### SUPPORTING AND TEACHING CHILDREN WHO ARE LANGUAGE DELAYED, MINIMALLY VERBAL, OR NONVERBAL

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#### WHAT ARE WE GOING TO LEARN?

- 1. Basic Definitions and Terms of Language Delays
- 2. Encouraging Prayer from these Children
- 3. Visuals for Classroom Management & Lesson Understanding
- 4. Alternatives to Common Church Practices (i.e. Memorizing Scriptures)
- 5. Teaching Tips for Topics of Salvation and Baptism

# ABOUT THE SPEAKER EVANA SANDUSKY, MS CCC-SLP

- Pediatric Speech-language pathologist since 2004
- Private practice since 2006 primarily serving children in the birth-3 program in Illinois
- Mom to a child with special needs since 2006
- Service in the local church
- Writer and author:
  - A Special Purposed Life blog: <a href="https://specialpurposedlife.blogspot.com/">https://specialpurposedlife.blogspot.com/</a>
  - Badges of Motherhood: One Mother's Story about Family, Down syndrome, Hospitals, and Faith Available on Amazon
  - Key Ministry Writing Team

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE ON THIS TOPIC



# BASIC DEFINITIONS AND TERMS

### THE BASICS

### **Receptive language:** The understanding of language

- Following directions (Get your shoes, and bring them to me.)
- Identification tasks (Show me your nose.)
- Demonstrate understanding of a concept (Which one is tall/big/yellow?)
- Listening (Does your child attempt to listen to conversations?)

### THE BASICS

**Expressive language:** Sharing thoughts, feelings, and ideas; Mostly, this is tested by evaluating what a child says as opposed to gestures.

- Requesting desired items with words
- Making animal sounds
- Singing
- Saying name
- Saying adjectives
- Using phrases, simple sentences, complex sentences
- Asking questions
- Answering questions

### THE BASICS

Articulation/Speech clarity: The ability to clearly produce speech sounds to form understandable words

- Difficulty with specific sounds like /k/ or /s/;
  Mild in nature
- If many errors, there could be a difficulty with processes or patterns such as leaving off all final sounds of words.
- Can be severe in nature such as using only vowel sounds

#### WHAT DELAYS ARE TYPICALLY SEEN?

- Expressive language delay: Can be short term ("Late Talkers") or longer term; Understanding is fine
- Mixed Receptive and Expressive language delay: Common with Intellectual Disabilities, Autism, Down syndrome, etc.; Difficulty understanding and using language
- Articulation delay: Can occur on its own; Can also occur with receptive or expressive language delays; Difficult to treat with Intellectual Disabilities because of the tendency to overgeneralize

## SEVERE LANGUAGE DELAYS IN PLAY

- Often related to receptive and expressive language delays in young children (toddler & prek age) is poor play skills or immature play with toys.
  - Mouthing toys
  - Wrecking ball kids
  - Throwing toys
  - Dumping things out
  - Banging and noise making in play
- What about autism?
  - Fixation on certain toys

### **NONVERBAL** VS MINIMALLY VERBAL

#### Nonverbal

- Most people in the general public consider this to be a complete lack of words. If a child talks, they seem surprised.
- In speech research journals, it has been defined as children who do not use spoken language now (5-20 words or less) and will continue to not use spoken language in the near to far future. Autism Res. 2013 Dec; 6(6): 10.1002/aur.1329.
- Key point: Nonverbal doesn't mean ZERO words.
- Ask parents: Are there any words your child can say?

### NONVERBAL VS MINIMALLY VERBAL

#### Minimally Verbal

- Minimally verbal is a classification that is under used.
- Again, there is a difference of opinion on who should be classified into this category.
- My definition: A child over 3 years old who says more than 20 words and who does not/cannot use verbal speech to **primarily** communicate. They too may use gestures, signs, pictures, a communication device, and nonverbal communication.
- In either case, nonverbal or minimally verbal does not mean incapable! They can still understand and learn. They may be able to read!

