

# Shaping the Hearts

of Kids with Special Needs

Fall 2013

**immerse**  
in His Word

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## Hearing Angels' Wings

Transitioning Noah from children's ministry to a youth and an adult setting frightened me. A fast-paced youth ministry program would have to slow its step significantly to embrace Noah among its ranks. I had provided accommodations within our children's ministry for years, but the day came when Noah needed to

How can a congregation with so few resources possibly minister to a child who has special needs?

It became clear one Sunday that the years of modifications made to include Noah in the classroom had shaped his faith in ways I could never have imagined. As we finished our weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, we transitioned into our time of contribution. This particular week, one of the volunteers who usually passes the collection plates was absent. I assumed someone would notice the deficit and assist. What I didn't expect was for that person to be my autistic son.

Without prompting, Noah stood up and began filling the role of the volunteer who was absent. People began to give Noah encouraging smiles and gently guided him in what would become a weekly ministry. Why did Noah feel so comfortable in this position when crowds and being in front of people are so difficult for him? How did he even notice the vacant position? And why would he attempt a task that would be daunting for someone who experiences challenges with adaptive functioning skills?

**"What I witnessed that day was a miracle, but not in the sense that God healed Noah and made him capable of things he could not formerly do."**

-Vangie, Georgia

find other safe places where he could learn and practice his faith.

The congregation we attend now is very small and many would say that we have no resources for including someone like Noah. Noah is the only young person his age in attendance. We rent a one-room building for our weekly worship service and there is no place for Noah to escape to for even a small sensory break.

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Before I could process any of this, I realized the song we were singing included words that perfectly captured the moment in time. The words rang out: "I can hear the brush of angels' wings. . . . Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place." What I witnessed that day was a miracle, but not in the sense that God healed Noah and made him capable of things he could not formerly do so that he could participate as a member of our body of believers.

No, this miracle had been worked through years of tireless efforts made by children's ministry volunteers who helped Noah believe he belongs in God's church. Even when all evidence pointed to the contrary, these teachers taught Noah that he has a place in the community of Christ and that he has been gifted to serve God. These teachers persisted even when he cried because of the noise. Even when he could not be held or touched. Even when he wouldn't sit in circle time. Even when . . .

You may wonder why I am writing about transitioning *out* of children's ministry in a resource that seeks to provide resources *for* children's ministry. I tell this story as proof of the harvest that can grow from seeds sown by faithful children's ministry volunteers. Without the steadfast work of those dedicated to shaping my son's heart as a child, he might not have so naturally have understood that he has a place in the larger body of Christ. He might not have taken the initiative to assume a ministry of his own.

Although unknown in this moment, the work you do now yields a harvest for every child who walks through the doors of your ministry. You may never see the results of the accommodations you are making to include a child who is developmentally delayed or disabled. But if you are very blessed, one day you might hear angels' wings.

✍ by Vangie Rodenbeck

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Fall 2013 *Toddlers & 2s Teacher*.

## Toddlers & 2s

### Nursery to Toddlers

All children eventually leave the safe, child-centered play environment of the nursery. At some point, it is appropriate to move them from self-guided play to a corporate or classroom environment. Veteran caregivers agree, however, that an arbitrary date on a calendar rarely indicates a child's readiness to promote to the classroom environment. And, it is precisely during this very first change that behaviors can immerge, indicating delays in functioning. How can this transition be made smoothly, without creating extra stress for the child, parents, and caregivers?

✓ First, be sure to give nursery caregivers copies of the "Activities for Babies 12 Months and Younger" pages included at the beginning of each unit of *Toddlers & 2s Teacher*. Introducing babies to simple Bible concepts can help to prepare them for the Bible Time and other activities they will experience in the toddlers & 2s classroom.

✓ In circumstances where there is a known or suspected developmental delay, create a transition plan. Establish an environment of cooperation between nursery caregivers, parents, and the toddlers & 2s classroom teacher. Develop a schedule that modifies promotion for this child.

