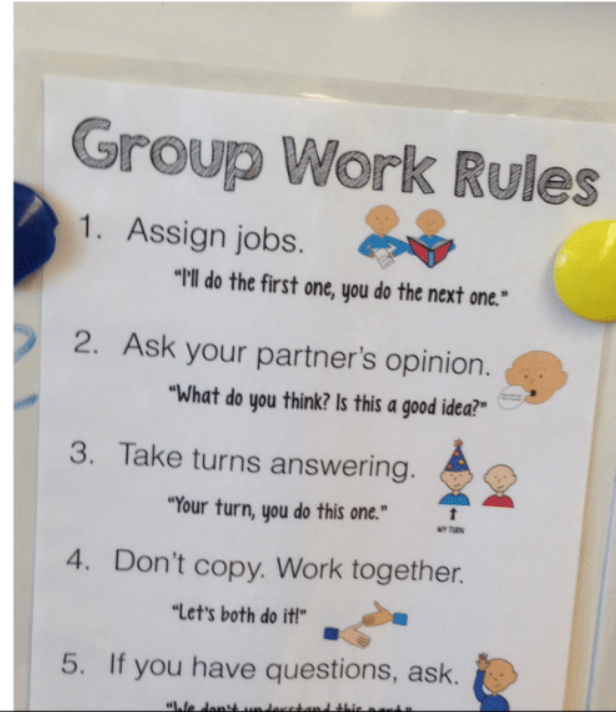
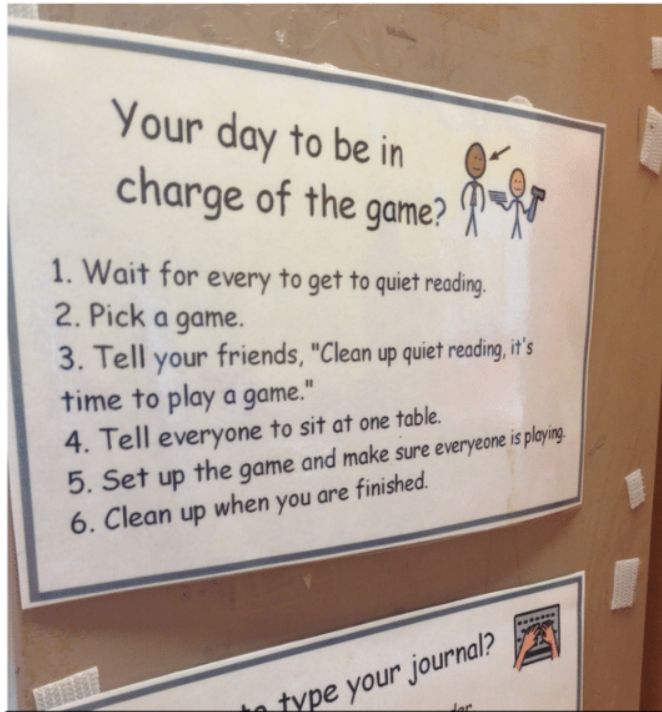
Daily Schedules Increase Predictability



Increasing Structure in the Environment



Prevent Behavior by Breaking Down Difficult Tasks/Activities




use mini schedules for social skills steps



Routines Increase Predictability

Mrs. Jones' Math Class



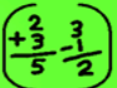
I Need:

- green textbook
- green notebook
- green pencil case
- calculator

Routine:

- go to seat
- put homework in green basket
- get assignment
- copy notes
- listen to teacher
- raise hand to answer question

math




- pencil
- textbook
- paper
- calculator
- ruler
- markers

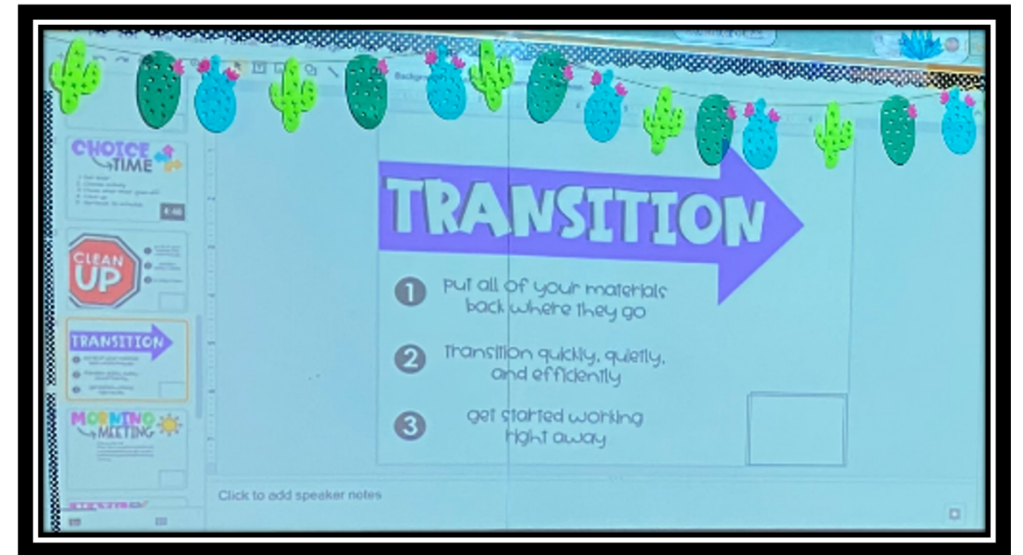
geography



- pencil
- textbook
- atlas
- binder
- ruler
- markers

If	Then
	

Prevent Behavior By Assisting with Transitions




Visuals to Support Staff

MY OTR Goal:
3 Per Minute

Say Something
Write Something
Do Something

Choral Response White Board Turn and Talk

Quick Write Thumbs Up/Down Online Survey

 **Correction Card**

How to give help to the Reader

When the Reader makes a mistake or is stuck on a word for 4 seconds:
Coach: "Check it!"

Reader: "I need some help."
Coach: "That word is _____
What word?"
Reader: Says the word correctly.
Coach: "Good. Read the sentence again."
Reader: Re-reads the sentence.

Reader: Says the word correctly.
Coach: "Good. Read the sentence again."
Reader: Re-reads the sentence.

(Adapted from Peer Assisted Learning Strategies: Reading Methods for Grades 2-6, by D. Fuchs, L. Fuchs, D. Simmons, and P. Mathes, 2008, p. 179.)



Beyond Just Posting The Visual

- **Teach** and model what is on the visual
- **Review** to keep it “visible”
- **Provide** individualized support when needed
- **Positive Feedback** when they display appropriate behaviors
- **Reteaching** consistently
- **Reference** to support independence



Activity 3.1

Pause and Process:

- Environment:
 - What visuals could structure your classroom and support predictability?
- Student support:
 - Which visuals might help students with completing difficult tasks, smooth transitions, or promote their independence?
- Staff support:
 - What visuals would help you guide routines and instruction?

4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

Key Takeaways

- Thoughtful classroom arrangements maximize structure and make it easier to monitor learning
- Teaching expectations and routines using best practices set students up for success
- Classroom visuals reinforce expectations and promote independence

Share your biggest takeaway from the session in the chat.

Next Steps

- Stay connected with the TA Center
 - Join our listserv, follow our social media pages
- Participate in additional professional learning
 - On Demand
 - EduPaths
 - YouTube
 - Microlearning
 - Professional Learning Sessions
 - In-person
 - Virtual

References

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