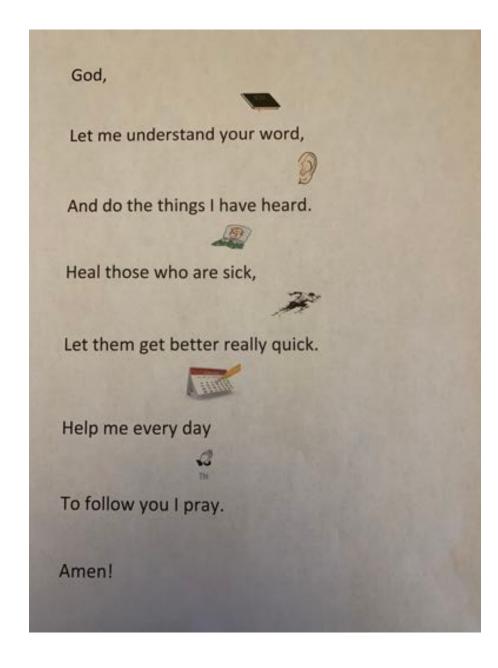
ENCOURAGING PRAYER FROM NONVERBAL, MINIMALLY VERBAL  Model the behavior. Eyes closed, and hands folded. Pray with the child out loud, so they can hear what prayer sounds like. Maybe prayer for some children is simply this action.

Include any words they say into the prayer. Can they say mama or dada? Use it!! Say it like they say it in the prayer. Use these words to ask them who they want to pray for. This is a common speech therapy technique.

 Pause at the end. Wait for the 'amen.' Pausing gives them time and the expectation to participate.

 Encourage any vocalization in prayer. Treat their attempts with respect. Children should participate to the extent that they can.

### GROUP PRAYER EXAMPLE WITH VISUAL SUPPORT



### **VISUALS**

#### WHY VISUALS ARE YOUR FRIEND:

- A professional once told me, "Your daughter communicates in a visual way with sign language and pictures on her device. If you **only** speak to her, you aren't connecting to her **preference** for the visual."
- To this day, when I want her to really understand, I will sign and gesture along with my words to help her.
- When you teach or give instructions with words only, the child with language delays probably isn't understanding your entire message. Visuals build understanding.
- If you are trying to reach children with language delays, visuals will be important for classroom management and your teachings.

## TYPES OF VISUALS FOR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

#### Visual Schedule:

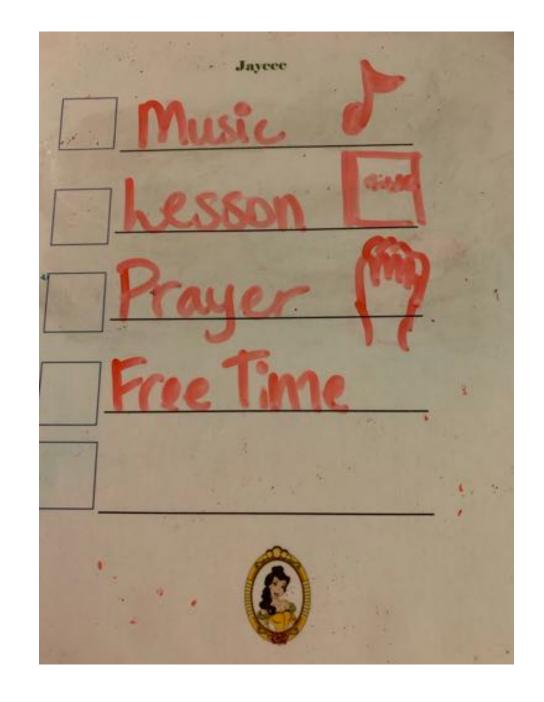
- The schedule of what will happen during your service/class and in what order using pictures to help the child understand.
- Often thought of as needed for autism but helpful for lots of children with language delays
- Can be class based or individualized
- Lots of different schedules to make and different ways to use them
- Helps increase understanding of what is happening, decreases anxiety (especially for visitors), and provides a tool for the child to become independent.



