

Reaching Children with Special Needs

- I. Who are these children?
 - A. People FIRST/Diagnosis SECOND
 - B. Diagnosis
 1. Mild – Moderate – Severe – Profound
- II. How do I teach these children?
 - A. Pray – God brought THIS child to YOUR class.
 - B. Meet with parents
 1. Questionnaire
 2. Best resource
 - C. Understand the child's unique needs
 1. Internet – Google search for diagnoses & organizations
 - a. www.joniandfriends.org; www.throughtheroof.org;
www.mephibosheth.org; www.theinclusivechurch.wordpress.com
 2. Books
 3. Visit churches with existing special needs programs.
 - D. Teamwork
 1. Leadership; Parents; Other Children's Ministry Workers; Teens
 - a. Brainstorm
 - b. Observations
 2. Training
 - a. Overview of the diagnosis
 - Give specific information about the child to the worker (must have parental permission)
 - b. Teaching techniques
 - c. Provide written job description
 - d. Teach etiquette
 - e. Teach safety
 - f. Teach basic behavior control techniques
 - E. Dealing with Behavior
 1. Need a plan
 2. Need to include parents

AUTISM

- Require support in understanding the purpose and value of communication.
- Provide precise instructions for student to follow.
- Always refer to the student by name, he/she may not realize that "everyone" includes them.
- Keep verbal instructions brief and simple.
- Use visual material and/or sign language to support student's communication.
- They are literal thinkers.
- Require direct teaching in social skills; they do not pick up on social cues.
- Give time and warnings to transition from one activity to the next.
- Adjust environment to address student's undersensitivity/oversensitivity to noise, smell, taste, light, touch, or movement.
- Structure environment to reduce distractions.
- Secure student's attention prior to giving instructions or engaging in conversation.
- Help student in understanding the duration of tasks.
- Use computers to support the student's learning.
- Make the links between different tasks clear to students.

ADHD

- Make instructions brief and clear, and teach one step at a time.
- Make behavioral expectations clear.
- Make frequent eye contact.
- Provide breaks as needed.
- Establish method to signal student to let them know when they are off task or misbehaving.
- Use a physical contact (a hand on the shoulder) to focus attention.
- Combine visual and auditory information when giving directions.
- Provide cues and warnings to ease transitions.
- Break assignments into manageable segments.
- Give step by step instructions.
- Provide consistent routines from week to week.
- Make sure you have the child's attention before giving them directions.
- Ask child to repeat back directions.
- Post simple rules.
- Vary teaching methods (visual, auditory, movement, hands-on).

DYSLEXIA

- Repeat directions.
- Maintain daily routines.
- Use step-by-step directions.
- Write key points or words on the chalkboard/white board.
- Simplify written directions.

RESOURCES

What About Me?

By: Dr. Tim Tutton

Exceptional Teaching: A Comprehensive Guide for Including Students
With Disabilities

By: Jim Pierson

8 Great Smarts: Discover and Nurture Your Child's Intelligences

By: Kathy Koch

The Way They Learn: How to Discover and Teach to Your Child's
Strengths

By: Cynthia Ulrich Tobias

Every Child Welcome: A Ministry Handbook for Including Kids with
Special Needs

By: Katie Wetherbee & Jolene Philo

Special Needs Smart Pages: Advice, Answers, and Articles About
Teaching Children with Special Needs.

By: Gospel Light

Smart But Scattered: The Revolutionary "Executive Skills" Approach to
Helping Kids Reach Their Potential

By: Dawson & Guare

<https://theinclusivechurch.wordpress.com>

www.lifeway.com - ministries/special-needs

Pinterest - type: *teaching special needs children in church*

**The internet is going to be one of your best resources to help you find articles, blogs, books, information on disabilities, groups for specific types of special needs.

teachers pay teachers . com

Including Students with Special Challenges



Students could face varying challenges. Some could face mental challenges and others physical.

Even within the same diagnosis, you might have students who act and react differently from one another.

① Know Your Students.

