Special Needs in Children’s Sabbath School

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Welcome

At the conclusion of presentation, participants will be able to:

• Explain intentional inclusion in the context of special needs ministry
• Identify common categories of special needs
• Name at least one accommodation to implement in their Sabbath School for a child from each category of special need
“I saw that it is in the providence of God that widows and orphans, the blind, the deaf, the lame, and persons afflicted in a variety of ways, have been placed in close Christian relationship to His church; it is to prove His people and develop their true character. Angels of God are watching to see how we treat these persons who need our sympathy, love, and disinterested benevolence. This is God’s test of our character. If we have the true religion of the Bible we shall feel that a debt of love, kindness, and interest is due to Christ in behalf of His brethren; and we can do no less than to show our gratitude for His immeasurable love to us while we were sinners unworthy of His grace, by having a deep interest and unselfish love for those who are our brethren and who are less fortunate than ourselves.”

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3, p. 511
What is a special need?

• Generally, three criteria legally identify a person with a special need:
  • A special need is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Major life activities include breathing, communicating, hearing, learning, manual tasks, seeing, walking, or working.
  • A person with a special need has a record of such impairment.
  • A person with a special need is regarded as having an impairment that is limiting.
Focus of Special Needs Ministry

- Accessibility
- Education
- Encouragement
- Accommodation
Intentional Inclusion

• Inclusion
  • Condition that exists deep within a team or culture where differences are accepted, valued and respected.
  • Opposite of exclusion

• Intentional
  • Deliberate
  • Planned
  • Willful
  • Purposeful
  • Preconceived
Intellectual Disability

• Permanent condition that impacts the ability to learn and process information

• Wide range of abilities and strengths; severe sensory impairment may be present

• Challenges with adaptive, social-emotional, communication, and physical development may be present

• May have difficulty inferring information from social cues and body language

• Issues to consider
  • Repeated opportunities for learning
  • Routines may be helpful
  • Use multisensory approaches
  • Present concepts in a simple manner, yet deep enough to encourage a full understanding of the gospel
Intelectual Disability

Strategies to Consider

• Keep meeting space consistent

• Break directions, concepts, and lessons down into smaller chunks of information, with a review at conclusion of Sabbath School

• Consider partner or buddy activities
Intellectual Disability Strategies to Consider

- Create a schedule/routine board
Intellectual Disability Strategies to Consider

- Use visuals and written signage
Intellectual Disability Strategies to Consider

- Post a schedule/routine
Schedule/Routine ideas
Schedule/Routine ideas
Intellectual Disability Strategies to Consider

- Use **aids** to assist in memorization
  - Memory verse take-homes, music, act out story, felts, sand table figures

- Focus on the **concrete** first

- Make **directions** deliberate for all children

- **Model** expectations

- **Simplify** directions
Intellectual Disability Strategies to Consider

- **Multi-sensory** approaches

- Provide opportunities for **pre-teaching** the lesson/concept
  - (Kindergarten AV resources: [http://www.gracelink.net/article/3/kindergarten#.VEWogMnkop8](http://www.gracelink.net/article/3/kindergarten#.VEWogMnkop8) and Primary AV resources: [http://www.gracelink.net/article/4/primary#.VEWoyMnkop8](http://www.gracelink.net/article/4/primary#.VEWoyMnkop8)).

- Teach **vocabulary** in an intentional fashion

- **Check for understanding** frequently

- Be **patient**

- Use child’s **strengths** to foster meaningful participation in Sabbath School
Deafness/Hard of Hearing

- Described as one of the most unreached populations (estimated that only 2-4% are Christian)
- The child may be deaf, or have a hearing impairment of varying severity; could affect one or both ears
- Child may use sign language to communicate
- Expect child to be of average or above cognition
Deafness/Hard of Hearing

- Many children now have a cochlear implant
Deafness/Hard of Hearing Strategies to Consider

• Preferential seating

• Use of FM system

• Rely on multisensory input

• Visual supports may be helpful
Hidden Disabilities

- Metabolic issues, such as Diabetes
- Seizure Disorders
- Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Asperger Syndrome
- Learning Disabilities