✓ In a modified promotion, suggest a month when the promotion will begin. Next, decide on an amount of time the child will spend each week in the classroom before returning to the nursery environment. It is important to include the nursery caregivers as well as classroom teachers in this decision, as each knows the schedule of their rooms and when transitions are most easily made.

✓ It may be useful to leave the modified promotion schedule open-ended. Continue to communicate with the parents as to the child's progress. Before you know it, the child may spend most of the time in Bible class in an age-appropriate classroom just because he or she was given a little extra time to adjust.

# Toddlers & 2s

More than Comfort

## Materials

varies with each unit

The comfort of routine cannot be underestimated, especially in children with developmental delays. But more than just comfort, the elements of a routine Bible Time, or circle time, are effective for anxiety reduction, classroom management, and successful Bible teaching for toddlers and 2-year-olds.

✓ Beginning with the same routine each week is beneficial for every child. Knowing what to expect from you helps a child know what kind of behavior you expect too. (Remember, this classroom-learning environment is a new experience for most toddlers and 2-year-olds.) The predictability of a set of songs and props enforces the set of behaviors you expect during this time.

✓ If you are introducing new children into the class (either as visitors or on a modified promotion schedule from the nursery), they may transition easier into a circle time where children are seated and engaged in learning. When introduced during free-play time, new students often infer that self-guided play is the rule of the day. But when introduced during a structured Bible Time, they immediately see the expectations of classroom behavior.

✓ Be willing to use your voice in both simple songs and in sing-song instruction. Singing activates the brain differently than spoken verbal instruction. Children with developmental delays may especially benefit from the simple sound of your voice in song. You can use the tracks on the *Resources CD* to establish your voice and song routine, but realize that in a few weeks, the children may respond better to your voice alone.

✓ The simple structure of Bible Time is the key to its success. With each unit, a different theme will be emphasized, but the general routine will remain the same. The biblical truths imparted during this time lay a foundation for years of shaping children's hearts with God's Word. Take advantage of the unit 3 emphasis on how God cares for us both day and night. Build a place where children can take therapeutic sensory breaks. Turn a large appliance box on its side to form a cave. Use a utility knife to cut small holes in the ceiling of the cave. Using a strand of holiday lights, poke a few individual lights through the holes to create a night sky inside the box. Place the box near an outlet where the lights can be plugged in safely. This sensory cave can provide a retreat area for a child who becomes overwhelmed by the lights and noise of a busy classroom.

## Activity adaptation for:

Bible Time for each unit

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in *Fall 2013 Preschool Teacher*.

# Preschool

## Creation Corners

### Materials

Creation cards from *Resources* sheet 1, tape, 7 jumbo craft sticks (numbered 1 to 7), soup can or similar container for craft stick storage

For lesson 1, use the creation cards to play a fun, whole body movement game that will review the days of creation without using words. Post creation cards around the room so that the children can identify certain days with corners or areas of your teaching space. Help children identify the days during a time of review by walking them around the room as you teach. For each day, have a corresponding craft stick numbered for that day of creation.

For review, gather all children in the middle of the room. Pull a numbered craft stick out of the can and ask children to move as a group to that day of creation. For older children, they can select a corner ahead of time and when you pull a number they must be seated if they are standing under that day of creation. The process of elimination creates the winner.

As unit 1 progresses, more days of creation are added to each time of Bible Review.

### Activity adaptation for:

Bible Review or More! Bible Review, lessons 1-3

## Tell & Smell

### Materials

variety of objects that stimulate the sense of smell (see activity), plastic sandwich bags

Both over-sensitivity and under-sensitivity to smell are hallmarks of sensory integration dysfunction and common in children with developmental delays. Keep the following facts in mind when teaching about God's creation of humankind and the sense of smell: (1) Smells are generally classified as either *arousing* or *calming*. (2) Smelling certain scents is known to improve attention and memory while relieving tension and anxiety. (3) Arousing scents include basil, chocolate, coffee, garlic, citrus, peppermint, onion, rubber, and vinegar. (4) Calming scents include almond, apple, banana, cinnamon, crayons, hand lotion, lavender, pine needles, soap, and vanilla.