# EXAMPLE OF VISUAL CLASS SCHEDULE

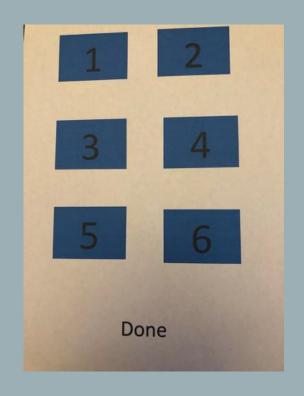
### PERSONALIZED SCHEDULE

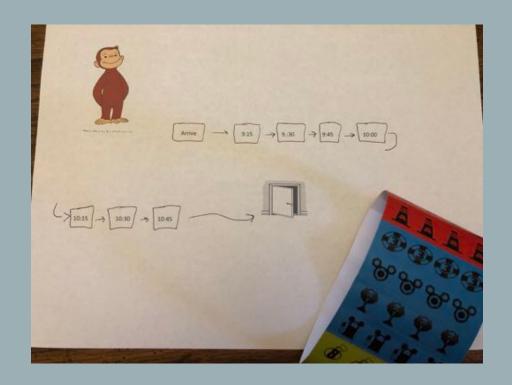
- -Can make it personal since it is for one individual
- -Allows for more weekly flexibility
- -Can allow the child to check it off when done
- -Add a picture to help with text meaning (Important for language delays)



## TYPES OF VISUALS FOR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

- Visual Countdown Schedule:
  - This schedule differs from the first examples in that it doesn't give the specifics about what will happen. It simply tells the child how close they are to being "done."
  - More general in nature
  - Better (in my opinion) as an individual schedule rather than a group
  - Can help non-language delayed children who are anxious to be away from parents





# EXAMPLES OF VISUAL COUNTDOWN SCHEDULE

## IMPLEMENTING VISUAL SCHEDULES SOME ADVICE

- Trial different methods. I would start with easy ones (first example with words and pictures) and move to harder ones.
- Give it a couple of weeks before deciding it didn't help.
- Once you have a schedule chosen, every volunteer/worker needs to know how to use it to be consistent!

# GENERAL VISUALS FOR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

- General Classroom Visuals
  - Stop signs on doors to help children remember not to leave



- A "no" sign to assist when stopping a negative behavior (i.e. hitting)
  - Heading shaking 'no' and other gestures are helpful too!
- Pictures on shelves or tubs showing where toys should go for clean up
- Pictures indicating how many children you want in a certain area

# VISUALS THAT BUILD COMPREHENSION WHEN TEACHING

- Books with pictures
- Video clips, movies
- Felt boards
- Posters, bulletin boards
- Real objects (Example: Stuffed animal lion for Daniel in lion's den)
- Written text to match up ("Mark" to match up Mark in the Bible)

# ALTERNATIVES TO COMMON CHURCH PRACTICES

#### WHY ALTERNATIVES?

• If a child with a severe language delay is in a church program encouraging verse memorization, books of the Bible memorization, or completion of certain papers for rewards, incentives, or recognition,

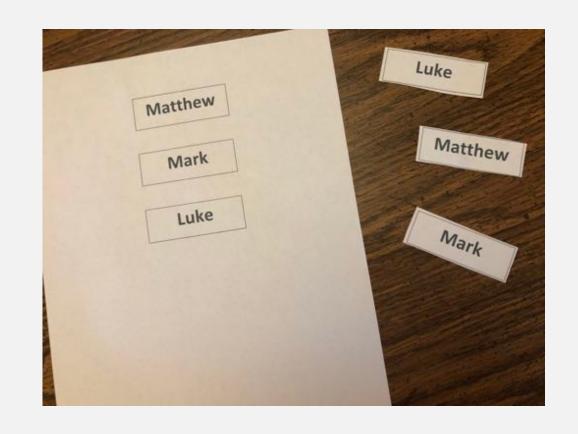
you are leaving them out

### KEYS TO FINDING ALTERNATIVES

- You must get all the volunteers and staff on the same page! (And parents)
- If the child can match, point, say some words (or signs), then we can make some accommodations.
- Parental input is always best to find the right alternative!

### ALTERNATIVES TO COMMON CHURCH PRACTICES

- Memorizing Books of the Bible
  - Match up books of the Bible.
  - Pick out the wrong book from a list. (Genesis, Exodus, Dora)



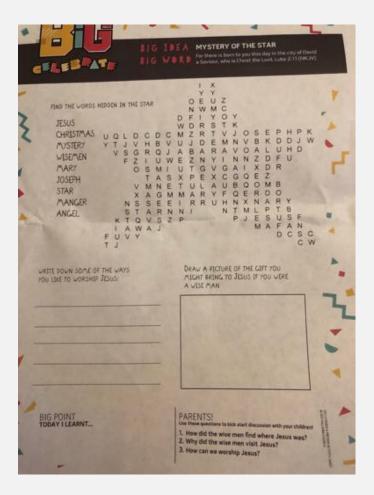


#### Memory Verse

- Give 2 choices: "Was your memory verse: Nothing is impossible with God or Cats are God's favorite?" If they can't verbalize, read it off two cards and have them point to the right answer.
- Match the printed verse or match the printed book title.
- Write out the verse but leave one word out. Let them memorize the selected one word. Or give them 2 choices to pick out the correct missing word.
- If they can speak, let them memorize the same verse for weeks at a time rather than switching every week. This will help with retention.
- If they can speak, let them memorize a short Bible concept. "God loves me." "God made everything."

