

# Ten Tips for Teaching Children with Disabilities in Religious Education

## 1. Get to Know Your Students–Use Teaching Intervention Plans

- Read IEPs
- Gather parental information
- Establish contact with Public School Teachers
- Maintain consistent behavior management plan  
(*Follow the same plan schools and parents use*)
- Identify what works best for learning
  - \*Independent work (*must be proficient reader*)
  - \*Partner-work
  - \*Small group work
  - \*Large-group work

## 2. Set up the Classroom Schedule with a Focus on Movement and Centers

- Incorporate activity into the lessons
- Ensure all materials are reading-level appropriate (*modify as needed*),
- Develop visual displays of the class plan – “what comes next?”
- Simplify oral class directions – no more than two directions given at a time

## 3. Design the Classroom Space (*as possible*)

- Large-group gather area
- Study carrel
- Activity area
- Carpet area

## 4. Organize and Manage Classroom Assistants

- Identify student needs and match “best-fit” for Adult/Older Student Personal Assistants
- Identify students who need assistance in a small group – “best-fit” match with appropriate Assistant
- Ensure appropriate training for Assistants re. instruction & behavior management

## 5. Organize Classroom Materials to Meet Student Needs

- Identify what is available
- Identify what is still needed
- Provide instructional material in various formats – visual, auditory, tactile

## 6. Identify the Visual Displays Needed for Your Class Rules & Procedures

- (*and each lesson – make them simple – use clipart or other simple designs*)
- Display Rules and Procedures in words **and** pictures
- Display** Each Step of Each Lesson in words **and** pictures

## 7. Choose and Use Communication Tools

- Use electronics//visual displays if available (Recorders, iPads, iPhones, etc.)
- Note cards – Notebook – Poster Board – Simple Handouts
- Use Auditory Methods – Record the directions in **voice** or **song** for multiple replays!

## 8. Organize Data Systems for the Class *(if used and available)*

- Record information such as sacraments made/needed, grade level completed, family contact information, abilities and special needs

## 9. Modify Lesson Plans for the Child with Autism – Consider Accommodations

- Know the difference between modification and accommodation to best meet individual needs.
- A **modification** changes what a student is taught or expected to learn (*ex., learners who are far behind their age-group peers may need changes to the curriculum, such as shorter or easier reading assignments, reduced or different assignments, reduced writing assignments, etc. Have students complete an oral report or create a hands-on-display to show mastery of key points instead of requiring a written report.*) Kids who receive modifications are **not** expected to learn the same material in the same way as their typical peers.
- Accommodations** can help kids learn the same material and meet the same expectations as their typical peers using different material or presentation methods (*ex., if a student has reading difficulties, he/she could listen to an audio recording vs. reading the text, or the information could be presented in a simplified picture format without changing the context. If a student has attentional difficulties, the student could be placed closer or farther away from the instructor, or may sit near a peer-buddy, depending on what best meets their needs. An adult or peer assistant can reexplain the information, check for understanding of the key points, and help students stay on task.*)

## 10. Identify Criteria for Inclusion and General Education Participation

- Inclusion** means that children with disabilities can learn alongside their non-disabled peers in **general education settings, usually with support and accommodations.**
- Self-contained classes or programs** are specifically designed for children who learn differently than their typical peers. These programs are usually indicated for children with significant or severe disabilities who cannot learn in a fast-paced general education setting. Some children may participate in learning in both settings, such as when a reading disability does not significantly impact math ability, or when attentional difficulties have minimal impact on cognitive abilities.

---

### Contact:

**Dr. Nancy J. Emanuel**

**Coordinator for Special Needs Ministries**

**The Catholic Diocese of Arlington**

**200 North Glebe Road**

**Arlington, VA 22203**

**Ph - 703-224-1633 C- 703-209-5466 [nemanuel@arlingtondiocese.org](mailto:nemanuel@arlingtondiocese.org)**