Allow children to experiment with smells and then tell you if they like that smell or not. Play a guessing game in which children close their eyes, smell a scent you select, and then try to guess which scent it is.

Take notes on which smells children with developmental disabilities favor. This knowledge can be useful in making them feel safe and secure during times of anxiety and frustration.

### Activity adaptation for:

"The Five Senses," lesson 4 Getting Started; "Wonder Center," lesson 4 Extra Hour More! Getting Started

## Puddle Path

### Materials

*Resources CD* Puddle Pattern printable file, blue paper, scissors, masking tape, *Resources* sheet 4 rainbow story cards 6a-6f, pictures of animals or small stuffed animals

Create a review game that will allow students with developmental delays to actually move through the story of Noah's ark. Print and cut out enough blue puddles to make a path around your room. Tape the puddles in a path around the room, much like footprints. Along the path, place the rainbow story cards in order. As you retell the Bible story, children will move along the puddle path, retrieving each story card as you tell that portion of the story. Children can move along the path individually or in pairs. Replace the story cards and tell the story again as the next child or pair of children walk the path. After you have told the story several times, verbal children may want to help you tell the story as their peers move along the path.

This is a great integration of occupational therapy with Bible teaching! Traveling on a planned path improves balance and coordination. Watching where their feet are placed improves children's visual skills, eye/foot coordination, depth perception, and spatial awareness. Additionally, nonverbal children or those with low verbal skills can fully participate in this Bible story review.

### Activity adaptation for:

"More! Bible Review," lesson 6

## Rhyme Time Tip

Throughout Immerse's preschool curriculum, you will find activities that include finger plays, rhymes, and piggyback songs (lyrics set to familiar tunes). Be sure to use these activities as often as possible. Infants generally develop bilateral coordination as they learn to move their torsos and limbs. Symmetrical movements are those where either arms or legs move at the same time. Asymmetrical movements require children to alternate the use of arms and legs. Bilateral coordination is the ability to use these features simultaneously.

Children who experience developmental delays often have not had bilateral coordination skills as long as their typically-functioning friends. The use of finger plays can help children develop these skills as they improve gross motor movement, body awareness, and motor planning. Repeating finger plays and rhymes and singing piggyback songs can improve auditory awareness and speech and language skills.

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Fall 2013  
*Pre-K & K Teacher.*

## Pre-K & K

### Seeing Clearly

#### Materials

Resources sheets 1 and 2  
“I Spy” poster and poster add-ons, empty paper towel tubes

The process of seeing is more than just eyesight. Vision and visual awareness includes the process of how the brain processes visual stimulation and information. Children who routinely squint, cover one eye, or prefer to view objects from the side may be experiencing difficulties in visual perception. These same children may also misjudge spatial relationships of objects in the classroom by bumping into furniture or appearing clumsy. Occasionally they withdraw from classroom participation and avoid group activities where movement is involved because of their inability to perceive distances accurately. Help these students use the “I Spy” poster by narrowing their field of vision.

Allow children to view the poster through empty paper towel tubes instead of using the magnifying glass provided. As they narrow their field of vision, there is less for their brain to process and they can view the scene with more accuracy.

#### Activity adaptation for:

Bible Time and Bible Review, lessons 1-4

### Pack, Push, and Pull!

#### Materials

a child’s wagon; bags or suitcases packed for a move

Occupational therapists often recommend heavy work activities, such as pulling one’s self along the floor on a scooter board or carrying a weighted backpack, to relieve sensory tension in children. A simple adaptation for packing and moving activities can meet a sensory need in your classroom.