## ALTERNATIVES TO COMMON CHURCH PRACTICES

- Take Home Lesson Sheet
  - Think about all the skills needed for this page.
  - Can you use one item from the page?
  - Can you come up with an alternative sheet that is simple?
    - Coloring pages
    - Tracing a Bible verse written out.
    - Allowing parents to read the verse and signing it as proof.



# TIPS FOR TEACHING SALVATION & BAPTISM

#### THINGS TO CONSIDER IN GENERAL

- Repetition is key! Much of speech therapy is repetition and practice. This will be true for church concepts as well. Repeat, repeat, repeat! In speech therapy, repetition is huge!
- Because few children with language delays can learn via auditory only method, use multiple ways to present the lesson or concept: videos, books, pictures, songs, crafts, etc.
- I'm not telling you what to include with your lessons on salvation or baptism. I'm giving general tips.

#### THINGS TO CONSIDER IN GENERAL

- Supplement your teachings with the communication method they use:
  - If they sign, teach signs that are church related.
    - YouTube has many signing videos!
    - Introduce I or 2 signs a week max. Don't overload the children or workers on signs!
  - If they use pictures, find pictures to supplement what you are doing.
  - If they have a device, talk with the parent on finding words or adding words. (If you want to add words on a device, give a list of words and let the parent or their SLP do it.)

# TEACHING SALVATION

Before we go to the next few slides, let's forget the debate on when/how/if children with large language delays should be saved or baptized. This information is only those who want to teach on these areas.

Forget your students' chronological age, and use materials that are more on their developmental age.

#### TEACHING SALVATION

- Make sure you have the sign language or pictures to help supplement your words. (Jesus, heaven)
- Use videos, books, Bible scriptures, songs, etc. to explain the concepts of salvation.
- Great Resource: Our Pastimes- Salvation Message Crafts for Preschoolers <a href="https://ourpastimes.com/salvation-message-crafts-for-preschoolers-12563465.html">https://ourpastimes.com/salvation-message-crafts-for-preschoolers-12563465.html</a>
  - These crafts can be adapted into object lessons for older children with special needs.

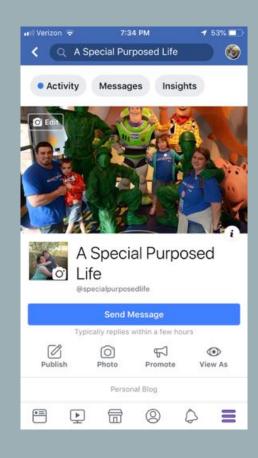
#### TEACHING SALVATION

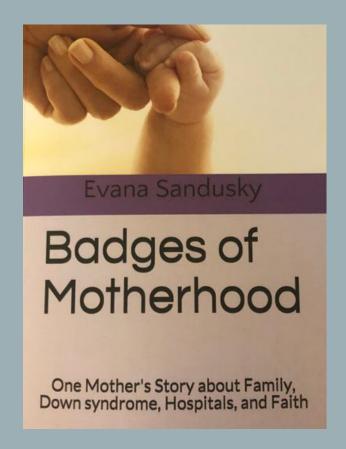
- Take your time to teach the concept. Revisit it over several weeks, even if it's a quick review before your new material.
- Hang up posters or print offs in your classroom of the key words you want the children to remember.



#### TEACHING BAPTISM

- Videos (YouTube is your friend)
  - Video modeling- video that teaches a behavior or a skill; think of this as a "how to" video
  - Video priming- videos to prepare a child for what will happen; general in nature
- Bible passages (Use picture Bibles)
- Books
- Practice baptizing dolls in a basin.
- Practice at home in the bathtub.
- Consider the consistency of your words.
- Visit the baptismal area!





### THANK YOU