**GOAL**

The purpose of this Assistive Technology (AT) Environmental Assessment is to provide information to the congregation of the Unity of Fairfax that may assist individuals to have increased access to participating in church activities which includes ways to icrease access to the Sunday school program for children with special needs.

**OBSERVATION**

Youth Education Lessons

The Unity curriculum for Youth Education is provided by Unity Worldwide Ministry. During the tour of the church, an actual observation of a Sunday school session was not viewed. However, a portion of the curriculum copied directly from Unity’s Worldwide Ministry Curriculum was found and reviewed online and is summarized below.

*Circle Time*

During circle time activities, children participate in activities that include independent reading and listening to bible stories, answering questions regarding the bible stories, reciting prayers, drawing and writing activities, and meditation. The lesson is lead by the youth education teacher for the age group and is structured by the teachers’ oral directions.

*Arts and Crafts*

During Unity’s arts and craft activities, children participate in activities that require the manipulation of a variety of art supplies. In the sample lesson, children participated in sculpting, writing, drawing, painting, and using materials including glitter and balloons to make crafts. They often are asked to share their crafts and provide explanations to what they created. The arts and crafts lessons supplement the theme of the day and are directed by the teacher’s oral instructions.

*Music*

Music is incorporated throughout the Unity lessons. Selected songs generally reflect the theme of the lesson. Children sing along by following the lyrics and music within a hymnal or following the teacher’s vocals.

**INTERVIEW**

Youth Education

In conversation with Roger regarding the school space, he noted that the space was leased to Pinnacle Academy, a private elementary and middle school used during the weekdays. He informed us that the church itself used the space for Sunday school, however, the church prefers not to use the technology and other supplies provided by Pinnacle.

On October 7, 2012, an additional telephone interview was made with Sarah Pavitt, one of Unity’s Sunday school teachers. Sarah stated that the class size ranges from 5-10 students per week and each week, the students may be different. The classes run approximately 60-70 minutes long and activities generally include circle time/greeting, meditation, craft and storytelling. She noted that she teaches the younger students and has an assistant but believes the teachers of the older students do not have assistants. Sarah also described a few students with special needs that have been included in the church. She noted that although the church is absolutely welcoming to everyone, there is a concern that there is a lack of knowledge on the topic of disabilities and how individuals with disabilities could be better included within the church.

**ASSESSMENT RATIONALE AND RECOMMENDATIONS: YOUTH EDUCATION**

### Theory to Educating Students with Disabilities

### Universal Design for Learning in Education

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a set of principles that help students with a variety of ability levels interact, respond and learn through the curriculum. Lessons that are created with universal design principals help students to access materials by presenting material in a variety of ways, providing students with the opportunity to respond and express what they have learned, and stimulate learner interest and motivation.

Application of UDL for Youth Education at Unity of Fairfax

Since lessons for youth education are already prepared, Universal Design, in this setting, would reflect the presentation of the lesson rather than the altering the curriculum. The content will remain the same, but the presentation and opportunities for student engagement, would be altered.

Principles and Areas of UDL

The basic tenants of UDL provide access to the students by providing the following (each tenant may not apply to all lessons or areas):

* Multiple means of representation- showing things in a variety of ways
* Multiple means of expression- providing many options for student to express knowledge
* Multiple means engagement – helping students to be motivated and engage with the curriculum in multiple ways.

Universal Design for Learning also involves the following components of a lesson or activity:

* Goals- what the student needs to learn from the lesson
* Methods- how the lesson is presented to the learners based on the learners needs
* Materials- the things that are needed to present the lesson
* Assessment-monitoring the student to make sure that he or she is learning the information presented

When the tenets are followed in the presentation of the lesson and the areas of the activity are considered, Universal Design may be effective within the class setting.

UDL Principles in Detail

Each component of Universal Design focuses on specific areas of the brain that affect specific functions. Since individuals think, process, express, and are motivated by different things, Universal Design for Learning helps a variety of learning styles to learn and engage.

*Recognition Networks*

The recognition networks of the brain align with the multiple means of representation aspect of UDL. How individuals gather facts, hear, see, and read, is controlled by the brains recognition network. When ideas are being presented, students may require different supports to understand the concepts. By providing multiple means of expressions, students, who may not be very good at understanding a concept in one form, can benefit from it being expressed in another way, or through the combination of various forms of the representation.

*Strategic Networks*

Strategic networks of the brain align with the multiple means of expression aspect of UDL. Planning and executing tasks are controlled by the strategic network. A student may be very good at expressing a concept by writing, but struggle with saying the same exact concept. By proving multiple means of expression, students who may not be able to express a concept in one way, will have the opportunity to express what they know in a different format.

*Affective Networks*

Affective learning affects how students are motivated and get engaged in the task. Motivation and interest are connected to the multiple means of engagement aspect of UDL. When students get interested in a task and are motivated to do well, this is a part of the affective network. By providing multiple ways for the student to become interested and engaged, students will be more successful in learning the material.

Assistive Technology in UDL

Assistive Technology is any item, tool or technology that helps student access inaccessible material or improves the efficiency and accuracy of a task. Within the principles of Universal Design, assistive technology is important in providing students equal access through the option of accessing the same lesson with the supports they require.

Assistive technology can be any tool, including highlighters that can be used to draw attention to key words or phrases that help students to complete a task, or improve their success within that specific task. Low-tech assistive technology devices can be household items, common classroom items, or purchased devices that can be used with all the students in a lesson to help the entire class access the task.

UDL Activities and Lessons

Lessons presented with UDL are designed in helping the most children as possible access and respond within the curriculum. Although these lessons are presented with all students in mind, lessons presented with UDL principals especially help students with a variety of disabilities, including learning disabilities, communication disorders, physical disabilities and attention disorders. The following situations gives an example of a student with a specific disability, a lesson presented without the principals of UDL, and the difficulties the student faces interacting with the lesson.

*Non-Universal Design Example*:Maria is a seven-year-old student who is about to attend her first youth education group at her church. Maria is a typical seven-year-old, but was born with a speech condition that makes it very difficult for her to speak her formulated thoughts. Most of her utterances include fragmented words or phrases. In class, the teacher tells a short biblical story and asks Maria to retell what happened, but due to Maria’s disability, she is unable to retell the story to the teacher. The teacher then skips over Maria and asks another student, who then responds orally.

*Problem*:The lesson that the teacher presented was not inclusive to a student with a variety of needs. The lesson was developed for students of typical cognitive functioning that could hear the story and remember its contents and for students who could respond orally to the concept. Maria has difficulty speaking, and the lesson did not give Maria an opportunity to express her knowledge to her peers. If the lesson was created with principals of Universal Design in mind, Maria would not only have the opportunity to express herself, but other students may benefit from the built in supports as well.