Pack the bags or suitcases and place them in a child’s wagon. Don’t be afraid for the bags to be weighted more than you would like a child to carry a long distance—remember, the bags will be in a wagon on wheels. Allow the children to push and pull the loaded wagon. The pushing or pulling will improve coordination and body awareness while providing heavy work that can help to organize a child’s proprioceptive system.

For a variation, allow a child who benefits from weighted blankets or vests to sit in the wagon. Place the suitcases and bags carefully around the child and atop his legs. Being moved passively in the wagon provides vestibular input as the student moves to maintain his balance. The deep pressure of the weighted luggage can calm and organize the child’s nervous system.

#### Activity adaptation for:

“Packing and Moving,” lesson 7 Getting Started; “Moving Away,” lesson 7 More! Getting Started

## Clothespin Dress Up

### Materials

dress-up clothes suggested for various lesson activities, clip clothespins

For the child with tactile sensitivity, or over sensitivity to touch, a dress-up center or activity would be one to avoid. Additionally, the smells and multiple textures of some articles of old clothing can seem overwhelming. Turn this activity around in a fun way that allows children to fully participate while building a trust relationship with you.

Allow the sensory-sensitive child to retrieve clothes from the dress-up area and attach items to you, the teacher, with clothespins. Although manipulating the clothespins may take practice at first, the activity can improve fine motor skills. To build auditory skills, request specific clothing items and have the child retrieve them from a basket or hamper. Pin the clothing to yourself in silly and random ways. For instance, a glove can be pinned to the hem of a skirt. Clip a scarf to the back of a collar, or pin a hat to a shirtsleeve.

Allowing yourself to participate with the student on this level can build trust and a personal connection that is invaluable. Soon the child may allow you to dress her up, and she will become more fully engaged in the classroom activity.

### Activity adaptation for:

“Families,” lesson 9 More! Getting Started; “Learning Center,” unit 3 lessons

## Snack Attack

Snack time is a part of many classroom schedules. More than a time to feed children’s physical bodies, this can be a time when you set classroom routine and provide sensory input. Just as scents and smells can be alerting or calming, so can the sense of taste. Particular foods can be organized according to texture, taste, and temperature.

Crunchy foods, such as pretzels, crackers, and chips provide sensory input as the child works to chew the food. Licking or sucking foods, such as frozen fruit treats, can provide calming oral-motor sensations. Ask the parents of a child with special needs what kind of snack their child is drawn to and consider providing this for the entire class—after checking for allergies, of course! Making this minor adjustment may add just the calming factor to your routine that you are looking for.



Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Fall 2013 *Early Elementary Teacher*.

## Early Elementary

### God Made It

#### Materials

nature magazines or photos of things in nature, chart paper, marker, scissors, glue sticks

#### Before Class

Cut out a variety of pictures showing things God created: trees, flowers, land formations, fish, birds, animals, people.

### Listen for the Promises

#### Materials

Bible, *Early Elementary Resources* sheet 3 story figures 6a, 6d, 6g and easels and sheet 4 story figures 7a and 7b, reusable adhesive

Retrieving information rapidly can be difficult for students who have dyslexia or other language-based disorders. A simple modification provides both structure and visual support for learning Bible verses.

**SAY: Our Bible Memory tells us that God made the world. Let's make a poster that shows what God created.** Draw a circle in the center of the chart paper. Inside the circle, write: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). Spread out the precut pictures. Let each child select a picture and glue it outside the circle on the chart.

Encourage the children to describe their pictures as they place them on the board. For children who might have difficulty with descriptions, ask yes/no questions, such as "Is that a dog? Are you thankful for dogs?" After each picture is added, repeat together the Bible verse.

#### Activity adaptation for:

Bible Memory activities for unit 1

The direction for the children to laugh each time they hear a form of the word *laugh* may be difficult for some students. Children with special needs might fail to listen for meaning and, instead, listen only for the word *laugh*. They may laugh at inappropriate times, drawing ridicule or criticism from other children.

