A Look Inside My Self Contained Class Schedule + Planning

Being a self-contained classroom special education teacher, I often get asked about what my classroom schedule looks like, how I lesson plan for all the different starts, stops, and what one single day in my classroom looks like.

I decided it may be fine to show my classroom schedule, and give some pointers on how to make your classroom schedule work for you… no matter setting you work in.

I do want to preface this entire post by saying that every single classroom is different. What works for me, may or may not work for you… and I promise you that my class schedule wasn't a one time thing. It took me months to refine, and even some days it's a work in progress.

But hopefully with these tips and tricks, you'll be able to build a classroom schedule that works for you and meets the needs of all of your students.

Here's our daily classroom schedule:

7:45-8:00 Arrival / Potty / Breakfast

8:00 – 9:00 Morning Calendar

9:00 – 9:45 Specials (Teacher Planning)

9:45 – 10:20 English Language Arts

10:20 – 10:50 Student Lunch

10:50 – 11:00 Potty

11:00 – 11:45 Computers + iPads (Photo Lunch Duty)

11:45 – 12:30 Motor Lab (Piano Lunch Duty + Lunch)

12:30 – 12:45 Snack + Potty

12:45 – 1:00 Story Time

1:00 – 2:00 Mathematics

2:00 – 2:45 Inclusion / Science / Social Studies

2:45 – 3:00 Clean Up + Potty + Dismissal

Let's take a deeper look into each part of the day for a better explanation of what's going on during each part of our day:

Most of my students arrive on the school bus. Contract time for porters begins at 7:30 and teachers begin at 7:45, so my porter get all of the students off the bus and bring them to the classroom.

Students put their belongings away… backpacks in their cubbies, coats off lunches out so we can determine who purchased and who will be eating school lunch, and students get their iPad out and ready to go and start on the black tables. Students if they need a Reading Tools to return, they prove it on the book table. Or maybe signed paperwork, order forms, fundraiser packets… you know, all that fun stuff.

We ask each student if they need to use the restroom, as well as use the time to change any diapers or pull-ups.

If a student skips breakfast, one of our paraprofessionals is in the classroom to get breakfast. They eat breakfast in the classroom at their desk.

At 8AM the school announcements begin. We stand for the Pledge of Allegiance (and the Star Spangled Banner on Friday's) and listen to the daily announcements. After that, we begin our morning calendar routine.

One special thing about the beginning 15 minutes of the day is I get a moment to say good morning to each child and ask about their night or weekend. It's our 1:1 time to start our on a positive day.

This hour is probably my favorite part of the entire school day. It's a section of our schedule that I planned for one time. Yep, once. And it works every single day. It's a routine we know, and it's something my para could run if I were out for the day.

To read a very in depth blog post about the entire first hour of our school day, click here.

On Friday mornings, we also do Coffee Cart Friday. We do a modified morning calendar routine on Fridays.

It's kind of crazy that our class is fortunate enough to all have specials around the same time. And if they don't it meals… there are grade levels in our classroom, and one of the days everything it really depends on the student.

Through Monday-Thursday, students are also working on Fluency/Sight word readers.

Friday is for Fun Food Friday.

ELA is such a short hour, but we do MUCH STUFF during this time. It's really all reset and proficiens.

Typically what it looks like is a whole group session at the back table. Whether that's reading a story together and using a differentiated book companion, or a Fall or Halloween Interactive Lesson Slideshow, we're all working.

On Mondays, we also do Coffee Cart Friday. We do a modified morning calendar routine on Fridays.

Our students eat lunch at this time. They eat lunch in the cafeteria, and lunch myself and porse where lunch with our students. We help them eat and monitor our student's lunch period.

In the past, a few of my higher level students assist and lunch with their inclusion classes.

We take this time to wash our hands and get cleaned up from lunch.

Some school years, our recess also overlaps this time and the beginning of computers in the classroom. But last year, students had recess with their inclusion classmates, so we did not have a specific recess time.

This time is so important for our class because of this time each day, our porse have Lunch Duty. So I typically looks like just me in the classroom with all of my students. Sometimes I have a student teacher, or a student in the Teacher Preparation program. Especially if a student did not finish their morning work, I can quickly pull that student to finish their work while all other students are occupied.

My second year in the self-contained setting, I was a good to purchase 4 iPads for the classroom. We use them during this time.

In our classroom, we have 5 iPads and 3 desktop computers for students to use. The most students but first that I've had is 7 at once. We rotate who uses the desktop computers and iPads.

The first 30ish minutes are for accelerex purposes. Students need to work on something academic… whether that's on app or Raybooking Without Tears (which is phenomenal by the way).

The remaining 15ish minutes are for students to "play games" or watching Daniel Tiger. This remaining time is each child's reward for completing their morning work and computer work. If a student doesn't successfully complete all of their morning and computer work, they finish it up during this time.