*Universal Design Example***:** Maria attends the youth education group for her first Sunday. The teacher is telling a bible story, but uses pictures to represent each main point of the story. First the teacher passes on copies of the text, and then she reads the story out of the book while showing pictures of the story parts. The pictures have Velcro on the back, and as the teacher is telling the story, she places each Velcro story part on a board. After the teacher tells the story, she plays an audio recording back to the students, and points to each part as the story plays. The teacher then removes the story parts, shuffles them up, and hands them to Maria. She asks Maria to place the story parts on the Velcro board in the correct order to retell the story. Maria places the story parts in the correct order. The teacher then asks if she would like the audio to play as she points to the story parts. Maria nods yes, the teacher begins the audio recording, and Maria retells the story as the audio plays while pointing to each story part on the board.

*Benefit*:This lesson was created with principals of Universal Design by embedding multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement. All the students benefited by multiple means of representation; the teacher read the story orally, showed it in text, played it on audiotape, and showed pictures of the story. This helped visual learners through text and pictures, and audio learners through hearing the story from the teacher and through the recording. This also helped students that may have had difficulty comprehending the story. The images, audio, repeating of the audio and text all supported the comprehension of the story. This lesson also provided multiple means of expression; students were able to retell the story orally, if they preferred, play back the audio, and place the pictures on the board to retell the story. The students were also able to engage with the activity in multiple ways by the teacher providing options for the student. With this version of the lesson, Maria was able to engage with the activity, but the lesson was not adapted specifically for Maria. She benefited, but the other students also received various supports from the lesson as well.

Lessons presented with Universal Design Principals helps all students to learn, respond, and engage. The lessons also have a particular benefit if you are not sure who will be coming into your class and what supports they will need. Although minor adaptations might need to be made, the lesson already has several built in supports.

Universal Design lessons are designed to help all students; however, it is important to understand specific disabilities and various supports that may help the student when presenting universally designed lessons. The below sections include assistive technology that aids in the implementation of universal design principles in the classroom areas of circle time/greeting, arts and crafts and music.

### Circle Time/Greeting Supports for Children with Cognitive and Learning Disabilities

Cognitive/Learning disabilities affect the brains ability to learn process, store and analyze information. Children with learning disabilities may require longer processing time and have difficulty with the following:

* Understanding information
* Remembering information
* Completing certain tasks
* Recalling what was learned

Learning disabilities can affect all areas of child performance including

* Number and letter recognition
* The reading of words
* Understanding spoken and written information
* Organization
* Completing tasks

Multiple Means of Representation

Children with learning disabilities may require support in the presentation of ideas to help with processing, organization and comprehension deficits. For example, a child with low processing speeds may not comprehend a direction, but can refer to that direction if they see it in written form or if it is repeated again. Children with learning disabilities may benefit from the following in the representation of concepts and ideas:

* Pairing text with visuals
* Providing text on a variety of reading levels
* Highlighting key words and terms
* Providing audio along with visuals and text
* Giving step by step examples/directions paired with visuals

Multiple Means of Expression

Due to processing and organization deficits, children with learning difficulties may have trouble expressing their thoughts. For example, a child with dyslexia may do very well retelling a story orally, but struggle when having to write the same information. The following may benefit children in the expression of thoughts and ideas throughout the lesson:

* Word cards
* Picture cards
* Drawing instead of writing
* Providing alternates to speaking orally

*Dry Erase Word Cards*

Dry erase sentence strips can cut into cards, and written Dry erase sentence strips can cut into cards, and written on with dry erase marker to make individual word cards. These cards can be reviewed with child and given to Children to order words to create sentences. For example, in the Unity Curriculum’s *Oops I Made a Mistake* lesson, the words glad, sad, mad, afraid and upset were used. These words could be placed on the dry erase cards for child use in conjunction with writing them on the board.

<http://www.amazon.com/Pacon-Dry-Erase-Sentence-Strips-PAC5185/dp/B00578A65E>

*Picture Cards*

Found images, from magazines, online, or pictures that come with the curriuculum can be cut and laminated. This creates individual picture cards that can used with Children that have learning disabilities. Children can respond to questions using the pictures, or ordering pictures to retell a story. For example, in the *Oops I Made a Mistake* lesson plan, pictures of people with happy, sad, and upset emotions could be placed on picture cards.

Multiple Means of Engagement

Motivation of children with learning disabilities may be low due to failures in other settings. Engaging and motivating children with learning disabilities will help their self-esteem, and reduce the occurrence of behavior issues.

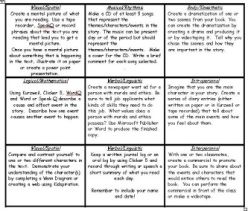
* Setting Goals
* Providing activity options



*Goal Charts*

Goal charts are charts that help a child to chart and monitor their progress on their goal.

<http://www.kidpointz.com/printable-charts/goal-charts/>

*Activity Tic-Tac-Toe*

During circle time, children could have an option for response on a tic-tac-toe board. The tic-tac-toe board could include the following options on squares, write a sentence, talk out loud, draw a picture, act it out, etc. Once the child responses in a particular way, an x could be placed on that square of the board.

<http://tkamforall.pbworks.com/w/page/9671789/Activities>

*Tools in Use Examples*: In circle time, if a child is asked a question, they could draw a picture and explain what they drew instead of writing, or respond by ordering or selecting a word card that contains the word or phrase with the correct answer.

### Circle Time/Greeting Supports for Children with Physical Disabilities

Physical disabilities are disabilities the effect either the fine or gross motor movements. Fine motor effects controlling the smaller muscles of the body, usually the hand, which typically affects the child’s ability to hold, move and grasp certain objects. Children with fine motor disabilities may have difficulty:

* Writing
* Drawing
* Turning pages of a book
* Picking up objects.
* Activating objects (ex: turning on CD player)

Multiple Means of Engagement

Children with physical disabilities require the most support in the areas of expression. Due to possible limited fine and gross motor ability, and most activities developed on the assumption that everyone has the same physical access to the material, special consideration must be taken in the inclusion of children with physical disabilities.

During circle time, arts and crafts, and music, children will require specific supports if any expression is required that relies on a physical component; writing, holding or manipulating objects. Making available low-tech assistive technologies can help support student needs within the activities. Circle time activities can be made accessible to children with disabilities. The following is a sampling of items that can be used in order to enable participation.

Purchased Items

Switches

In order to participate in their community, home and school environments, individuals with physical impairments require the use of various assistive technologies. Some of the technology is low-tech (does not require the use of a power source) and some of the technology is mid to high tech (does require the use of a power source) including items such as capability switches, latches/timers and switch-adapted items. The following section will describe a variety of these items and many ways that an individual with physical disabilities can use them. The capability switches and latches/timers will be discussed first as they can be used with a variety of materials and apply to various activities.