- Individual responses vary greatly (impact on day-to-day life, support network, severity, unique personality)
Hidden Disabilities
Strategies to Consider

- Be aware of need for **sensory breaks**
- Physical safety with **snacks**
- Keep meeting space **consistent**
- Use **visuals** and written signage
- Post a **schedule/routine**
- Break directions, concepts, and lessons down into **smaller chunks** of information, with a review at conclusion of Sabbath School
Hidden Disabilities
Strategies to Consider

• Use **aids** to assist in memorization
  • Memory verse take-homes, music, act out story, felts, sand table figures

• Focus on the **concrete**

• Make **directions** deliberate for all children

• **Model** expectations

• **Simplify** directions

• **Model** social expectations and behavior
Hidden Disabilities
Strategies to Consider

- **Multi-sensory** approaches

- Provide opportunities for **pre-teaching** the lesson/concept
  - (Kindergarten AV resources: [http://www.gracelink.net/article/3/kindergarten#.VEWogMnkop8](http://www.gracelink.net/article/3/kindergarten#.VEWogMnkop8) and Primary AV resources: [http://www.gracelink.net/article/4/primary#.VEWoyMnkop8](http://www.gracelink.net/article/4/primary#.VEWoyMnkop8)).

- Teach **vocabulary** in an intentional fashion

- **Check for understanding** frequently

- Be **patient** and go slowly when presenting information

- Use child’s **strengths** to foster meaningful participation in Sabbath School
Mobility/Motor Issues

• Many causes including:
  • Chronic (ex: Arthritis)
  • Trauma (ex: Traumatic Brain Injury, Stroke, Spinal Cord injury)
  • Infectious disease (ex: Polio, Meningitis)
  • Potentially degenerative process (ex: Multiple Sclerosis)
  • Congenital (ex: Dwarfism, limb differences)

• Assume average intellectual ability

• “How can I help?”
Mobility/Motor Issues

- Accessibility often a major issue
  - Entrance from parking lot
  - Between buildings on church campus
  - Within church and other buildings
  - Restrooms and drinking fountains
  - Seating for wheelchairs
  - Access to light switches
  - Lighting may deter or enhance access
Mobility/Motor Issues

Strategies to Consider

- Preferential seating—create a space
- Consider program activities (alternative to kneeling?)
- Access to restrooms
- Consider fine motor needs when planning activities
- Consider buddy activities
- Consider needs when planning for special programs, such as 13th Sabbath programs
Emotional Disabilities

- Conditions of the brain that can impact a person’s thinking, feeling, moods, behavior, and ability to interact with others

- Examples include:
  - Depression
  - Bipolar disorder
  - Schizophrenia
  - Anxiety Disorders
  - Social anxiety Disorders
  - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
  - Phobias
  - Addiction
Emotional Disabilities

- Often stigmatized
- Very stressful for caregivers
- Great variability in manifestation day-to-day
- Likely a biological or biochemical issue
Emotional Disabilities
Strategies to Consider

- **Quiet room** available when needed
- Consider **small group** activities
- Provide a warm and genuine **welcome**
- Try to create **pressure-free** situations
- **Don’t force** engagement with others
Communication Disorders

• Typically classified in two primary categories:
  • Speech
  • Language
    • Expressive
    • Receptive

(Oral and written language deficits may impact the ability to share thoughts, ideas, needs, and wants)
Communication Disorders

Strategies to Consider

- Create **multiple, repeated opportunities** to master new information
- Present new information in a **variety** of formats, including auditory, visual, multisensory, and physical means or a combination of these methods.
- Present key spiritual concepts in a manner **simple enough** to be understood and accepted, yet deep enough to impart a personally meaningful understanding of the gospel.
Communication Disorders
Strategies to Consider

- When possible, use actual **objects** when teaching a concept
- Begin with more **basic/simple** concepts and build to the more **complex/abstract**
- **Chunk** information into smaller bits of information
- **Review** key concepts at conclusion of lesson
- Break **directions** into individual steps
- Invite children to **repeat information** to help build comprehension
Communication Disorders
Strategies to Consider

