

Shaping the Hearts

of Kids with Special Needs

Winter 2014-2015

immerse
in His Word

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It Came to Pass

As a teenage girl and young woman, I dreamed of the kind of home I would create for my family during the holiday season. Before I was even married, I had decided which family traditions I would keep and what new traditions I would add for my husband and children. I could envision my family participating in all the

what autism was, I knew that our son did not tolerate deviations from his daily schedule. Before I understood terms such as *auditory sensitivity*, I knew that the continual playing of Christmas music in every retail and grocery store was painful for him. And before sensory integration became the gold standard in our home, I knew that everything about the holidays was going to be painful for Noah.

Nothing was how I imagined it would be. The charming displays of holiday lights in stores and on neighborhood homes distressed Noah to the point of tears. Comforting scents of pine, clove, and cinnamon triggered a gag reflex that caused him to scream at the first whiff of the aroma. Christmas parties, gift swaps, caroling, and holiday play dates with other children his age were completely out of the question. Nothing had come to pass as I had hoped and planned.

Very few of my friends understood why we were slowly dropping off the social calendar. Many of them still offered invitations. Some even specified a quiet room where I could take Noah in

**"Nothing was how I imagined it would be. . . .
Nothing had come to pass as I had hoped
and planned."**

—Vangie Rodenbeck, Cumming, Georgia

wonderful customs associated with Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's long before they came to pass.

When those days finally did come to pass and my firstborn son was just a toddler, we began integrating more of those time-honored traditions in our home. To my disappointment, we looked much less like Currier & Ives than I had hoped. Before I even knew

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case of a meltdown. But in the end, I was too discouraged and overwhelmed to even attempt taking him out in situations where I could not control the environment. Holiday season after holiday season passed, and by the time we had gotten proficient at managing the symptoms associated with what we came to call “holiday overload,” the invitations had stopped coming.

I take comfort from another young mother who, when things “came to pass” for her, was also in circumstances very different from what she probably had imagined. The Gospel narrative indicates that Mary was obedient, yet shocked, at her sudden circumstance. Betrothed to Joseph and a virgin, yet having conceived a child through the Holy Spirit, Mary was in no way prepared for the challenges that lay before her.

I encourage other mothers, whether in the first years of diagnosis or many years into a lifestyle they never imagined, to take during the hectic holiday season a page from Mary’s book. Luke 2:19 says that when the shepherds reported to Mary all they had seen and heard, Mary simply “treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.” The word translated “treasured” denotes that Mary preserved the memory of these times. She was watchful over the memories and protected them.

The life of Mary, the mother of Jesus, can teach us that when nothing around us is what we prepared for, we should watch carefully to see what God is doing there. When what has come to pass is not what we had so desperately hoped for and our circumstances seem too humble to be of any use, we must tune our ears to the heavens and look for angels, coming to proclaim peace on earth in the middle of the chaos. We can be watchful and know what has come to pass is that the eternal God came to be with us—*Immanuel*—and is still with us.

And parents of children with special needs need Him with us all the more.

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✍ by Vangie Rodenbeck

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Winter 2014-2015 *Toddlers & 2s Teacher*.

Toddlers & 2s

Less Is More

Materials

materials needed for Activities for Babies 12 Months and Younger

Children with developmental delays may not be equipped to participate in Bible Time, when children sit on carpet squares or at a table. One key to ensuring these children's continued spiritual growth, as well as their endurance for lesson times, is to use materials designed for children younger than their actual age. Each unit in *Toddlers & 2s Teacher* provides Activities for Babies 12 Months and Younger. Try using these activities with children who have special needs or developmental delays, since the activities are written to use with children who are closer to their actual developmental age.

Lesson highlight for:

all units

I'm a Wanderer

Materials

materials needed for selected activities

One of the biggest challenges for teachers of toddlers and 2-year-olds is teaching them how to move from self-guided play to a structured lesson time. Many lessons for this age level include activities custom-made for children who still prefer to wander throughout lesson time. Children with special needs are often slower to move to a structured lesson time than their typically developing peers. To keep these children more engaged, consider using approaches found in some of the Active Play activities included in *Toddlers & 2s Teacher* (see examples listed below).