- ◆ Know their cognitive and physical abilities and interests, not just their disabilities or challenges ... both strengths and weaknesses.
- ◆ Maintain good parent/teacher relationships to gain a better understanding of students' diagnosis and needs. Parents or other caretakers generally would be in the best position to provide these kinds of insights.
- ◆ Try to determine how students learn best and how to most effectively communicate with them.
- ◆ Ascertain what their trigger points are for adverse reactions and how to calm them down.

② Keep Things Simple and Uncomplicated.

- ◆ Adjust activities to their simplest level if you have a student with cognitive disabilities. Make adaptations, as needed, if you have students with physical disabilities. If it is not possible to modify the activity, you might need to use a different activity.
- ◆ Provide easy and clear instructions.
- ◆ Focus on one concept and use much repetition in a variety of ways to communicate it.
- ◆ Use simple crafts. Students without disabilities might construct and cut out projects themselves whereas you might need to do some preliminary steps ahead of time for students with disabilities.

③ **Keep Students Engaged.**

- ◆ Provide sufficient one-on-one attention.

This could require adjusting your teacher-to-student ratio. Unless you have a very small class, you might find it helpful to have a teen or other adult who is there solely to come along side of the student with special challenges. If you are unable to find a helper, perhaps you can enlist the assistance of one of your more mature students.

- ◆ Guard against sensory overload by providing a calm, structured, and orderly environment.

Too many concurrent activities or too much noise or chaos could get them over-stimulated, causing them to disengage.

- ◆ Plan many short activities rather than longer activities.

They could lose interest in longer activities easier. How long you can keep a student engaged in an activity could depend on the particular disability and its severity.

- ◆ Provide much visual and hands-on learning, seeking to use all of their senses.

Guard against being too heavy on auditory alone. Use visuals such as pictures, objects, or other visual aids. Use kinesthetic activities that give them opportunity for movement or to touch and feel. Use some auditory means such as listening to the story or music.

- ◆ Use puppets and other dramatic means of presenting the lesson.

This is particularly good for students struggling with social skills.

④ **Be Patient with Students.**

- ◆ Do not rush them through an activity in which they are engaged or they could become frustrated.
- ◆ Be willing to repeat instructions as necessary.
- ◆ Simply love and value them as a person and treat them as you would a student without a disability.

Parent Questionnaire for Children with Special Considerations:

Our church cares for each participant in children's ministry programming. These questions are asked for the benefit of your child and so that we may provide the best experience and safest environment for everyone involved. Our church and our children's ministry workers respect your family's right to privacy. Any information shared from this form is communicated directly with those caring for your child and only on a "need to know" basis. Please answer the below questions that apply to your child and that may help our church best minister to your child.

- My child has the following diagnosis, medical condition or learning difference:
- My child has the following allergies and/or food sensitivities:
- My child's allergies can be life threatening (circle) **Yes/No** and require the use of an EpiPen **Yes/No**
- My child's main mode of functional communication is:
- My child processes instruction or information best when: (e.g. visual, auditory, experiential, drama).
- My child currently receives therapies and special instruction in:
- My child has an Individualized Education Plan **Yes/No**
- If answered "yes", please describe child's IEP:
- The goals I have for my child's development this coming year include (behavioral, social, academic, etc):
- My child has the following area(s) of interest:
- My child can do these things independently:
- My child needs assistance with:
- My child is uncomfortable with or has an aversion to:
- A trigger-point for a potential meltdown is when:
- When/if my child experiences a melt-down he/she calms when we:
- Doing/seeing/experiencing this one thing is an important part of my child's routine:
- My child (circle one) **does/does not** enjoy music
- My child seems most relaxed in settings (circle one) **alone, with a few children, among many children**
- My child (circle one) **would/would not** enjoy a large group worship experience
- My child is really picky about:
- My child may be trying to communicate their need for (describe) _____ when he/she exhibits the following behavior:
- My child is prone to seizures (circle one) **Yes/No** If yes, tell what prompts the seizure and how we can prevent/respond: