



.....  
**All In This Together**

Lesson Adaptations to Reach Every Child

# Curriculum Adaptation

## Buddy Tips

### To Reach Every Child

#### 1. Know Your Role

- You are there to provide increased opportunities for your buddy to learn alongside peers.
- Your church will define your specific role based on your buddy's unique needs and plan for growth.
- Ultimately, your role is to create an environment where God can do His work in your buddy's life!

#### 2. Know Your Buddy

- Learn in advance your buddy's interests, preferred communication, things he or she can do independently or needs help with and typical interaction with peers.
- Know what makes your buddy uneasy, triggers and good redirection phrases.
- Learn about the diagnosis, if disclosed, allergies, and bathroom independence.

#### 3. Encourage Safe Independence

- Help your buddy only as much as is necessary – kids should do as much as possible for themselves. It may help to demonstrate activities first.
- Give choices when possible, e.g. “you may do this activity or you may do that activity.”
- Safety is primary though. You may need to sit beside your buddy, sit nearby in the classroom and walk with your buddy to different settings. Always keep a watchful eye!

#### 4. Use Positive Language

- Change your don't's to do's. Positive language focuses on what you want your buddy to do. For example, if your buddy is running, say “Please walk with me,” instead of “Don't run.”
- Praise each thing your buddy does right or well. This reinforces desired behavior.
- Use a welcoming, calm tone of voice. You can be authoritative by being firm without being demanding or raising your voice.

#### 5. Make Positive Behavior Desirable

- Use the First/Then approach. Do a less-preferred activity first, followed by a preferred activity. For example, you might say, “**First** we will sing songs. **Then** we will play with playdough.”
- It may help to write your First/Then goals on a dry erase board and carry it with you. If your buddy doesn't read, make a chart with pictures or draw symbols and carry with you.
- Use the Try Again approach. When your buddy demonstrates an inappropriate action, ask her or him to “Try again.” Guide or model the desired response for your buddy as needed.





## 6. Slow Down

- When talking or asking a question, practice the “Pause.” Maintain eye contact and pause for 15 seconds or more to allow your buddy to process your request and respond.
- Take regular breaks to allow your buddy to process what is being learned and to have some personal space.
- Breaks might be in the classroom, in the hall or a different classroom. Sometimes a quiet, calming environment helps.

## 7. Make Transitions Easier

- Prepare for what is coming up. Use a picture schedule. Use countdowns such as, “In five minutes we’re going to...”, “In two minutes we’re going to...” Try to avoid abrupt changes.
- Arrive at class late or early when halls and doorways aren’t crowded and active.
- Let your buddy take something to the next activity.

## 8. Set Goals and Succeed

- Set small, attainable weekly goals. For example, go to 5 minutes of your buddy’s age-appropriate class. Increase the time in class as your buddy is able. Begin with the portion of class that is most desirable.
- Each goal met becomes a success that motivates your buddy to experience more.
- Do a small activity that your buddy can accomplish and feel good about what he or she has done. Praise your buddy for the accomplishment.

## 9. Simplify

- Break multi-part instructions or tasks into individual steps to do one at a time. Try to use concrete language.
- Simplify the Bible lesson. Work with the class teacher to present the concept of a lesson in a way your buddy can see it, hear it, and do it in order to increase her or his engagement.
- Learn the Bible focus in advance. This will give you time to simplify the lesson into one key concept your buddy can easily remember.

## 10. Make and Use a Discovery Box

- A Discovery Box is a portable box that is filled with interactive tools to help students who learn differently from their peers.
- See the [Plan Ahead Resources](#) document for instructions and suggested contents.

*The mission of MNA Special Needs Ministries is to engage, educate, equip and encourage congregations in the “whys and hows” of ministering to and alongside people with disabilities and their families. For further information on how your church can advance in “making the gospel—the good news of the coming of Christ’s kingdom—accessible to all, in word and deed”, contact MNA Special Needs Ministries via [www.equalconcern.org](http://www.equalconcern.org).*

© 2016 by MNA Special Needs Ministries