Lesson highlight for:

"Lost and Found," lesson 3 Activity Time; "Find the Stars," lesson 4 Discovery Time; "Find the Food," lesson 5 Discovery Time

Toddlers & 2s

Good Things Box

Materials

box with a separate lid,
marker, scissors, flashlight,
objects as suggested for
each lesson

Repetition and predictability are keys to success and progress when attempting to engage any toddler or 2-year-old in a lesson time. Even children who seem detached from the larger group of children will often rejoin the class during activities that are familiar and part of the routine. In unit 2, the Good Things Box is introduced as a recurring tool for capturing the attention of children. Easily adaptable for each unit theme, this is an inexpensive way to encourage in a safe and predictable format the inquisitive spirit of a child with special needs.-

Lesson highlight for:

“Good Things Box,” lessons 5-9 Extra Hour Activity and Bible Time

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Winter 2014-2015
Preschool Teacher.

Preschool

Tongue Tied

Materials

Preschool Resources CD;
whisper phone (see activity)

Helping children become immersed in the Word of God is a key feature of Immerse. For children with language delays, verbally repeating Bible verses may be an impossible and frustrating process. With the addition of a few simple items, you can break down the process into smaller, more manageable steps that will teach the value of Scripture without frustration. Consider using these teaching methods:

- Fully utilize the *Resources* CD by making copies of each unit's Bible Memory posters. Use the posters as coloring pages. As a child colors each word, you can recite the verse for him. This will help the child make the connection between the words of Scripture and your spoken words.
- Teach the Bible Memory motions found on the *Resources* CD. Tying spoken words to motions may be just the extra help a child needs to attempt recitation. Alternatively, if the child learns only the hand motions, he is, in a very real way, speaking the words of Scripture in his own special way.
- When a child is able to repeat words but easily becomes frustrated, remember to break the Bible Memory down into small, 2- to 3-word phrases.
- A very successful tool in developing language has been the use of a whisper phone, which enables the child to hear his or her own voice while repeating the Word of God. Instructions for making whisper phones are included below.

How to Make Whisper Phones

Purchase 90-degree $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 1" PVC pipe-fitting elbows (2 per phone) and clear mailing tape (or decorative duct tape). Tape together two PVC elbows so that the pipes resemble the handset of a telephone. If desired, add length to the handset by cutting a 3" to 5" length of PVC pipe and inserting it between the 2 elbows. Wrap each joint with tape.

Activity adaptations for:

Bible Memory activities, all units

Show Me the Story

Materials

Resources sheet 2 Bible story picture cards 3a-3f

As a teacher, it may be your dream that at the end of a lesson, every child would be able to name the story facts, characters, and focus. But seasoned teachers will confess that, even with typically developing children, this seldom happens. While conventional methods of measuring retention may not always yield the desired result, there are other methods that can be useful for evaluating the effectiveness of a lesson. For children with developmental delays, use of methods other than verbal recognition of story facts often shows big results.

The “Put Them in Order!” activity found in lesson 3 is a good example of a different method that will allow children to showcase their knowledge of the day’s lesson. Using pictures cards, children are encouraged to retell the story by putting the cards in story order. With narration added by the teacher, children can retell the story, showing they understand the order of events and action of the day’s Bible lesson. Consider using this same method with other quarter materials, such as *Resources* sheet 3 mountain puzzle 5a-5e, sheet 4 Bible story flip pictures 7a-7d, and sheet 5 Bible story stick puppets 8a-8e.

Activity highlight for:

“Put Them in Order!” lesson 3 Grow and Go

I Don’t Do Small Talk

Materials

small beanbag; pictures of favorite foods, activities, colors, animals, etc.

Using language to convey abstract thoughts may be very difficult for preschool-age children who have developmental delays. While their peers are enthusiastically participating in activities that require verbal responses, these children often stand by silently. Invite them to participate more fully in the activity “Beanbag Chat” by supplying visuals for them to choose from when asked about their favorite food, animal, color, or activity.

Activity adaptation for:

“Beanbag Chat,” lesson 7 Getting Started

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Winter 2014-2015
Pre-K & K Teacher:

Pre-K & K

Whisper a Prayer

Materials

whisper phone

Note

Instructions for making a whisper phone can be found with the preschool adaptive activities, page 5. Make enough phones for each child in the class to have one.