If you anticipate that the suggested story presentation will be difficult for your class, **SAY: Today we are going to learn more about what God said to Abraham and his wife, Sarah. Listen carefully for the promises God made. We'll talk about those promises after the story is finished.** Open your Bible to Genesis 15 and tell the story, using the story figures. Emphasize each promise God made: (1) "You will have many family members." (2) "I will be your God and the God of your children." (3) Your wife Sarah will have a baby boy next year."

After you end the story, ask children to tell you the promises they heard. If you have a student who is nonverbal, restate the promises and have children answer by showing thumbs-up or thumbs-down. For example: "Show me a thumbs-up if God promised that Abraham's wife would have a baby." Give some choices that are obviously thumbs-down, such as "God promised that He would give Abraham a new car."

#### Activity Adaptation for:

Bible Exploration, lesson 7

# Early Elementary

“Sign Here, Please”

## Materials

4" x 6" index cards, stapler and staples, pencils

## Before Class

Stack five index cards and staple them together along the left edge to form an “autograph book.” Make a book for each child in your class.

Multi-step activities can be difficult for young children. This difficulty is compounded for children who have developmental disabilities. As a result, these children often develop low self-esteem, being overwhelmed by the list of things they can't do in comparison to other children their age. A simple activity adaptation can allow each child to identify something that he or she can do.

**SAY: An *autograph* is the written name of a person. Sometimes people collect autographs in autograph books. Let's learn a bit more about each other by finding out some things people in our class can do. Each of you will have an autograph book. You may walk around the class and ask each other, “What is something you can do that makes you proud?” When the person gives you an answer, ask the person to sign his or her name in your book. Be ready to sign your name in someone else's book too!**

Distribute the prepared books and allow the children to give and get autographs. Provide support to students who need assistance with language and communication, or who might have difficulty writing their own names. Allow an alternative to writing a full name—initials or a smiley face will work just as well. After the autographs have been collected, ask volunteers to tell what kinds of special skills their classmates have. **SAY: Now let's learn about the kinds of things God can do, because He can do anything!**

## Activity adaptation for:

“I Can” Tic-Tac-Toe,” lesson 10 Focus In activity

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Fall 2013 *Middle Elementary Teacher*.

## Middle Elementary

### Sticky Words

#### Materials

self-stick notes, 11" x 17"  
paper, reusable adhesive,  
markers

#### Before Class

Attach 11" x 17" sheets of paper to the wall, one per student.

The "Sticky Words" activity suggested in *Middle Elementary Teacher* is a positive activity that builds community. Making a simple adaptation will be helpful for kids who have sensory problems. These students may not like the feeling of having notes stuck to their backs. In addition, they may not have a good sense of how hard to press a note onto someone else's back, which could lead to either accidental shoving (pressing too hard) or the notes falling off (pressing too lightly).

**SAY: When we praise someone, we tell the person what we appreciate and admire about him or her. We're going to give praise to each other this morning.** Ask students to look at the papers attached to the wall. Go each paper and write a student's name on the paper. Provide self-stick notes and explain that kids are to write or draw on the notes something they admire about each person in the class. When their notes are finished, they can stick the praises on the appropriate papers on the wall.

Be sure to offer support for any students who struggle with writing or retrieving words. After all the notes have been placed on papers, let children read the praises others have written about them. **ASK: How does it feel when someone praises you? Let's keep thinking about praise and talk about who is worthy of all our praise.**

#### Activity adaptation for:

"Sticky Words," lesson 1 Focus In option

### Bible Memory

#### Materials

colored construction paper  
cut into arches, copies of  
modified Bible verse (one  
per student), blank sheets of  
paper, glue sticks

Many children with disabilities have food sensitivities and cannot eat fruit-flavored cereals, as suggested in *Middle Elementary Teacher*. In addition, some students struggle with reading and memorizing, so grasping a verse of this length could be difficult.

