

Discussion on How to Utilize Picture Cards Effectively in Childcare Scene

-Based on the Examples of Mistakes in Composing and Using Picture Cards-

University of Tsukuba

MIZUNO Tomomi

Research Institute of Child Care Support

OKOSHI Kazumi

I . Introduction

Today, many children with developmental disorders attend kindergartens and daycare centers. In some cases, childcare providers who are in charge of children with developmental disorders are troubled that “they cannot follow the direction of childcare providers”, “they repeat the same thing after being corrected”, “they cannot remember the activities of daily living”, “it is difficult for them to change to other activities”, and “they panic when there is a sudden change in plan” (Ogawa, 2013) . However, there are reasons why children with developmental disorders behave like this such as “they do not understand the direction given by childcare providers”, “they do not know what they are supposed to do at that moment”, and “they are worried because they do not know what to expect”.

One way to avoid the situation for children with developmental disorder “that they do not understand” and “they are worried” is to use picture cards. Picture cards are illustrations and pictures used to supplement communications. Also, picture cards can be divided into direction cards (Fig.1), procedure cards (Fig.2), and schedule cards (Fig.3). Direction cards are used when childcare provider promote certain behavior from children such as “go get crayons” and “sit down on the chair”. Procedure cards indicate the series of movements such as brushing teeth and going to the restroom so children know what to do in the process. Schedule cards show the plan for the day in order so children can foresee what is going to happen.

One of the reasons why picture cards are effective for children with developmental disorders is that they have the characteristic of “visual predominance”. Many of the children with developmental disorders do not understand just by hearing it, but they can understand the meaning if they have visual clues. By showing the picture cards by childcare providers will let the children understand “what they should be doing now” and “how they should do it”. In addition, having the childcare provider show the picture and explain it will connect the words of childcare provider and picture cards so it makes it easier for children with developmental disorders to understand what they should do just by listening to them.

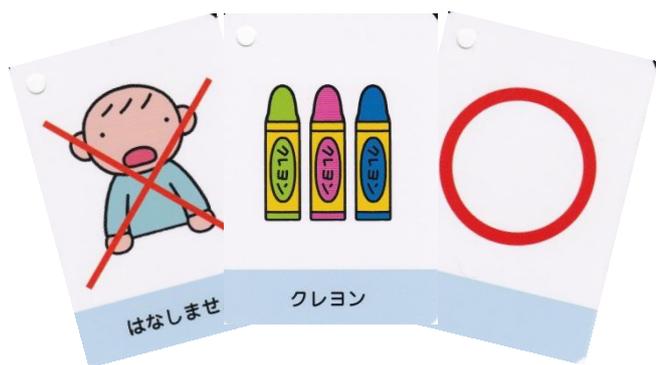


Fig.1. Direction Cards



Fig.2. Procedure Cards



Fig.3. Schedule Cards

Also, many of the children with developmental disorders are not good at judging the situation quickly even when they can communicate with words. Especially, children with tendencies of impulsive type of ADHD behave impulsively with the idea they have. They understand “what is good and bad to do” and “what they should do next”, but they forget what to do or do not know what to do in that moment. If there are picture cards to judge “what they should now” for those children, they are able to control their behavior. This is the second reason.

The third reason is related to the fact that children with developmental disorders have working memory weaknesses (Saino, Kawai, Kurokawa & Denda, 2007) . It means that they cannot encode multiple things at once or losing what they are supposed to be doing while processing multiple behaviors. For those children, picture cards helps them maintain their memory and when they do not know what to do, they can check what they are supposed to do by checking the procedure cards and schedule cards. Also,

experiment done by Torii & Sugita (2013) to an elementary school student with developmental disorders verified that when comparing the memorization with picture cards and words only, it was easier to remember it when picture cards were used. From this, it can be said that picture cards are effective in maintaining memories.

Although picture cards are effective for children with developmental disorders, it is often interferes with the assistant for children because the way childcare providers make picture cards is inappropriate or there are mistakes in the usage method. Also, there are some cases where children hate seeing the cards let alone responding to the picture cards.

In this research, we would like to clarify what is inappropriate in making the picture cards or using the picture cards for childcare providers, and suggest how the picture cards can be used effectively in the future.

II. Method

(1) Subject of Analysis

The subject of analysis was 128 childcare providers who work at a kindergarten or daycare center that is a member of Childcare support program of Research Institute of Child Care Support, which is a venture business from Tsukuba University, and consulted about picture cards to the authors when we went to route consultation to the kindergarten or daycare center.