The “More! Sing and Pray” time in lesson 7 suggests using a cell phone to demonstrate what it means to “talk” to God. Often, speech and language delays are common symptoms of developmental disorders. When these delays are present, the idea of talking, much less talking to God, will be more abstract for the child.

Try using whisper phones to help children word simple prayers in 2-word phrases. Give each child a whisper phone, and tell the children they should repeat into their phones the words you say. PRAY: **Dear God/thank You/for hearing/our prayers.** When the children have completed the last phrase, ask, “Did you hear your prayer? God hears your prayers too!”

Activity adaptation for:

“More! Sing and Pray,” lesson 7 More! Bible Discovery

Hard to Follow

When teaching about obedience and how that relates to following Jesus, the unsaid assumption for preschool children is that obedience entails an immediate response. Games such as “The Leader Says” and “Following Pictures” give typically developing children an excellent opportunity to showcase how quickly they can respond to commands and follow a leader. Children with special needs, however, often experience delays in processing what they hear. These delays can appear especially pronounced when a child with developmental delays is trying to perform alongside a typically developing child. Consider using a few simple strategies to adapt activities that require following a leader.

- Give your instruction to the group, but don’t allow anyone to move until you have repeated the instruction a second time and then counted to five. This will allow a child with auditory delays time to process your instruction.
- Provide a visual cue along with your verbal instructions.
- Provide a physical cue along with your verbal instructions, such as hopping when you say “hop.”
- Consider giving the child with developmental delays an opportunity to be the leader so that his delays are less obvious to the group.

Activity adaptation for:

“The Leader Says” and “Following Pictures,” lesson 10 More! Getting Started

Eye Spy

Materials

inexpensive reading glasses from local dollar store, clear nail polish

Before Class

Coat the lenses of a pair of reading glasses with several sloppy coats of clear nail polish and allow the polish to dry completely.

It may be difficult for a child with developmental delays to internalize the story of someone who has a visual impairment, unless of course, that is the child's own impairment. Help all the children in your class to identify first-hand with the person who is visually impaired.

Explain that you have prepared a special pair of glasses that will help the children actually see what it would be like to be visually impaired. Have the children take turns putting on the prepared reading glasses. While the child wearing the glasses is seated, give instruction for doing a few activities, such as putting blocks in a jar or stringing large beads. Note: When children have the glasses on, do not allow them to move around the room as they will be effectually visually impaired during this time.

SAY: The way you felt while wearing the glasses is how the man who was blind in today's Bible story felt all the time. But the man loved Jesus, and even though the man could not see things around him, he could do what Jesus said to do. That's a way to follow Jesus. Just because a person has a disability doesn't mean that person can't follow Jesus. Everyone can love and follow Jesus!

Activity adaptation for:

"An 'Eye' Witness," lesson 13 Getting Started

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in *Winter 2014-2015 Early Elementary Teacher*.

Early Elementary

Get Ready

Materials

assortment of school supplies, brooms, dustcloths, calendars, invitations, cake mixes, baby blanket, diapers (or pictures of these items)

Teaching Tip

Search the Internet for images when you need pictures to help children visualize what you are teaching.

Simeon and Anna

Materials

Early Elementary Resources sheet 1 Bible Flash Cards 1c and sheet 2 Bible Flash Cards 3a, 3b, 3d, 4a, and 4b; card stock; scissors

Before Class

Copy onto card stock the flash cards needed for this lesson. Prepare a set of cards for each child.

Children with language-based learning disabilities may have difficulty retrieving information from past experiences to share as part of a discussion activity. Having the objects or pictures can help these children participate more effectively. The pictures also will help children stay focused on the topic being discussed.

Have the children form three groups. Assign one of the following events to each group: first day of school, visit from a relative, new baby in the family. Let the groups go “shopping,” gathering from the assortment of supplies (or pictures) any items they would need for their assigned event. Give time for the kids to talk about what they will need to do to get ready for their event. When the groups are ready, have each group show the items gathered and tell about their preparation plans. SAY: **Just as we need to prepare for special events, God prepared to send His Son, Jesus, to the world. God is a very good planner. Let’s find out what God did to prepare for Jesus’ coming to earth.**

Activity adaptation for:

“Get Ready,” lesson 1 Focus In

Acting out the lesson 4 Bible story as suggested in *Early Elementary Teacher* may be hard for some children; the children might have trouble standing in the correct place or knowing how to share space with others. By making an activity adaptation, children can each focus on their materials and learn the Bible story. The children will be able to use their flash cards when they go home to retell the story to family members.