- Use **visual supports** (pictures, felts, sequence cards, objects)
- Use **repetition** to help child learn concepts
- **Act out** stories to enhance comprehension or use sand table figures
- Audio tape the lesson and provide it to the child **before or after** it is presented in Sabbath School.
- Access Kindergarten and Primary Sabbath School lessons in audio format
  - Kindergarten AV resources: http://www.gracelink.net/article/3/kindergarten#.VEWogMnkop8
  - Primary AV resources: http://www.gracelink.net/article/4/primary#.VEW0yMnkop8)
The Ten Plagues of Egypt

*Exodus 7–12*

- Water turned to blood
  7:19

- Infestation of frogs
  8:5

- Influx of gnats
  8:16

- Masses of flies
  8:24

- Livestock died
  9:6

- Outbreak of boils
  9:10

- Pounding hailstorm
  9:22

- Swarms of locusts
  10:12

- Overwhelming darkness
  10:21

- Death of the firstborn
  12:29

Source: The NIV Quickview Bible - www.thequickviewbible.com
Communication Disorders
Strategies to Consider

• **Explain vocabulary** to enhance understanding

• Use **various methods** of repeating lesson elements, involving all children to avoid singling out the student with special needs

• **Model patience** to decrease the child’s frustration

• Include the child in ways to highlight their **strengths** and abilities
Communication Disorders
Strategies to Consider

- If the child uses a communication device, offer to receive training on how to utilize it to enable the child to communicate.
Blindness/Visual Impairment

- Range of visual challenge
- Worldwide estimates indicate that 285 million people worldwide have a visual impairment; 246 have a low vision issue, and 39 million are blind.
Blindness/Visual Impairment
General support strategies

• **Identify** yourself and others with you when you approach a person who cannot see you.

• Indicate when you are **concluding** your current contact with the visually impaired person and are moving away.

• Remember that individuals with visual impairment often rely on use of their arms/hands to help them maintain a sense of safety; because of this, it is best to **ask** what kind of assistance they would like.
Blindness/Visual Impairment Strategies to Consider

- Place **reflective tape** on stair edges
- Be cautious about **physical dangers** (ex: uneven or slippery flooring, sharp or protruding corners)
- Ensure adequate **lighting**
- Educate others about the child’s **service/guide dog**
- Have **magnifiers** available
- Use **real objects** when possible to teach lesson, allowing opportunities for children to touch objects
Blindness/Visual Impairment
Strategies to Consider

• Provide **verbal** directions and prompts

• Collaborate with the family of visually impaired students to provide **Braille versions** of Primary lessons ([www.christianrecord.org](http://www.christianrecord.org))

• Provide **audio recordings** of the lesson

• Educate all children if a **service dog** accompanies child to Sabbath School

• Provide Kindergarten and Primary Sabbath School lessons in **audio-video format** along with extension activities.
  • Kindergarten AV resources: [http://www.gracelink.net/article/3/kindergarten#.VEWOgMnkop8](http://www.gracelink.net/article/3/kindergarten#.VEWOgMnkop8)
  • Primary AV resources: [http://www.gracelink.net/article/4/primary#.VEWoyMnkop8](http://www.gracelink.net/article/4/primary#.VEWoyMnkop8)
Reviewing our learning targets

- Explain intentional inclusion in the context of special needs ministry

- Deliberate, planned, and purposeful approach to ensure that each child, youth, and adult is accepted, valued and respected as we share the love of Christ with them.
Reviewing our learning targets

- Identify common categories of special needs
  - Intellectual disability
  - Deafness/Hard of Hearing
  - Hidden disabilities
  - Mobility/Motor issues
  - Emotional disabilities
  - Communication disorders
  - Visual Impaired/Blind
Reviewing our learning targets

• Name at least one accommodation you can implement in your Sabbath School for each category of special need

• Intellectual disability
• Deafness/Hard of Hearing
• Hidden disabilities
• Mobility/Motor issues
• Emotional disabilities
• Communication disorders
• Visual Impaired/Blind
Thank-you for joining us!

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