Capability Switches

Capability switches allow a user to activate devices in their environment that are switch accessible, including computers. There are a variety of capability switches that have a variety of features. Some act only as a switch while others may have voice output and/or attention getting features such as flashing lights or vibration. There are hundreds of capability switches. Some examples include:

*Big Red Twist*

Activates a click when pressed on any part of the switch. It has five inches of surface space and comes with changeable colored caps.

<http://www.enablemart.com/Catalog/General-Switches/Big-Red-Twist-Switch>

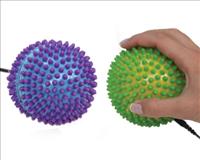
<http://webstore.ablenetinc.com/big-red-twist/p/10033500/>

*Jelly Bean Twist*

Smaller version of Jelly Bean Twist. 2.5 inches of surface

<http://www.enablemart.com/Catalog/General-Switches/Jelly-Bean-Twist-Switch>

<http://webstore.ablenetinc.com/jelly-bean-twist/p/10033400/>

*Ball Roll Switch*

Switch that activates switch activated devices with a textured surface. Good for children with sensory needs that are able to grasp a rounded surface.

<http://enablingdevices.com/catalog/capability_switches/lights-vibration-music-switches/ball-roll-switches>

<http://www.rehabmart.com/product/ball-roll-switches-36053.html>



*Grasp Switch*

Tube shaped switch that can be activated with a squeeze or pinch. Users must be able to control movement enough to squeeze or pinch the device for activation.

<http://www.enablemart.com/Catalog/Ablenet-Inc/Grasp-Switch>

<http://webstore.ablenetinc.com/grasp-switch/p/58650/>

Control Units/Latches and Timers

There are essentially two types of timers, one that works with battery operated devices and one that works with devices that draw power from an outlet (need to be plugged in). These items have multiple features including the ability to touch the switch one time to activate a device and then touch it again to turn off the device (latch feature) and setting the timer for a number of seconds or minutes so that when the switch is pressed to activate the device, the individual using the device can let go and it will continue to work for the set amount of time. In addition to these features, there are others available.

*Switch Latch Timer*

The Switch Latch and Timer is used to control battery operated devices.

[www.enablingdevices.com](http://www.enablingdevices.com)

[www.enablemart.com](http://www.enablemart.com)

[www.ablenetinc.com](http://www.ablenetinc.com)



*PowerLink Control*

The PowerLink Control Unit is used with AC powered devices. These items can be found at the following sites/vendors:

[www.enablingdevices.com](http://www.enablingdevices.com)

[www.enablemart.com](http://www.enablemart.com)

[www.ablenetinc.com](http://www.ablenetinc.com)



*All-Turn-It Spinner*

This device allows individuals to make random choices that are presented on the spinner. Spinner boards come custom made but can also be created for specific lessons/activities (ex. choose friends or order of events/schedule). It can found at the following sites/vendors:

<http://www.enablemart.com/Catalog/Picture-Communicators/All-Turn-It-Spinner>

<http://webstore.ablenetinc.com/all-turn-it%26%23174%3bspinner/p/10070003/>

*Bookworm*

Use magnets, stickers and voice recording to make a book (up to 32 pages) switch adapted. This allows an individual with physical or cognitive disabilities to participate in book reading. For example, in the *Oops I Made a Mistake* lesson Children read the story Jacobs Return in the Children’s Illustrated Bible. The pages of the story could be copied and placed in Bookworm to allow for child participation. Also, during the same lesson, if a child was required to read a short book about the topic, the pages of the book could also be copied and pasted in Bookworm. It can be found at the following sites/vendors:

<http://webstore.ablenetinc.com/search.aspx?sb=RANK&ss=bookworm&x=0&y=0>

<http://www.enablemart.com/Catalog?search=bookworm&.x=0&.y=0>

Homemade/Household Items

Additional homemade or household items can be used as assistive technology with children to help them access materials in the Sunday school classroom.

*Binder Slant Board*

For children that have difficulty writing on a flat surface, a binder can be placed flat on the table, with the rings away from the student, to create a slant board for writing

*Clothespin Tripod Grip*

Placing a pencil in a clothespin makes a tripod grip for children that have difficulty holding a pencil in the correct way. The pencil fits in the clothespin at the middle of the pencil. A child can place their fingers around the clothespin and move the pencil.

*Pencil Grasp*

Poking a hole in a small foam ball (the size that can in a child’s fist) and placing the eraser end of a pencil into hole of the ball also makes a great pencil grip. For children that have difficulty holding a pencil, the child can grasp the round ball and control the pencil.

<http://tnt.asu.edu/files/BA11_Foam%20Grip%20Pencil%20Holder.pdf>



*Rubber Stamps*

For children who have difficulty writing with pencils, they can use rubber stamps instead. Rubber stamps with bulbous handles can be easier to grasp than pencils for some children with disabilities that effect fine motor ability.

<http://www.reallygoodstuff.com/product/jumbo+lowercase+alphabet+rubber+stamp+letters.do>

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### Circle Time/Greeting Supports for Children with Communication Disabilities

Communication disabilities are any set of disabilities to effect a child’s ability to speak fluently, which could range from difficulty speaking specific sounds to being completely non-verbal (unable to speak at all). This difficulty in speech could be caused by a specific speech and language disorder, or due to limited oral motor control. Language disorders are disabilities that effect how language is processed and expressed. Children with speech and language disorders may have difficulty understanding and processing auditory information or speaking.

Multiple Means of Representation

Children with speech/language disorders, especially those who have difficulty processing information, require the support of representation of the same concept in different ways. Children with a speech and language disorder may have difficulty understanding auditory information, but can understand the information with the support of pictures and/or text.

The following list includes forms of representation that support children with speech and language disorders.

* Using simplified language when speaking
* Giving the goal of the task prior to task
* Providing visual examples
* Providing comprehension checks
* Breaking task into smaller parts
* Pairing text with audio
* Using low tech assistive technology solutions that aid in comprehension tasks

Several low-tech assistive technology solutions can be used to help children with speech/language disorders, especially children with processing difficulties, in the representation of information.

*Highlighters*

Highlighters can be used to highlight important key words or facts. Erasable highlighters are especially useful for children with learning or attention disorders as they may highlight the wrong information. In the *Oops I Made a Mistake* lesson, the teacher could highlight the key words for the child, including glad, mad, upset to help draw attention to key words from the lesson.

