

SURVIVAL-TO-SYSTEMS CHECKLIST

THE SURVIVAL-TO-SYSTEMS CHECKLIST

Directions: Find the section where you checked the most boxes and pick one system and improve it.

Instruction & Groups

GOAL: Instruction starts on time without the teacher micromanaging

Systems That Help

- Visual group expectations (what it looks like/sounds like to be ready to sit)
- Consistent group entry routine (same steps every time)
- Materials present or assigned by student
- When you're done, then... visual/activities to reduce early finish chaos
- Self-start at desk work to start while waiting for teacher & peers

Instruction Protection Systems

- Timed warm-ups or independent starters
- Visual timers so students know how long they need to engage
- Clear start-and-stop cues

Other Ideas

Paraprofessionals

GOAL: Paraprofessionals feel confident acting independently in the moment

Systems That Help

- Clear para schedules (who supports who and when)
- Defined roles during groups vs transitions
- Written expectations instead of verbal reminders
- One-man down schedules for para absences

Communication Systems

- Non-urgent questions are written down
- Communication board or shared notes system
- Scheduled check in time instead of constant interruptions

Para Training Systems

- Short, focused staff trainings
- Para handbook

Other Ideas

THE SURVIVAL-TO-SYSTEMS CHECKLIST

Directions: Start by identifying what consistently interrupts instruction and drains your energy during the day. Check all that apply. TIP: Not your biggest issue right now? Circle the section and come back to it later.

Instruction & Groups

- Group instruction takes a long time to begin
- Students don't know where to go or what to do
- Materials aren't ready when instruction should start
- You are repeatedly redirecting before teaching even begins
- Behaviors escalate during transitions into groups

Total Checked

Student Behavior

- Behaviors interrupt instruction multiple times a day
- You respond to the same behaviors repeatedly
- Students rely on adult prompts to stay regulated
- Breaks are reactive instead of planned
- Behavior plans exist but aren't consistently implemented

Total Checked

Paraprofessional Support

- Paras frequently ask what they should be doing
- You are the go-to person for all behavior concerns
- Paras wait for direction instead of following routines
- You feel interrupted during instruction to problem solve
- Support looks different depending on which para is present

Total Checked

Transitions & Scheduling

- Transitions take longer than expected
- Students struggle to move between activities
- Paras are unsure who supports which students during transitions
- You give verbal reminders all day long
- The schedule changes frequently without visual supports

Total Checked

Data, Assessments & Paperwork

- Data collection gets pushed aside due to behavior
- You unsure when assessments will realistically happen
- You try to collect data (unsuccessfully) while teaching groups
- Paperwork feels louder than instruction
- You leave school feeling behind, no matter how hard you worked

Total Checked

Identify Priority Areas

Which area has the most boxes checked?

Which area has the second most boxes checked?

Instead of asking-
WHAT SHOULD I BE WORKING ON?
Ask-
WHAT IS PULLING ME AWAY FROM INSTRUCTION THE MOST?

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THANK YOU

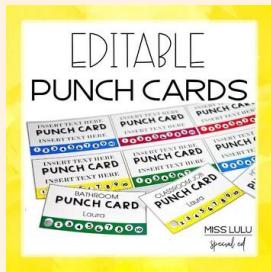
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 *Laura*

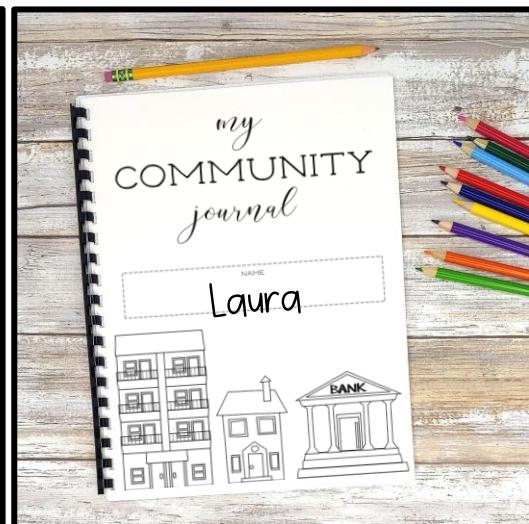
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Teaching Resources & Classroom Decor

MISS LULU

The **SURVIVAL-TO-SYSTEMS** Checklist



Read the blog post here-

**YOU CAN'T FIX EVERYTHING AT ONCE!
PRIORITIZING CLASSROOM SYSTEMS**

This resource includes-

- **CHECKLIST TO IDENTIFY INTERRUPTIONS**
- **CLASSROOM SYSTEMS CHEAT SHEET**
- **AI PROMPTS TO ASSIST IN SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT**

THE SURVIVAL-TO-SYSTEMS CHECKLIST

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TIP: Not your biggest issue right now? Circle the section and come back to it later.