(2) Analysis Method

When we went to route consultation, we had the childcare providers who consulted us to use picture cards as they normally do for children. We talked to the childcare provider after making the observation. From these observations, we evaluated whether they are appropriate or inappropriate and categorized the causes of inappropriate ones. For the evaluations of appropriate and inappropriate as well as reasons, the judgment was agreed among over 70% of the authors.

III. Results

(1) Inappropriate points when composing the picture cards

① Too much noise in the picture

There are some cases where there are other contents in the picture than they are trying to convey such as background and around the subject when they made picture cards with photographs. For example, there was a school bus in a picture that showed the playground. Here, children will not focus on the playground but look at the bus. For illustrations, childcare providers often draw stuff that is not necessary. For example, some childcare providers drew a child doing craft with scissors in the card for scissors. In this card, it is not clear whether the card indicates “scissors” or “crafting”. For direction cards, they have to only draw what they want to indicate to children.

② One card has multiple meaning

One card should only have one meaning. However, there are childcare providers who draw multiple contents for one direction card and use it for multiple scenes. For example, some childcare providers drew children dancing in the hall to indicate the location, “hall”, and behavior of “dancing”. For children, they do not know which meaning the childcare provider wants to convey even when they see the card.

③The size of the picture card is too big

Some childcare providers used picture cards that are made with A4 or B5 size paper. The cards are used only for children with developmental disorders so they are shown right in front of them. So if the size is too big, children can only focus one part of the card so it does not convey the content that childcare provider want to communicate. The optimal size is about L size in photograph.

④The color and shape are different in card from the reality

We often saw cards that show different illustration from what they actually are at school such as children have yellow hat in the card but they actually wear navy blue hat, or toilet in the school is western style but the card showed Japanese style. The reason was they could not find the same color or shape as the real situation when they looked for illustrations on the internet, but even if they show those picture cards, they do not understand that they are the same thing so they get confused.

⑤Use new illustration when remaking the card

Some childcare providers made a different picture card than the one that was being replaced due to damages. There are a few cases where children could behave appropriately because of direction cards, but when they were remade, they could not follow the direction. When the card is remade, the same illustration should be used.

(2) Inappropriate points in using direction card

①They often use cards to prevent certain behaviors

There are many childcare providers who often use cards to prohibit or prevent certain behavior with “× (bad)” or “do not (hit or push) to warn children. Children follow the direction temporarily, but if this kind of cards is used often, they start dislike looking at the card. It means that picture card has turn into a tool to scold children. Especially when they start using direction cards, they should use twice as many “○ (good)” cards than “× (bad)” cards so children recognize picture cards as “tool for praising”.

②They do not praise children after giving direction

They often talk to us about how children follow the direction when they start using the cards but they won't even look at the cards after a week. In most cases, childcare providers only give direction to children and did not praise them afterward. Unless they praise the children for following the direction given by the card, their appropriate behavior will not last.

③They only show the card without using words

Children learn language by seeing the cards and hearing the words. However, some

childcare providers gave direction with picture cards without saying anything. When using the picture card, they have to show the cards while saying simple words.

④ Their timing is off

When children are behaving in an inappropriate way, it is necessary to warn them immediately with picture cards. When they give directions, they have to pull out the picture card at the same time as saying words. However, we saw many childcare providers who are looking for the card when children are behaving inappropriately and they should be pulling out the card and giving direction. It is necessary to make them verify that what they are doing is wrong when they are doing it so missing the opportunity loses most of its effect. Also, looking for the card when they should be giving direction means they are making other children in the class waiting.

In order to avoid this, childcare providers should pull out the cards that are necessary during the child care activities (picture cards indicating name of the object and place such as a hat, bag, and cup) and problems that the children have (“do not hit” card for children who often hit other children) before the morning and keep them in a certain place so they can pull them out.

(3) Inappropriate points when using procedure cards

① They just put the procedure cards and do not teach children how to use them

Children with developmental disorders often stop what they are doing because they cannot remember what they need to do next. Therefore, children can act smoothly if they clearly know what they should do next with procedure cards. However, there were childcare providers who only put the procedure card up on the wall and did not teach children how to use them. Just by putting the card up will not naturally make children behave according to the procedure. Childcare providers have to look at the cards with children first and make sure that they know “what they need to do next” and promote children to behave accordingly when they check the procedure cards by themselves.

② It is difficult to understand which card they should focus on.