Consider teaching this modification of Deuteronomy 7:9: "God is faithful and keeps His promises to His people." Print and make copies of the verse. Give each child a set of construction paper arches, a blank sheet of paper, and a printed copy of the modified memory verse. Have the kids glue the arches in layers to make a rainbow. Then they can paste a copy of the memory verse below the rainbow. Encourage pairs of students to practice reading or reciting the verse to each other.

#### Activity adaptation for:

"Bible Memory," lesson 4 Explore His Word activity

# Middle Elementary

## “What Did You Get?”

### Materials

story props or pictures

### Before Class

Gather simple props or picture of items you plan to include in your story. For the sample story provided, you would need an electronic game, art supplies, a cell phone, and a pair of socks.

Contentment is an abstract concept that might be difficult for some students to grasp. In addition, if students are asked to reflect on friendships or possessions, some may perseverate (continue beyond a desired point) on areas that are troubling to them, and it could be difficult for the teacher to get the students to move beyond that subject.

Help students understand the concept of contentment by telling a simple story they can relate to. Showing props as you tell the story will make the comparisons more concrete. SAY: **Listen as I tell about what happened to some kids who received some great presents. Then we'll discuss their reactions.** Tell the following story, or make up a story your student would relate to.

Allen got a PlayStation for Christmas. This was a surprise, and he was really happy! Grace was thrilled to receive an art set she had asked for. Julia got her own phone; she couldn't wait to use it. Jeff was excited to receive a pair of new socks that would be perfect for wearing to away games with his basketball team.

After Christmas break, the kids talked about what they had received for Christmas. Even though Jeff had asked for socks to wear to away games, he started to feel not so happy. He wished he had a new PlayStation. Even though Grace had asked for art supplies, she was jealous when she found out that Julia got a phone.

ASK: **Have you ever felt like Jeff or Grace? Tell us about that.** Allow students to briefly discuss their feelings and then move into the Bible lesson on Joseph and his brothers.

### Activity adaptation for:

“Contentment Rating,” lesson 6 Focus In activity

Use these ideas for adapting activities included in Fall 2013  
*PreTeen Teacher*.

# PreTeen

## "I'd Rather Draw"

### Materials

drawing paper, markers

Dyslexia is a disability that often goes undiagnosed until a child is older, and, once diagnosed, it may take time to help the child learn how to make adaptations or accommodations for the disability. Dyslexia is not a sign of lower intelligence; rather, it's just a hitch in the processing of written or sequenced material. Children with dyslexia are often exceptional spatial problem solvers.

Keep in mind that children who have dyslexic tendencies may have difficulty doing some common Sunday school classroom activities. To help these students feel more comfortable in the classroom, never force a student to read aloud or write on the board. Don't call on a student to answer unless he or she volunteers. When an activity calls for students to copy off of the board, either work in teams and have a "writer," or modify the activity to be a drawing activity. Generally, students with dyslexia would rather illustrate a concept than write about it. Provide a choice whenever possible.

### Activity adaptation for:

activity leaflets, or any activity that requires a student to read text or write answers

## Order, Order . . . What?

Sequencing events and words is another difficult task for people who have dyslexia. A common method for learning a Bible verse is to write the verse on a board and then erase words as students memorize the verse. A popular Bible skills activity includes passing out cards with words, books, or events of the Bible written on separate cards. Students are then asked to put the words, books, or events in sequential order. Both of these activities would be harder for the student with dyslexia to master. Modify these kinds of activities to be group or team activities so that one student isn't left alone to sequence items. Again, never force a student to read aloud. Repeat and learn Bible memory verses as a group, only calling on students who volunteer to individually say the verses.

### Activity adaptation for:

any Bible Memory or Bible skill builder activity

## Positioned to Learn

Children with hearing loss are often placed in mainstream classes during the school week. These children generally know their classroom routines, and they can be expected to participate with the rest of the students. Plan to make your Sunday school classroom both a place that is safe to come to (free of bullying and mockery) and a place where great learning can take place.