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Data, Assessments & Paperwork

GOAL: Data supports instruction instead of competing with it.

Data Collection Systems

- [Simple, repeatable data sheets](#)
- Data tied to instruction—not extra tasks
- Clear roles (who collects what, when)

Schedule Protection Systems

- Built-in data windows
- Instructional activities that double as data collection
- Letting go of “perfect” data for usable data

Mental Load Reduction Systems

- Fewer goals tracked at once
- Clear priorities for compliance vs instruction
- Tools that automate or streamline tracking

Other Ideas

Student Behavior

GOAL: Reduce crisis moments so instruction can continue.

Systems That Help

- Baseline data (simple, fast, functional)
- Token systems or reinforcement schedules
- Planned breaks instead of reactive ones
- Behavior momentum (easy → hard tasks)

Regulation Systems

- Break cards or choice boards
- Visual calm-down options or [break space](#)
- Clear expectations for returning to work

Consistency Systems

- Visual behavior expectations posted and referenced
- Prompt hierarchy- least to most prompting

Other Ideas

THE SURVIVAL-TO-SYSTEMS CHECKLIST

Transitions & Scheduling

GOAL: Successful transitions happening with less talking and less stress.

Visual Schedule Systems

- [Individual or whole-class visual schedules](#)
- "Now/Next" or "First/Then" boards
- Transition cue visuals

Adult Alignment Systems

- Para schedules that mirror student schedules
- Clear expectations for who supports transitions

Time Awareness Systems

- [Visual timers](#) or timers projected on the board
- Daily slides showing what's happening now
- Countdown warnings built into routines

Other Ideas

Notes & Ideas for my Classroom

THE SURVIVAL-TO-SYSTEMS CHECKLIST

Directions- Use these AI prompts to assist in designing a plan for system implementation.

Tip: Be specific about *one* system. If you ask ChatGPT to fix your whole classroom, it will try... and you'll end up with a 47-step plan you'll never touch again.

AI PROMPT FOR SYSTEMS SUPPORT

You are an instructional coach helping me build one classroom system.

My problem area is: [transitions / para support / behavior / instruction / data collection].

The specific issue is: [describe what's happening in 1-2 sentences].

Classroom details:

- Grade/setting: []
- # students: []
- Primary needs: [AAC, autism, IDD, behavior, etc.]
- # paras: []
- My schedule blocks (roughly): [list main parts of day]
- Biggest constraint (time, staffing, space, etc.): []

Please give me:

- 1) A simple system that fits my situation (not a perfect-world plan).
- 2) Step-by-step setup directions for Week 1 (what I do, what paras do, what students do).
- 3) What visuals/materials I need and exactly how to introduce them.
- 4) A "when it goes wrong" troubleshooting plan with scripts.
- 5) A quick data plan to evaluate if it's working (1-2 metrics, how to track in under 2 minutes/day).
- 6) Clear criteria for success after 5 school days and after 15 school days.

Ask me up to 3 clarification questions only if truly necessary—otherwise make reasonable assumptions and proceed.

Instruction & Groups

Groups take forever to start and I'm redirecting constantly before I can even teach. Design a group start-up routine that students and paras can follow independently. Include: entry routine, materials system, "first/then," early finisher plan, and a 5-day teaching script. Provide a quick evaluation plan to see if groups are starting faster and with fewer interruptions.

Student Behavior

Student behavior is interrupting instruction. Recommend ONE behavior support system to start with (token, break card, visual schedule, momentum, etc.) based on what's most likely to work in my setting. Give step-by-step setup, how to teach it, reinforcement schedule, and how to track progress quickly. Include what to do if behavior spikes the first few days.

Paraprofessional Support

My paras interrupt instruction frequently to ask what to do or how to respond to behavior. Design a para communication + independence system that reduces interruptions but keeps students safe. Include: an "ask 3 then me" flow, non-urgent question parking lot, when-to-interrupt rules, and a 10-minute weekly para huddle agenda. Give me a rollout plan for 5 days and how I'll measure success.

Transitions & Scheduling

Transitions are eating up my day. Create a transition system using visuals and adult roles (who supports who) that reduces prompting and speeds up movement. Include: a routine, visuals, timer use, para responsibilities, and a practice plan. Tell me exactly how to teach it to students and what data to track (transition length, prompts, behaviors).

Data, Assessments & Paperwork

Data collection keeps getting pushed aside. Help me design a data system that is realistic: simple sheets, clear roles, and data collected during instruction (not as an extra task). Give me a plan for one goal area first, with a 5-day rollout, and tell me exactly what counts as "working."

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