Give each student a set of flash cards; keep the original set for your use. Name the characters shown on the cards and ask kids to tell what they know about the people pictured. As you tell the Bible story, show your flash cards and have the children follow along, finding the appropriate cards from their sets. After the Bible story has been told, have the children find partners. Encourage partners to retell the story to each other, using their flash cards.

Activity adaptation for:

“Bible Exploration,” lesson 4 Explore His Word

Permission is granted to reproduce the Bible Flash Cards for use with this activity adaptation—not for resale.

Early Elementary

What John Said

Materials

white (or light blue) construction paper; *Early Elementary Resources* sheet 3 Bible Story Figures 6a, 6d, and 6e; copy paper; scissors; blue crayons; glue sticks; whiteboard; dry-erase marker

Before Class

Make copies of the three Bible story figures (John, Jesus, dove). Cut out a set of figures for each child who will be doing the review activity in this way.

Code activities can be very difficult for some children with learning or developmental disabilities. Making an adaptation will allow them to review the story in a way that they can process.

After the Bible story has been told, give each child a piece of construction paper and a blue crayon. Tell the children to color the bottom part of their paper blue, creating a “river.” Then give each child a set of story figures and let them glue the figures onto the paper, creating a picture of Jesus’ baptism. Write on the whiteboard the two code statements from the activity page: “Remember God, and obey Him.” “Jesus is the Son of God.” Have the children write these statements somewhere on their papers. Then ask volunteers to retell the Bible story, using the visual they have made. SAY: **After Jesus was baptized, John knew that Jesus was God’s Son! John told others about Jesus. We can tell people that Jesus is God’s Son too!**

Activity adaptation for:

Early Elementary Activities p. 15; “Bible Review Activity,” lesson 6 Explore His Word

Permission is granted to reproduce the Bible Story Figures for use with this activity adaptation—not for resale.

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Winter 2014-2015
Middle Elementary Teacher.

Middle Elementary

Acts of Courage

Materials

chart paper, marker, reusable adhesive, pictures of children and adults doing courageous things, scissors

Before Class

Search the Internet for images of courageous actions, and then copy and print out the images.

Creating a chart or showing a visual before opening up a discussion activity can help children understand exactly what will be discussed. The visual images can trigger memories that children can tap into for the conversation. Eliminate the need to compare what takes the “most” courage. For some kids, it may take courage to do things that other kids perceive as easy.

Display a sheet of chart paper. Draw a chart with three columns. Label the columns: At Home, At School, In the Neighborhood. SAY: **Sometimes we need courage to do things that are new to us or that are difficult for us to do. We might need courage at home, at school, or in our neighborhoods.** Show the pictures you have gathered. Have the kids help place the pictures in an appropriate column on the chart. Then ask the kids to share other times when they have needed courage. SAY: **We all need courage at some time. Let’s see what God’s Word has to say about this!**

Activity adaptation for:

“Acts of Courage,” lesson 3 Focus In

Pose!

Materials

pictures of Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus, Simeon, and Anna; copy paper; scissors

Before Class

Find pictures of the Bible story characters. You may want to use the images found in “Jesus, the Promised Messiah,” *Middle Elementary Activities* for lesson 5. Make copies and cut out sets of pictures, one per student.

Acting out a Bible story with group poses would be difficult for some kids with developmental disabilities. These students may not be able to process the language quickly enough to move into the suggested posed scenes. They also may struggle with sharing space with other kids. By providing an activity adaptation, you can help students with special needs stay engaged during the Bible Exploration time, and they will have the tools needed for retelling the story later.

Give each student (or the person with special needs) a set of story figures. Begin telling the Bible story. Stop at an appropriate time and say “pose.” The kids can move their figures to show the part of the story just described. Continue the story in this manner, encouraging kids to move their figures into various scenes as the story is told. Let the kids use their figures to retell the story to each other as time allows.