[http://www.staples.com/Pilot-FriXion-Light-Erasable-Highlighters-Yellow-3- Pack/product\_769966](http://www.staples.com/Pilot-FriXion-Light-Erasable-Highlighters-Yellow-3-%20Pack/product_769966)

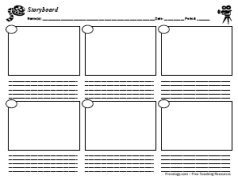
*Post-It Notes*

Post it notes can be used to flag certain pages or sections of books and stories. Teachers can write the main idea, key words, or important information on the post it note to help the child understand the information.

*Index Cards*

Index can be used to help children remember the definition of key terms and recall facts of a story.

*Storyboard*

Storyboards are sheets of paper that contain four to six squares for the important parts of the story to be drawn. These storyboards can be completely pre-made, partially completed, or left completely blank for a child to fill in. As a story is being told, the teacher could pause after each important story part and retell the main events, or ask a child to retell what happened. The children can then point to the image in the pre-made storyboard that contains the image that shows what happened in the story, or draw in what happened for a blank storyboard. This activity supports children by providing visuals by either locating the correct visual or drawing their own image to represent that portion of the story. Once all the storyboard has been completed, the child can reference the images to retell the story, or as support for answering teacher questions during circle time.

<http://freeology.com/reading/storyboard-with-six-boxes/>

Tools in UseExamples

To support children with speech and language disorders in circle time activities, directions can be broken into smaller pieces and visuals and text can be used to support the comprehension of the information. Children, especially those with processing difficulties, have difficulty understanding large chunks of information. Breaking the task, or information, into smaller pieces and pairing textual and visual supports aids in the children understanding.

During circle time, the teacher could write the goal of the task on the white board and the steps of the task and any visual support that may pair with the text. The teacher could then give a couple of pieces of information and give the children a quick comprehension check. A simple way to check comprehension is to ask the children to give thumbs up if you understand and thumbs down if you do not. If any children have thumbs down, the teacher could repeat the information, possibly using simple phrases or words. Chunking of information can also be used in telling stories. For example, a story could be told one page at a time or a paragraph at a time. After each stopping point, the thumbs up thumbs down comprehension check could be used. The story could also be told with the aid of images. As the story is being told, Velcro story pieces could be placed on a board. Children could also participate by placing the relevant story pieces on the board as the story is being told, which supports their comprehension by becoming an active participant in listening.

Multiple Means of Expression.

Children with speech, language and communication disorders especially benefit from the UDL principle of multiple ways of expression. Some children, especially with limited ability to speak, can benefit from several low-tech communication solutions in circle time, arts and crafts, and music activities.

*Velcro board*

Images or words can be cut out and laminated, then place Velcro on the back of the picture. When asked a question, or retelling a story, children can place the words or images on a Velcro board to respond. This can also be done with magnets and a magnetic board. Velcro boards could be purchased or made.

<http://www.rehabmart.com/product/velcro-board-17782.html>

*Communication Books*

Laminated pictures with corresponding words or phrases can be placed on a metal ring. The child would then have the ability to flip through the pages and show the image/text to respond to communicate with others. Communication books can be purchased or made. For example, in the Oops I Made a Mistake lesson, the youth education teacher could prepare picture cards relevant to the lesson. During discussion, the child could use the picture cards in the communication to answer teacher questions.

<http://www.pecsproducts.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=114&osCsid=b181f9adb04cda158da101e94bc7d40c>

*Connect Four Communication Board*

The game Connect Four can be modified to create a communication board. Pictures can be hot glued to both sides of the round connect four pieces and placed into the game. This creates rows of images that can be categorized based on the child’s needs. The student could point to the round piece to make a choice or communicate with others.

<http://tnt.asu.edu/files/C4_Connect%204%20Communication%20Device.pdf>

*Single Message Communicators*

A single message communicator is a simple speech-generating device that allows an individual to participate in everyday communication. They are generally simple to record; hold down a button, record a message and then play it back with the touch of a button.

Some examples of single message communicators include:

[](http://www.especialneeds.com/speech-communication-augmentative-communicators-communication-devices-go-talk-one.ht) [](http://www.especialneeds.com/speech-and-communication-single-message-communicator-littlemack-communicator.ht) [](http://www.especialneeds.com/speech-communication-augmentative-communicators-communication-device-express-one.ht)

Go Talk One LITTLEMack Communicator Express ONE

Items such as the above can be found from a variety of sites/vendors with varying prices. Some sites include:

[www.enablingdevices.com](http://www.enablingdevices.com)

[www.enablemart.com](http://www.enablemart.com)

[www.attainmentcompany.com](http://www.attainmentcompany.com)

<http://www.especialneeds.com/speech-communication-augmentative-communicators-single-message-communicators.html>

Tools in Use Examples

Some examples of use during a circle-time activity may include: greetings, gaining attention, making requests, indicating attendance, turn taking, labeling a particular object/portion of circle time, saying a prayer, using with predictable books/stories (a book/story that has a repeating phrase), telling the day/date, talking about a show and tell item and giving a direction.

*Dual Message Communicators*

These are similar to the single message communicators but allow for 2 messages simultaneously. As well, they are generally programmed similarly to the single message communicators.

Some examples of Dual Message Communicators include:

[](http://enablingdevices.com/catalog/assistive_technology_devices_used_in_education/twin-talks/rocking-two-message-communicator-with-lig) [](http://www.enablemart.com/Catalog/Speech-Generating-Devices/Twin-Talk-Pl)

Rocking Two Message Twin Talk

Communicator

[](http://www.enablemart.com/Catalog/Speech-Generating-Devices/Speak-A-Ne) **[](http://enablingdevices.com/catalog/assistive_technology_devices_used_in_education/twin-talks/textured-talkable-)**

Speak-a-Need Textured Talkable II

Items such as the above can be found from a variety of sites/vendors with varying prices. Some sites include:

[www.enablingdevices.com](http://www.enablingdevices.com)

[www.enablemart.com](http://www.enablemart.com)

Tools in Use Examples

Some examples of use during a circle-time activity may include: greetings, gaining attention, making requests, indicating attendance, turn taking, labeling a particular object/portion of circle time, saying a prayer, using with predictable books/stories (a book/story that has a repeating phrase), telling the day/date, talking about a show and tell item, telling date/time, asking questions, answering yes/no questions and giving a direction.

*Multi-Message Communicators*

Again, these are similar to the single message communicators but allow for multiple messages simultaneously. As well, they are generally programmed similarly to the single message communicators.

Some Examples of Multi-Message Communicators Include:

Go Talk 4+ CheapTalk 4 In-Line

[](http://www.enablemart.com/Catalog/Speech-Generating-Devices/Basic-Talk-4-Bla) [](http://www.enablemart.com/Catalog/Speech-Generating-Devices/Black-6-Level-Communicat)

Basic Talk 4 CheapTalk 8

Items such as the above can be found from a variety of sites/vendors with varying prices. Some sites include:

[www.enablingdevices.com](http://www.enablingdevices.com)

[www.enablemart.com](http://www.enablemart.com)

[www.attainmentcompany.com](http://www.attainmentcompany.com)

Tools in Use Examples

Some examples of use during a circle-time activity may include: making choices, indicating attendance (calling friend’s names), playing games, talking about the weather, saying prayers and talking about the schedule, reading or retelling a book/story, share the class rules, have lines in a play, make animal sounds for a story, talking about things you bring for show and tell and talking about what happened over the past week.