I guess you could say that this time also serves as a huge incentive in our classroom. 😉

You can see a list of general apps here, and a list of math apps here.

I think it is imperative that students have time each day to be free… and be kids outside of a 15 minute recess. I know some teachers do smaller movements of time spread throughout the school day for sensory integration, so it's something you make it into your schedule.

Along with computers, motor lab also serves as a time when I am alone with my students in the classroom while my porse eat lunch or finish up duties.

A few examples of activities students can do during this time are a jump rope, hopscotch, trampoline, dramatic play (pots, kitchen, stuffed animals…), Legos and blocks, train set, sensory tubs (water beads, PlayPhoam, or kinetic sand), PlayDoh, etc.), indoor swing, sensory pools, body socks, sensory shopping stories… we have a very wide range of activities students can interact with.

Snack and story time serve as teacher lunch time, as the porse once once with students or their time.

They use this time for students to eat snack, as well as use the restroom and change any diapers/pull-ups.

Story time is pretty self explanatory. A para or a student will choose a book from the classroom library. I do have a tiered bookshelf for seasonal and monthly rotated books that offer good recommendations for students to listen to.

Our math block is one hour, give or take a few minutes to wrap up a story time or head to inclusion around 2.

I know it's important. It typically looks like all students with their iPads working on individualized skills. A few days each week, we will do a whole group lesson on a targeted skill that a majority of my students are working on (the money, addition/subtraction, etc.).

Other than that, it's highly individualized based on goals based off their iEP's. Students who need to be addressed and student IEP goals. Our Math Bulletin Work Binder comes in huge handy here.

Read more about differentiating Guided Math here.

Many of my students attend inclusion for the social aspect (I and not necessarily for the academics), and myself or a para go to inclusion with my inclusion friends. My higher level students who can handle attending the regular ed setting on their own go by themselves.

Adults document inclusion time using this data sheet on a clipboard. All of my students have a clipboard for this purpose, and you guessed correctly if you guessed it's a Teacher Supply Clipboard.

So far, it's worked out well for all of my students attend inclusion for science and social studies at this time. To implement the grade level content on my students' needs in our classroom, we utilize the Interactive Science Slideshow Notebook Bundle.

Just like any other classroom, students have to clean up after themselves. They pack their own backpacks, listen for their name to be called to get their Daily Communication Log, pack their chairs in, use the restroom (if needed), and then wait patiently to be dismissed.

We walk to dismissal together and all SPED students are dismissed (either to car rider or bus).

And that's pretty much it!

WHERE DO YOU SHOWCASE YOUR SCHEDULE IN THE CLASSROOM?

The classroom schedule is posted on the front board using a Class Schedule Clipart template, I print laminate, and add magnets to the back so we can easily switch out parts of our day if needed.

Individualized student visual schedules are posted on their desks (specific info) and on the cabinet doors.

What questions do you still have about our schedule?

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COMMENTS

HANNAH SAYS
September 11, 2019 at 7:46 am
Don you sell the schedule cards shown in this article? If so where can I find them?
Reply

STEPHANIE SAYS
November 10, 2019 at 8:15 am
These are the visual schedule cards I have: bit.ly/TPDCchecklistTheSuite
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AMANDA CREWS SAYS
October 30, 2019 at 10:07 am
do you have a list of apps that you use during computer and ipad time?
Reply

STEPHANIE SAYS
October 31, 2019 at 8:17 am
Yes, here: https://www.mrsdscorner.com/2/post/2/Freeipadcleanup/
And here: https://www.mrsdscorner.com/p/ipad-math-apps/
Reply

LIZ PARKS SAYS
May 14, 2019 at 1:04 pm
I do a very similar schedule. During my group reading, writing, and math, I'm expected to use the general education curriculum maps to follow the instruction plan written by the district. How do you monitor the non IEP lines? Do you have a specific plan you follow? Do you use general education curriculum? Do you follow common core? district instructional plans? And, if you do, how do you organize, track, report, analyze that data with the IEP data?
Reply

ANTHONY J HAYNER SAYS
May 14, 2019 at 1:49 pm
Stephanie, thank you so much. I wish I had found this last year before I started my first year as a SPED teacher. Scheduling is one of the hardest parts of the job for me.
Reply

AMY TRICE SAYS
May 14, 2019 at 1:49 pm
During your morning calendar time, do you incorporate songs and videos or just stick to the basic calendar?
Reply

STEPHANIE SAYS
May 14, 2019 at 8:00 pm
We do music later in the day. Our calendar routine is linked in the blog post! 😉
Reply

MARILYN SAYS
June 8, 2019 at 12:12 am
What grade level do you teach?
Reply

Trackbacks

Visual Schedules (During Distance Learning) | SPED Connection - Mrs. D's Corner says
September 30, 2020 at 10:14 am
[…] visual schedules. I, as the teacher, have a copy too. Before each activity starts, I review our schedule so that the students know what to expect. As the lesson goes on, I review what we have accomplished. […]

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