Activity adaptation for:

Bible Exploration, lesson 5 Explore His Word

Permission is granted to reproduce the art images from Middle Elementary Activities for lesson 5 to use with this activity adaptation—not for resale.

Middle Elementary

Shopping for Gifts

Materials

assortment (or pictures) of toys, games, or other objects that could be given as gifts; table

Before Class

Create a “gift shop,” displaying on a table the gift items you have gathered.

Playing a game that requires kids to name favorite kinds of gifts to receive may be difficult for a number of reasons. Kids with developmental disabilities might not play with the same toys as their typically developing peers. The students may have interests that could be stigmatizing, or they may live in family situations in which gift giving is limited. Restructuring this activity to offer a “gift shop” can keep the focus on gifts but take it away from what a person receives. Providing actual objects (or pictures) also helps kids who may have trouble verbalizing or retrieving information.

SAY: Let’s pretend we are shopping for some presents to give to someone. We’ll walk through a gift shop and decide what we might choose to give as gifts. Allow kids to go through the “shop.” Each person should choose something to give and then tell what has been chosen and for whom. **SAY: It’s fun to give and receive gifts. Jesus likes gifts too! Let’s read in our Bibles and find out about this.**

Activity adaptation for:

“My Favorite Gift,” lesson 6 Focus In

“No Comparison!”

Materials

roll paper, pictures that represent Jesus’ power, glue sticks, markers, reusable adhesive

Before Class

Search the Internet, picture Bibles, and Bible storybooks for pictures of things that represent Jesus’ power. (Examples: storm/calm sea, sealed tomb/empty tomb, sick person/healthy person) Print (or copy) and cut out the pictures.

Students with developmental disabilities often do better with concepts that are presented visually. Making a connection between loud, powerful sounds and Jesus’ power could be difficult. An activity adaptation may allow these students to have some success in understanding how powerful Jesus is. In addition, it will provide a lasting mural that can be referred to again—or even displayed in a hallway or lobby of your church facility!

Have the kids work together to create a mural that depicts Jesus’ power displayed by the many things He did while on earth. Kids can draw their own pictures, or they can mount pictures from the selection you have provided. Title the mural: “Jesus’ Power—No Comparison!” As kids work, talk about the different ways Jesus showed His power.

Activity adaptation for:

“There’s No Comparison,” lesson 9 Make It Real

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in *Winter 2014-2015 PreTeen Teacher*.

PreTeen

Pass the Present

Materials

PreTeen Resources sheet 7
Bible Skills: New Testament Events poster, gift box with separate lid, wrapping paper, scissors, tape, small treats (wrapped candies, stickers, etc.), song from your music collection

Before Class

Wrap the gift box and lid separately. Place treats inside and put the lid on the box.

Buddy Building

Materials

modeling dough, plastic mats (or paper), moist towels for cleanup

Being put on the spot to answer questions in a circle format can be difficult for preteens with processing disorders (auditory, visual, sensory, or language). Remembering information from the poster and then reading and discussing it in front of the group could create unnecessary anxiety.

Pair students and assign each pair a particular event from the poster. Give pairs a few minutes to discuss their assigned events. Have kids sit with their partners in a circle. Play a song as the wrapped gift is passed. When the song stops, identify who is holding the box and ask that pair to tell about their event. The kid who feels less comfortable sharing can hold the box while the partner presents the information. When all pairs have shared, the box can be opened and the treats distributed.

Activity adaptation for:

Optional Bible Skill Builder "All Wrapped Up," lesson 5 Explore His Word

Kids with low muscle tone may have difficulty making things out of modeling dough. Kids on the autism spectrum tend to have difficulty with abstract thinking. Understanding how contentment relates to generosity and sharing would be unclear for the child with autism.

Try pairing kids up for this activity. Choose a student who is compassionate and kind, and ask that child to work with the person who has special needs. The student with special needs can rely on the buddy for assistance without standing out. Provide the option of each pair making one model or both buddies in the pair making their own models. As they work together, the typically functioning student can explain and help the kid who struggles with abstract thinking. In the situation where a kid has low muscle tone, a buddy could help the partner form a model that would communicate their combined ideas. When sharing with the class, one partner can hold (or point to) the model while the other person explains what the pair created. The entire activity then becomes a live demonstration of how we can share earthly treasures and live unselfishly.