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### Circle Time/ Greeting Supports for Children with Sensory (Visual, Hearing, Sensory) Impairments

Visual and hearing impairments affect a student’s ability to see and to hear. Children with visual impairments can have various ranges of visual needs, ranging from low vision to blindness. Children can also have varying hearing abilities that range from complete loss, or low hearing, in a specific ear, to deafness. Children with sensory needs may require specific touch or texture to calm their body and mind. Children with low hearing, low vision, and other sensory disorders can benefit from built in supports from curriculum presented with concepts of Universal Design.

Hearing Impairment

In addition to printed and written materials, such as writing on a large white board and books, children can engage in activities that require the use of text by the teacher and peers in other forms.

Multiple Means of Representation

*Small Dry Erase Boards*

During circle time, when a teacher asks a question, each child could write their answers on small dry erase board. On the teacher’s signal, each child could turn around their dry erase board and show the answer. The child with the hearing impairment could see all of the child’s answers in case they were unable to hear what the children said.

<http://www.dryerase.com/seconds>

*Sign Language Alphabet Cards*

In circle time, sign language could be used for key words or short phrases. Children can also pair sign language cards when speaking orally.

[www.christianbook.com/sign-language-pocket-flash-cards/pd/823016?en=google-pla&kw=homeschool-0-20&p=1167941&gclid=CPnU1Nz\_zrMCFQOf4AodN0MAmghttp://www.kaplanco.com/store/trans/productListingRpt.asp?CatID=8|NU1030|0](http://www.christianbook.com/sign-language-pocket-flash-cards/pd/823016?en=google-pla&kw=homeschool-0-20&p=1167941&gclid=CPnU1Nz_zrMCFQOf4AodN0MAmghttp://www.kaplanco.com/store/trans/productListingRpt.asp?CatID=8|NU1030|0)

Visual Impairment

During circle time and arts and crafts activities for children with visual impairments, enlargements can be made and specific colors could be used to support the child’s vision. If the child is required to do any reading, text can be enlarged on the copier or children can be given a magnifier that will help enlarge the words. In addition, specific colors should be avoided in print material and the board. Light colors or very bright colors on white backgrounds are very difficult to see on the board, including the color red and light blue. Light backgrounds with black or very dark lettering are easier for students with visual impairments to see.

Multiple Means of Engagement



*Large Manipulatives*

When using manipulatives, children with visual impairments may benefit from larger versions of items. For example, if children are completing a beading activity in arts and crafts, larger beads can be used for the students to see the items better.

<http://www.kaplanco.com/store/trans/productListingRpt.asp?CatID=8|NU1030|0>

*Low Vision Magnifiers*

Low vision magnifiers can be used with children that have low vision. The small portable versions can be carried around by children and used to read a variety of print material.

<http://www.telesightmagnifiers.com/catalog/i205.html>

Sensory Impairments/Attention

Many children with disabilities have sensory and/or attention deficits. For all of the activities mentioned above (circle time, art, music) there are a variety of assistive technology materials that can benefit these children. The following is not a comprehensive list, just a sampling.

Fidgets assist individuals to better attend to others by helping to keep both the mind and body calm. Some include:

[](http://www.amazon.com/Tangle-Jr-Yellow-Green-Purple/dp/B004XDX3XQ/ref=sr_1_6?ie=UTF8&qid=1351522925&sr=8-6&keywor)

*Tangle*

There are a variety of options of the Tangle fidget.

Use both of your hands to move it around.

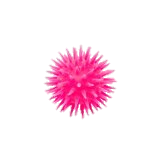
Tangles can be found at the following website: <http://www.amazon.com/s/?ie=UTF8&keywords=crayola+first+markers&tag=googhydr-20&index=aps&hvadid=14504006850&hvpos=1t1&hvexid=&hvnetw=g&hvrand=54449051400827670&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=b&ref=pd_sl_8mcdekadxp_b#/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=tangle&rh=i%3Aaps%2Ck%3Atangle>

*Other various fidgets*

<http://www.therapyshoppe.com/therapy/fidget-toys-8/silent-classroom-fidgets-1052/>

<http://www.nationalautismresources.com/fidget-toys.html>

<http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Dtoys-and-games&field-keywords=fidgets>

[](http://www.amazon.com/Sensamart-Inside-Out-Ball-Small/dp/B004P0U9W0/ref=sr_1_19?s=toys-and-games&ie=UTF8&qid=1351523294&sr=1-19&keyword)

[](http://www.amazon.com/Abilitations-Twidget-Two-Handed-Attachable-Fidget/dp/B0042SYVSI/ref=sr_1_23?s=toys-and-games&ie=UTF8&qid=1351523294&sr=1-23&keywords=fidge)

[](http://www.amazon.com/Original-Toy-Company-Educational-Products/dp/B001BDVT8C/ref=sr_1_11?s=toys-and-games&ie=UTF8&qid=1351523294&sr=1-11&keyword)[](http://www.amazon.com/NUBBY-STRETCH-BALL-TACTILE-FIDGET/dp/B001YK1QXK/ref=sr_1_14?s=toys-and-games&ie=UTF8&qid=1351523294&sr=1-14&keywords=fidge)



*Air Cushions*

These items are great for the child who has difficulty sitting still (and also helps will balance and strength). Place it on the floor or the child’s chair.

<http://www.therapro.com/Air-Cushions-C4218.aspx?gclid=CPXUtM7CprMCFU-d4AodrxgAkg>

<http://www.amazon.com/s/?ie=UTF8&keywords=disc-o-sit&tag=googhydr-20&index=aps&hvadid=4342066049&hvpos=1t2&hvexid=429269&hvnetw=g&hvrand=3580339081448841263&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=b&ref=pd_sl_9l7yxlxzqb_b>

<http://www.nationalautismresourcesblog.com/2012/08/10/therapy-ball-disc-o-sit-or-move-n-sit-which-one-should-you-use/>

\*\* Many of the supports described in the Greetings/Circle Time Section may also be applied to the following sections.