There are many childcare providers who just put the procedure cards up in one line. This does not clearly indicate how much they should do and what they should do next. Therefore, it is necessary to be creative about what they should be doing now such as putting magnets on the card and take them off the wall when they finish the step or using arrows.

③ It is difficult to see which card is the first and which card is the last.

When they put up the procedure cards, they have to put it top to bottom or left to right. However, some childcare providers put them in spiral or put them in 2 lines. It is difficult for children to see which one is the start and which one is the end, as well as what order they should look at the cards.

④ Procedure cards are set up in a different place than where it takes place.

Procedure cards need to be set up in the same place as where the action takes place so they can check what they should do now and what they should do next. However, they

are sometimes put up in a different place than where the action actually takes place. For example, even when they are supposed to get changed in front of their locker, the procedure for getting changed is up on the black board. Children with developmental disorders need to verify what they should do next in every step. So if the procedure cards are put up at a different place than where the action takes place, they forget what to do after going to the place, check the next procedure, and come back.

⑤ Cards are set up higher than their eye level

Children with developmental disorder often have hard time focusing on objects that are far away. Therefore, when the procedure cards are set up higher than their eye levels and cannot check them by pointing at, they do not know which card to look at. So procedure cards need to be located in an area where children can check by themselves that “I am doing this now” and “what I need to do is this” by looking at the content of picture cards.

(4) Inappropriate point when using schedule cards

① Schedule cards are buried in other postings

Schedule cards are often buried among other postings that are up around the cards. In such situation, children do not know where to see even when they try to check the schedule with the cards, so schedule cards lose their meaning.

② Other information are added to schedule cards

There are some childcare providers who write down the tools used and explanations on the side of the schedule cards. This has too much information on the schedule card so it is difficult for children to understand the schedules. It is easier for children to understand if schedule cards have minimal information.

③ It is difficult to understand which card is the first and which card is the end.

We often saw childcare providers who put schedule cards in 2 lines similar to procedure cards. This makes it difficult for children to see what order the schedule is going. Also, there are many childcare providers who put all the schedule cards for the day. In this situation, it is difficult for children to see how much of the schedule for the day is done and what they should do next. Similar to procedure cards, it is necessary to put down the schedule that is finished and indicate clearly what the activity is now and which one is next.

④ There is no enjoyment for children in the schedule.

Childcare providers often indicate activities that they want children to do and not include any activities that children with developmental disorders look forward to. When they cannot feel enjoyment in activity cards that are indicated, they are not motivated to do each activities. If they know that activity they enjoy is scheduled, they are motivated to do each activity. In addition, when they promote children to do activities they are not good at, visually indicating that “they can do the activity they like after doing the activity they do not like” makes it easier for children to do the activity they do not like.

IV. Conclusion

Since the effective use of picture cards for children with developmental disorder is introduced in childcare magazine such as the Early Childhood Education Magazine and books, many childcare providers started to use picture cards in childcare scene these days. However, there is not enough explanation of how the cards should and should not be used. Therefore, it was clarified that childcare providers are not using picture cards appropriately.

As it was mentioned earlier, picture cards can assist children with developmental disorders if they are used appropriately, but if they are not used properly, it is meaningless for children with developmental disabilities and sometimes even confuses them. In the future, it is necessary to specifically teach them how to use picture cards appropriately in training as well as indicate the usage method in books so childcare providers can use the cards appropriately.

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Inappropriate points when composing the picture cards were ①too much noise in the picture, ②One card has multiple meaning, ③The size of the picture card is too big, ④The color and shape are different in card from the reality, and ⑤Use new illustration when remaking the card.

Inappropriate points in using direction cards were ①They often use cards to prevent certain behaviors, ②They do not praise children after giving direction, ③They only show the card without using words, and ④Their timing is off.

Inappropriate points when using procedure cards were ①They just put the procedure cards and do not teach children how to use them, ②It is difficult to understand which card they should focus on, ③It is difficult to see which card is the first and which card is the last, ④Procedure cards are set up in a different place than where it takes place and ⑤Cards are set up higher than their eye level.

Inappropriate point when using schedule cards were ①Schedule cards are buried in other postings, ②Other information are added to schedule cards, ③It is difficult to understand which card is the first and which card is the end, and ④There is no enjoyment for children in the schedule.

Picture cards can assist children with developmental disorders if they are used appropriately, but if they are not used properly, it is meaningless for children with developmental disabilities and sometimes even confuses them.