Activity adaptation for:

"Symbol Sculpture," lesson 2 Focus In

Pick a Side

Materials

whiteboard, dry-erase marker, tack magnets, *Resources* CD lesson 2 Give Unselfishly Choices printable file, scissors, basket

Before Class

Print a copy of the Give Unselfishly Choices printable file. Cut apart the slips and place them in a basket.

What Can You Give?

The word *autism* comes from the Greek word *autos*, meaning “self.” Thinking selfishly is common for kids on the spectrum, although they aren’t meaning to be selfish in a negative way. Kids on the spectrum could have a difficult time with choosing between one option and another, especially when the selfish option might seem perfectly normal to them. Additionally, the activity could be problematic for the kid with visual-processing disorders if he has to read his slip out loud with the attention of others on him.

Instead of completing this activity in a circle format (where a kid may be put on the spot to read a choice and then compare it to previous choices), format this as a group activity with two categories. On the board, write the headings “Selfish” and “Unselfish.” Kids can choose whether they want to take a turn drawing a slip of paper. When a slip has been drawn and the situation read, the class can decide as a group if the behavior is selfish or unselfish. Then the slip of paper can be attached under the appropriate heading on the board.

Activity adaptation for:

“Meeting the Needs,” lesson 2 Live It Out

Kids with special needs often will have an object of comfort they like to have with them in stressful situations. They may carry a special snuggle object, such as a stuffed animal or blanket, to provide them comfort. Or they may keep an item in their pocket to fidget with as a coping mechanism for compulsive behaviors. Sacrificing those special objects could create great anxiety.

Make a simple adjustment to ease the anxiety that this activity might create for the kid with special needs. Discuss the meaning of sacrifice: “giving up something that is precious.” Tell kids you are going to ask them “What can you give?” When you ask the question, the kids are to find another person and either name something they own that they would be willing to give that person, or they can pull something from their pockets (a paper clip, coin, lint) and actually give the item to the person. There is no harm in pointing out that sacrificing by giving up a special comfort object might be harder than giving up something of lesser value. The child with special needs may even surprise you and offer his coping object. Concept learned!

Activity adaptation for:

“Give What You’ve Got!” lesson 5 Focus In

Tips and Encouragements

for families and
volunteers



Quick Steps for Special Needs

While the *Quick Step* activities in Immerse curriculum require little preparation and are easy for teachers to use, they aren't always the most effective activities for children with special needs. But Immerse contains many tools that can serve as a *Quick Step* for teaching a child who learns differently!

A Note from the Editor



Welcome to *Shaping the Hearts of Kids with Special Needs*. We hope this resource helps you as you minister to children and families who have children with special needs. Have you read this quarter's Tips and Encouragements article? Because winter quarter includes the holiday season, we wanted to give you even more help. We have gathered the tips from previous issues of this resource and created a special article, "Tips for Teachers: Seasonal Helps for Kids with Special Needs." Look for the article on our Downloads page on www.21stcc.com, and then pass it on to your team of volunteers.

May God bless you as you teach and minister to each of His beloved children.

Sincerely,

Immerse Editorial Staff

- Each lesson in *Toddlers & 2s—Pre-K & K* provides activities marked "Especially for . . ." (children a year younger than the specified age for that level). For children with special needs, these simple suggestions may be more developmentally appropriate. In most cases, each suggestion requires few or no additional supplies but makes a slight modification to ensure success for the child.
- Often all that may be needed is for the lesson or activity to be taught at a slower pace. Whereas typically developing children may be able to complete six or more activities on a given Sunday, a child with developmental delays may finish only two or three. Before class, select the activities that will be most successful for the child. Let the child (accompanied by a buddy) work on the activities at her own pace. Build in break times as needed.
- Immerse's many visuals make it an ideal curriculum for shaping the hearts of kids with special needs. One of the first curriculum adaptations and additions needed when teaching a child with special needs is finding pictures to supplement the verbal aspect of the story being taught. Each age level of Immerse includes colorful printed visuals ready for use in making each lesson a success.

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