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### Arts and Crafts Supports for Children with Cognitive and Learning Disabilities

Multiple Means of Representation

In an arts and crafts activity, children with learning disabilities can particularly benefit from viewing the finished product as well as watching the steps to complete the task prior to starting the craft. For example, the teacher could present the finished craft, put the finished example to the side, and then show the first one or two steps to complete the task along with repeating the directions for the first one or two steps. After showing the steps, the children can be instructed to complete the first one or two steps. This can be repeated until the craft is completed. In segmenting tasks, the directions and steps are presented in multiple ways; visually, through viewing the completed craft, and then step by step which combines audio with visuals. The steps to complete that task could be typed on a sheet of paper, or displayed on the white board, to help the child remember the step in case they forgot.

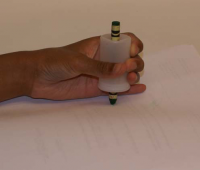
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### Arts and Crafts Supports for Children with Physical Disabilities

Multiple Means of Engagement

Art activities can be made accessible to children with disabilities. The following is a sampling of items that can be used in order to enable participation.

Homemade/Household Items



*Film canister crayon holder*

Place a crayon into an empty film canister. Children who may have fine motor difficulties an d have trouble holding the crayon may be able to grasp the thickness of a film canister.

<http://tnt.asu.edu/ideas/using-arms-and-hands/adapted-crayon-holder>

*Glue Outline for Coloring*

To help children stay within the lines of pictures, glue can be squeezed around the outline of the picture and let to dry. This will then create a puffy barrier that it will be difficult for the child to color outside of and will help the child to stay inside of the lines.

<http://tnt.asu.edu/ideas/using-arms-and-hands/better-boundaries>

*Roll on Deodorant Paint*

To help children with disabilities paint, place paint inside of an empty roll on deodorant canister. The girth of the deodorant canister may be easier for children with disabilities that affect fine motor ability to hold in comparison to a paint brush.

<http://tnt.asu.edu/ideas/using-arms-and-hands/picasso-its-possible>

Purchased Items



*Battery Operated Scissors*

These scissors are battery operated and come switch adapted. They are used as shown in the photo with a capability switch (and a SLAT if needed). An individual assists the child by holding the paper and scissors while the child activates the scissors by holding down/touching the switch. Therefore, cutting cannot happen unless the user activates the switch. The scissors can be found at the following sites/vendors:

[www.ablenetinc.com](http://www.ablenetinc.com)

[www.mayer-johnson.com](http://www.mayer-johnson.com)

*Paint n Swirl and Musical Swirl Art with Lights*

These items can be used during painting activities. They can be used on their own to create designs on sheets of paper or stencils can be used (to draw on top) after the artist has made their creation to allow the finished product to look like the content of the lesson.

[www.enablemart.com](http://www.enablemart.com)

*Universal Cuff*

A universal cuff is generally talked about for use of holding utensils in order to assist a child with limited grasp ability with independent eating. However, another use for them is in arts and crafts. They can be used to hold crayons, markers or paintbrushes. Just place the universal cuff on the child and insert the desired tool into the universal cuff to allow for participation. There is a large variety of universal cuffs and they can be found through a variety of websites/vendors including the following:

<http://www.amazon.com/Ableware-736171001-Pediatric-Universal-Cuff/dp/B000NE23Z8>

<http://www.sportaid.com/universal-cuff-adult-pediatric.html>

<http://www.medicalproductsdirect.com/pefeaipeuncu.html>

*Fingertip Crayons*

Crayons can be placed on fingers to color. Because of their size and shape, they may be easier to hold by grasp for children with fine motor disabilities in comparison to traditional crayons.

<http://www.soap.com/p/alex-farm-finger-crayons-20711?site=CA&utm_source=Google&utm_medium=cpc_S&utm_term=AX-087&utm_campaign=GoogleAW&CAWELAID=1466685378&utm_content=pla&adtype=pla&cagpspn=pla>



*Beginning Brushes*

Beginning brushes have thicker handles and a bulbous tip that may be easier for children with physical disabilities to hold.

<http://www.amazon.com/Alex-Toys-Beginner-Brushes-3/dp/B000GCICPM/ref=sr_1_6?ie=UTF8&qid=1351473749&sr=8-6&keywords=toddler+paint>

*TaDoodles*

Egg shaped markers that may be easy to grasp for children with fine motor disabilities.

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000QUNKSS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=na0805-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217153&creative=399349&creativeASIN=B000QUNKSS>

*Scissors*

There are a variety of adapted scissors that do not require the use of batteries or switches. They allow children with limited fine motor skills to participate in cutting activities. There are many types of scissors. The following is a sampling along with sites/vendors where they can be purchased.

<http://www.mayer-johnson.com/nsearch/?keywords=scissors>

<http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=adapted+scissors>

<http://www.peta-uk.com/acatalog/Scissors_for_Children.html>

[](http://www.peta-uk.com/acatalog/Mini_Easi_Grip_Scissors.ht) [](http://www.peta-uk.com/acatalog/Easi_Grip_Stand.ht) [](http://www.peta-uk.com/acatalog/Childrens_Pushdown_Table_Scissors.ht) [](http://www.peta-uk.com/acatalog/Children_Long_Loop_Scissors.ht)

**Arts and Crafts Supports for Children with Communication Disabilities**

Multiple Means of Expression

*Single-Message Communicators*

(see devices/websites in greetings/circle time section)

Examples of Use: gaining attention (teacher’s name), making request (“I want it” or “I need a break”), request help, turn taking (“my turn”), indicating when they are finished and giving a direction.

*Dual-Message Communicators*

(see devices/websites in greetings/circle time section)

Examples of Use: making choices, request “help” and saying “thank you”, turn taking (“my turn”/”your turn”), indicating when they are finished and asking for someone to look at their project and answering yes/no questions.

*Multi-Message Communicators*

(see devices/websites in greetings/circle time section)

Examples of Use: making choices, giving directions, asking someone to look at their project and letting others know when they are done or need help.

**Arts and Crafts Supports for Children with Sensory Disabilities (Visual, Auditory and Sensory Needs)**

Multiple Means of Engagement

Visual Impairments

*Glue Outline for Coloring*

To help children with visual impairments understand the outline of a coloring picture, glue can be squeezed around the outline of the picture and let to dry. This will then create a puffy barrier. If the child has difficulty seeing the outline, they can feel the puffy texture and color inside the lines. Color can also be added to glue by mixing paint or colored icing sugar. The glue barrier with the colored art barrier may help children see and feel the barrier.

<http://tnt.asu.edu/ideas/using-arms-and-hands/better-boundaries>

*Painting with Glue*

Children with visual impairments may not be able to see their art work very well. To help the children create a piece of art that they can enjoy with another part of their senses, children can use glue to paint. Paint or colored icing sugar can be mixed in with the glue in the squeeze glue containers. Children can squeeze glue directly onto the paper, using a variety of colors, and the paint can be allowed to dry. Once dry, the artwork is very colorful and it has a texture. The child with the visual impairment can feel the artwork, even if they are not able to see it. The child with the visual impairment would also be able to enjoy the artwork of their peers if all students completed an activity with colored glue.