First, for the student who has a hearing device, make sure the device is *always* on—no exceptions or excuses. Next, pay attention to auditory distractions. Distractions might include the hum of fluorescent lighting, an air conditioner, a vent, a pencil sharpener, or other ambient noises. Remove or turn off the source of noise, or seat the child as far away from the source as possible. Invite the student to sit close to you to maximize his or her usable hearing. As distance increases between the speaker and listener, the ability to hear and understand decreases exponentially.

### Activity adaptation for:

classroom setup

## Worth 1,000 Words

### Materials

label maker; photos printed from the Internet, iPad, or tablet; Internet access

This may seem like preschool advice, but don't forget to use and label pictures—even with preteens! Creative labeling of visuals or unique classroom items will help English-language learners and delayed readers to connect the spoken word to the object. Using a computer search engine, find and print pictures of objects or concepts that you will talk about each week. Does the Bible lesson take place in a Bible times house? Search “Bible times house image” and find a picture! What did Solomon's temple look like? Search and show an image. You can gather pictures on an iPad or other tablet to use during classroom time.

If you have Internet access in your classroom, stop the lesson when you come to a word or concept that you can't describe and find a picture. Don't assume that an object common in your household is common in others; learn from your students. This is especially true if your congregation is ethnically diverse. When using common church terms that aren't common everyday words, be sure to use as many different ways as possible to clarify the meaning. (Examples: worship, praise, contribution, fellowship, communion, baptism, and so on.) You may be surprised at how just the right picture can spark a conversation you've been waiting to have with your students.

### Activity adaptation for:

any lesson

# Tips and Encouragements

for families and  
volunteers

immerse  
in His Word

## Transitions: From Terror to Tranquility

### A Note from the Editor



Welcome to *Shaping the Hearts of Kids with Special Needs*. We hope this resource will help you minister to the child with special needs. In this quarter's Tips and Encouragements, writer Vangie shares the value of using a picture schedule to help children walk more smoothly through transitions in the classroom. We are excited to provide you with a set of picture cards you can use to create your own picture schedule board. The cards feature the same icons used in our Immerse teacher guides. Using these cards, you can easily picture for children exactly which activity is coming next—just place the cards in the order in which the icons appear in your teacher guide! The expanded article, "Transitions: From Terror to Tranquility" and picture cards can be found on the 21st Century Christian website with this quarter's special needs resources.

May God bless you as you teach His beloved children.

Sincerely,  
New Life Through His Word  
Editorial Staff

In a room full of so many teachable hearts, we frequently move quickly from one activity to another without thinking about everything involved in the act of transitioning. But for children who experience developmental delays or who face challenges in adaptive functioning, classroom transitions can be anything but smooth and tranquil. In fact, the many changes can seem quite abrupt and frightening.

*Adaptive functioning skills* are those that assist us in navigating the most basic changes of function within our environment. These include the skills required to move effortlessly, step by step, within any single task in order to accomplish the whole task. Persons with developmental delays or disabilities often see each part of the task separately, rather than seeing it as a single whole act.

When this concept is translated to the number of acts involved in participating in a classroom environment, it is understandable why children with special learning needs often become overwhelmed and anxious. One way to lessen the anxiety of children who struggle with changes in classroom activities is to use a picture schedule. A simple visual map of the day's schedule can help even young children plan out the skills they will need for participating in various activities. A picture schedule is also useful for pointing out that a preferred activity is on the day's schedule. For instance, if working independently at the art center soothes a child, it might help the child tolerate other non-preferred activities if he sees when art time will take place. Pointing to a picture schedule, you can say, "First we have Bible story time, and then we will be going to the art center." Children are sometimes willing to endure an activity that is more difficult if the reward they seek is in sight.

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