<http://artwithmrssmith.blogspot.com/2009/07/atcs-with-colored-glue.html>

Hearing Impairments

*Printed Directions*

For children with some hearing impairments, the specific directions of the task and all of the tasks steps can be printed in text and given to the child. The paper could have the purpose of the text at the top of the page and numbered steps with pictures to help the child understand the directions even if they are unable to hear. The directions could also be correlated to colored number cards. If the texture were discussing step number one, the teacher could hold up a colored card with the printed number 1. The color and number could correlate to the color and number on the child’s direction sheet. The child would then be able to follow along with the class. If the child has difficulty reading, the incorporation of pictures on their direction sheet will also help them to understand the task.

Sensory Needs

*Textured or Scented Clay*

Children with sensory needs may benefit from the incorporation of texture and scented objects during arts and crafts projects. Some children may not like the texture or scent of clay or play dough and adding food items including cinnamon, salt and brown sugar can alter the texture. To create textured clay, these items can be mixed into the clay for that child’s specific portion of clay or mixed into the clay or play dough in its entirety. To create scented play dough or clay, pre-mixed Kool-Aid and cinnamon provide texture and scent and essential oils, including lavender and peppermint can add a scent to the clay without adding texture.

*Scented Markers*

Some children with sensory disorders may not like the traditional smell of markers. Scented markers provide a different smell, usually fruity, to traditional markers.

<http://www.staples.com/Mr-Sketch-Scented-Watercolor-Markers-12-Pack/product_224287>

*Textured Tools*

The handles of a variety of art tools, including paintbrushes and markers can be changed based on the child’s sensory preference using items such as felt, foam, sandpaper and Velcro. To create a texture tool, cut out circles or small pieces of the material, then hot glue the pieces to the outside of the tool or its handle. The material can be used in pieces or glued to the tool to cover the entire surface area. The addition of texture to the tool may have a calming effect for the student who has a sensory need while they participate in the art activity.

**Music Supports for Children with Cognitive and Learning Disabilities**

Many of the supports used for children with learning disabilities in circle time and arts and crafts can be used within music activities, but modified for music tasks. Examples include:

* Hearing the teacher sing the song without music
* Hearing it on audio with music
* Seeing the lyric
* Teaching one line at a time then allowing a child to repeat after the teacher

This will give the children three modes of representation for the overall song, the lyrics, and the melody. When teaching the songs, lines can be presented to the child one at a time. Then the child can have a chance to repeat the line of the song before the new line is introduced.

Additionally, assistive technology can be used to enhance the child’s understanding of tempo and rhythm in the music:

Multiple Means of Engagement

*Highlighters*

The words of the lyrics can be printed out, and highlighters can be used to mark a specific temp or rhythm.

*Picture or Word Cards*

Picture or word cards can be used to remind children of the line that they are about to sing. For example, if a song were about a little boy, a card showing a little boy could be help up and shown to the class to remind the students of the line they are about to sing.

*Streamers/Scarves*

Streamers and scarves can be used to show rhythm or tempo of a song. If a song speeds up, the teacher (and/or children) can waves the streamers quickly. If the song slows down, the streamers could be waved slowly.

<http://www.shindigz.com/Party-supplies/Party-Decorations/Streamers/15031>

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### Music Supports for Children with Physical Disabilities

Multiple Means of Engagement

It’s often difficult to find ways for children with disabilities to participate in music activities. Some of the above mentioned items could be used in music class such as the All-Turn-It Spinner and SGDs. One other item that can be used is the CD Boom Box that has been switch adapted and has radio, cassette and CD options. The switch adaptation piece is especially important for the CD option. When a non-adapted CD player is plugged into a control unit and activated by a switch, it does not restart the CD at the place it stopped. Instead, it restarts at the beginning of the CD. With the switch adapted Boom Box, the CD restarts where it was stopped. The CD Boom Box can be found at the following site/vendor:

<http://enablingdevices.com/catalog/AdaptedElectronics/CD_Players_Boom_Boxes/cd-boom-box>

For musical instruments, the following adaptations could be made to help children with physical disabilities participate:

*Baby Teething Rings*

Baby teething rings can be used instead of fingers to strum guitars or other string instruments.

[http://www.diapers.com/p/nuby-icy-bite-teething-ring-pink-221264?site=CA&utm\_source=cse&utm\_medium=cpc\_D&utm\_term=NY-190&utm\_campaign=Google&CAWELAID=1338773812&utm\_content=pla&cagpspn=pla&ci\_kw={keyword}](http://www.diapers.com/p/nuby-icy-bite-teething-ring-pink-221264?site=CA&utm_source=cse&utm_medium=cpc_D&utm_term=NY-190&utm_campaign=Google&CAWELAID=1338773812&utm_content=pla&cagpspn=pla&ci_kw=%7bkeyword%7d)

*Velcro and Gloves*

Velcro can be placed on a small instrument and on a glove. A child could place their hand in a glove and grasp small instruments with the aid of Velcro.

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### Music Supports for Children with Communication Disabilities

Switch communication devices can be used in various ways during music activities. The following selection gives a sample activity and the type of switch that may work the best with the activity.

Multiple Means of Expression

*Single Message Communicators*

(see devices/websites in greetings/circle time section)

Some examples of use with music may include: singing a song with repeating lyrics (similar to predictable book/story), singing a short song (ex. happy birthday), choosing a song, announcing which song will be sang/played and request a song “again”.

*Dual Message Communicators*

(See devices/websites in greetings/circle time section)

Some examples of use with music may include: requesting a song “again” and having it or the repeating lyrics on the second side (similar to predictable book/story), singing a short song (ex. happy birthday), choosing songs, announcing which songs will be sang/played and requesting a song “again”.

*Multi-message Communicators*

(See items/websites in greetings/circle time section)

Some examples of use with music may include: requesting a song, singing a song (with various lyrics on different cells), choosing songs, announcing which songs will be sang/played and make animal sounds for a song and listing the songs to be sang.

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### Music Supports for Children with Visual and Hearing Impairments

Hearing Impairment

Multiple Means of Representation

*Sign Language*

During music activities, sign language could be taught while learning the lyrics.

Multiple Means of Engagement

*Boom Box on Floor*

Boom boxes or radios can be turned up loud and placed on the floor so the child can feel the vibrations of the sounds, even if they have trouble hearing the music.

*Sustaining Instrument*

Sustaining instruments, including cymbals, metal phones, and triangles, once played, have sounds that linger. These instruments can be used with children that have disabilities to help them to feel the vibration, and hear some of the sound if they have low hearing.

<http://www.steveweissmusic.com/category/triangles>

Visual Impairments

Multiple Means of Representation

*Enlarged Copies*

Enlarged copies of lyrics and or music notes can be given to the child or projected on to a board.

*Sandpaper Notes*

Musical notes could be cut out using sandpaper. Children with visual impairments can touch the notes for the child to sense the music through touch. This item is not available for purchase, but can be made using sandpaper, enlarged copies of notes and a X-acto knife.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**Stories about Church Inclusion**

**Challenging Our Paradigms**

<http://snappinministries.wordpress.com/?s=challenging+our+paradigms>

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. ~ Romans 12:2, NIV

Do you like my awesome, colorful caterpillar?  While he’s already missing one leg and one antenna, he is a great tool our family has used in a unique way.  He is one of our tools in church on Sunday.  While this may evoke a yawn from some of you, let me point out that he’s not used in an inclusive Sunday school class (although he certainly could be).  He is used in the church proper.

You see, I am bringing up this cute little fellow to help us challenge our perceptions of what inclusion ministry needs to look like.  Too often we view special needs ministry as looking like either a separate class for those with unique abilities or inclusion into a traditional Sunday School class with adaptations made.  While those are two fine options, there may be still others.

My radar was turned on to this notion as I became aware of the fact that our own family was dealing with our youngest child’s church experience. Our daughter has ADHD, Sensory Processing Disorder, and other assorted diagnoses. We have tried several different options with her. We have endured the typical complaints from the ordinary Sunday school class setting.  Adaptations were made for her while we worked with church staff.  At one point we even enrolled her in a class reserved exclusively for kids who are very engaged in their faith because of her voracious appetite for learning more about her Savior.  None of those worked out.  Finally, at her request, we tried something different. While it may seem contrary to the instinct, we sit as far down in the front of the sanctuary as possible along with our “Little Miss”.  Fellow church attenders surrounding us smile at her as this otherwise-noise-sensitive child grabs the pens out of the chair caddies, using them as drumsticks to play along with the drummer on the worship team.  She often cuddles with her dad or I during the remainder of the service, fully processing what’s being said by the pastor because there is nothing obstructing her view of him.  If she gets squirmy during the sermon, her caterpillar gives her enough sensory feedback to remain engaged for the entire service.  Some weeks it may not be her caterpillar.  It may be her spiral notebook for doodling.  It may be the lip balm she needs to apply, reapply and then reapply again.  Whatever it is, we are thrilled that we’ve discovered a solution that helps our precious child to engage in spiritual formation.  After our weekly church visits, she is able to discuss the growth point that has been shared in the service.

So, my question to you, fellow worker on the front lines for Jesus, is what paradigm shift might YOU need to be making to create an accessible environment for certain children or unique adults in your church?  Could it be that you have overlooked the simple idea of large print Bibles?  What about outdoor exercise while teaching kiddos songs containing Scripture verses?  What would Sunday School class look like with the kids on exercise balls?  The options are only limited by our own imaginations!

**Disabled Children in the Church**

<http://childrenteach.blogspot.com/2010/08/disabled-children-in-church.html>

Recently I heard the following story: A family with two children started attending a church close to their home. The son was deaf, partially blind and had a rare blood disease. Even though the boy was very sick, he was also energetic, creative (read into that what you will!) and fun loving. While they were the only family attending with small children, they thought they were loved and accepted by the other church members. Then one day, a representative of the church came to them and asked them to find another church. "We'll help you out financially any way you need it," the church told the family, "But because your son is so noisy and disruptive, we would appreciate it if you went somewhere else.'

"What's the rest of the story?" my husband asked when I shared this with him.  
  
That IS the story.

Granted, some children are disruptive. Whether physical handicaps, emotional trauma, socio-economic restrictions or more energy than a roadrunner on steroids, som

Is motioning the family toward the door an option?

Not according to Jesus! In Mark 10:14, Jesus told his disciples, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these." He goes on to tell his disciples that anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.

Jesus gives two good reasons for children in the church. Children need the Kingdom of God. How else will they receive the Kingdom if not through the vehicle God has provided called the Church?. Second, the Church needs children. We need children to teach us how to receive the Kingdom. How will we understand what Jesus meant unless we surround ourselves with children and observe what it is about them that makes them so special to Jesus?

"You don't understand," pew-sitters might moan. "They are SO disruptive. Our little church just can't handle them. You want us to change we do worship just to accommodate them?" A church overwhelmed with a special needs child might stop to think of what it must be like for the parents who deal with the child day in and day out. Are we saying they need to trust the Lord for daily strength and courage to cope with their child's needs when a congregation isn't willing to put up with it for one hour a week?

Think instead of the tremendous blessing a small congregation can be in lifting up a family, encouraging them, carrying part of the load, as Galatians 6;2 tells us to do. Think of other fringe and community people who are watching how the church interacts with someone who is different, watching to see if the church is as loving and accepting as they say they are.

If the church enfolded that child and his family to themselves, think of the message of love that would shout to the community.

It can be done as another congregation proved. One Sunday, a pastor noticed a new family in the congregation, a father and two sons. The next Sunday, the mother showed up with the two boys. This pattern alternated for several weeks. One Sunday the pastor asked why they didn't all come together as a family. The parent explained that they had an autistic son at home who hated crowds and was scared of the loud music from the organ.

The pastor said, "Bring him anyway. We'll do what we can to make him comfortable." The family sat in the balcony and left church a few minutes before dismissal. And wouldn't you know it? For some strange reason, the organ didn't work for several Sundays in spite of being tested and working okay mid-week! Soon, the autistic child was taking piano lessons from, guess who? The organist!

Last time the resource for this story heard, the boy was starting to play the organ.  
  
If your church is small, children will demand change. A church might have to let loose of some of their sacred cows for the sake of a child. It's worth the sacrifice, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. A child's faith is more rich when it is shaped by adults. If we are going to shape the faith of children in our communities, we need to be willing to give up our time schedules, get down on our creaky, arthritic knees to their level, touch their grimy hands and love them to Jesus.

**Funding**

<http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=2662>

[http://www.brethren.org/disabilities/documents/church-grants.pdf](http://www.brethren.org/disabilities/documents/church-grants.pdf%20)

<http://www.joniandfriends.org/help-and-resources/organizations/christian-fund-disabled/>

**Church Inclusion**

<http://theinclusivechurch.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.lds.org/topics/disability>

<http://ministry-to-children.com/adapting-lessons-for-special-needs/>

**PLEASE NOTE**

Advances in technology are being made at a rapid rate. To assure that the staff and members of Unity of Fairfax continue to make progress with existing technologies as well as have the opportunity to benefit and grow from future technology, assistive technology screenings/evaluations should be periodically reviewed. Indicators for such reviews may be a significant change/shift in membership, modifications to existing goals and objectives, and changes in available technology.