

General Strategies for Adaptations for First Graders

Each grade of *Alive in Christ* has specific Adaptive Learning and Special Needs adaptations for the activities in that grade. Grade 1 is unique in that several additional adaptation options are made available to accommodate the need for more visual and tactile learning experiences to assist in teaching children at this age. The additional adaptations have also been developed with consideration given to the fact that many of these learners will be receiving their first year of catechesis.

Puzzle Adaptations

There are several Puzzle options throughout the individual chapters of Grade 1 which can be downloaded as PDFs from the Preparation section of each chapter at aliveinchrist.osv.com. Instructions for the use of each Puzzle can be found in the Adaptive Learning & Special Needs instructions under the same Preparation section for that chapter.

Wherever a Puzzle is suggested, you will need to print out (on card stock if possible) the puzzle pieces and the outline of the puzzle. To save time during the session and to help learners with **fine motor difficulties**, all individual puzzle pieces should be precut before they are passed out to the children. Before you begin teaching each chapter, be sure that you have enough puzzle pieces and outlines for each of the learners who will benefit from the adaptation. These Puzzles can be reused, so be sure to collect them after the learners are finished working on them and store the outlines and puzzle pieces in large plastic bags for future use.

These Puzzles are a great adaptation option for learners with **writing or fine motor difficulties (such as dysgraphia)**, learners who have **difficulties with attention or impulse control**, and learners with **intellectual/developmental delays (such as autism)**.

Word Puzzle Adaptations

There are several Word Puzzle options throughout the individual chapters of Grade 1 which can be downloaded as PDFs from the Preparation section of each chapter at **aliveinchrist.osv.com**. Instructions for the use of each Word Puzzle can be found in the Adaptive Learning & Special Needs instructions under the same Preparation section for that chapter.

Each Word Puzzle has two different options for use. The first option is to print out (on cardstock if possible) the first two pages of the PDF. The next step is to cut out for the children the individual letters on the first page. Precutting these pieces will save time during the session and will be helpful to learners with **fine motor difficulties**. Then provide each learner with the precut letters and the page with the letter outlines. Invite the learners to place each of the letters in its correct outline in order to spell the word that the activity is highlighting.

The second option is to print out (on cardstock if possible) the first and third pages of the PDF. The next step is to precut the letter-squares on the first page for the children. Precutting these pieces will save time during the session and will be helpful to learners with **fine motor difficulties**. Then provide each learner with the precut letter-squares and the guide page that shows the full word and gives them a guiding line where they can place their letters. Invite the learners to organize the letter-squares on the guiding line in order to spell out the word that the activity is highlighting.

Whether you are using the first or second option with the learners, before you begin each chapter be sure that you have enough of the necessary materials to accommodate each of the learners who will benefit from the chosen adaptation. These Word Puzzles can be reused, so be sure to collect all of the materials being used when the learners are finished. You can store everything in large plastic bags for future use.

These Word Puzzles are a great adaptation option for learners with **writing or fine motor difficulties (such as dysgraphia)**, learners with **reading difficulties (such as dyslexia)**, learners with **language difficulties**, learners who have **difficulties with attention or impulse control**, and learners with **intellectual/developmental delays (such as autism)**.

Gross Motor Activity Adaptations

There are several Gross Motor Activity options throughout the individual chapters of Grade 1 which can be downloaded as PDFs from the Preparation section of each chapter at **aliveinchrist.osv.com**. Instructions for the use of each Gross Motor Activity can be found in the Adaptive Learning & Special Needs instructions under the same Preparation section for that chapter.

Wherever a Gross Motor Activity is suggested, you will need to print out (on card stock if possible) the pages that include the letters of the word (or phrase) that the activity is focused on. Before you begin each chapter, be sure that you have enough Gross Motor Activity pieces for each of the learners who will benefit from the adaptation. These Gross Motor Activity pieces can be reused, so be sure to collect them after the learners are finished working with them and store them in large plastic bags for future use.

These Gross Motor activities will incorporate gross motor movement to help the children learn concepts being taught in activities. They are a great adaptation option for learners with **writing or fine motor difficulties (such as dysgraphia)**, learners with **reading difficulties (such as dyslexia)**, learners with **language difficulties**, learners who have **difficulties with attention or impulse control**, and learners with **intellectual/developmental delays (such as autism)**.

Picture Bank Adaptations

Using a Picture Bank is an excellent option for communicating with learners who demonstrate little or no ability to use verbal expressive language. This can include learners with **intellectual/developmental delays (such as autism)** and **learners with language difficulties**. A Picture Bank can also be helpful to use as an alternative to drawing and writing activities for learners with **writing or fine motor difficulties (such as dysgraphia)** and as an alternative to writing activities for learners with **reading difficulties (such as dyslexia)**. A Picture Bank can also be useful for children who are concrete thinkers, serving as a tool to help enhance discussion activities and activities where the children are expected to create or imagine scenarios.

It will be very important for you to work with the parents of each learner to help compile a Personal Picture Bank that can be used as a teaching tool for learners throughout the year. Below is a list of the types of images that you will need to ask parents to look for. The parents will need to either affix their images to note cards and label them or use a personal computer to create their Personal Picture Bank cards. However they choose to provide them, it is very important that each of their pictures are labeled with the types of Picture Bank

descriptions listed below.

- Pictures of parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, neighbors, friends, and anyone else the family wishes to include
- Pictures of pets
- Pictures of child's favorite toys, stuffed animals, or blanket
- Pictures of child's favorite things and activities (sports, music, camping, doing puzzles, etc.)
- Pictures of ways the child shows God's love to others
- Pictures of ways the family shows love to each other
- Optional: Pictures of your parish priest and of you (the catechist) may be beneficial to the children.

If possible, provide these images as part of the children's Personal Picture Banks. If parents are unable to provide a Personal Picture Bank for their child, or if they are missing several of the necessary images, download the complete General Picture Bank from the "Alive in Christ Program Overview" section under the Program Resources area of **aliveinchrist.osv.com**. Print out the necessary Picture Bank cards, precut them, and provide them to that learner. **Note: The items on pages 6 through 10 of the General Picture Bank will need to be provided to all learners, including those who are using a Personal Picture Bank. These are more specialized Picture Bank cards that will be used with several specific activity adaptations throughout Grade 1.** Each learner's Picture Bank items should be kept in a plastic bag that is labeled with his or her name for easy identification, as this Picture Bank will be used on multiple occasions.

While using the Picture Banks, some individuals may not be able to point to what they want to answer. For these situations, develop a

simple method for having the child communicate “yes” and “no” as you show them pictures. Be sure to check with the learner’s parents about the most effective ways to communicate with their child.

It is also important to remember that some learners may already use something called PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) and have a binder or digital device with pictures that they use to communicate. Allow these learners to continue to use their usual form of communication as opposed to having them use a Picture Bank, but do encourage the child’s parents to make sure that the Personal and General Picture Bank items are already in, or that they are added to, their communication tool. This will enhance the child’s learning experience as you work with him or her throughout the year.

Adaptations Using Additional Handouts

For several activity adaptations, additional handouts are suggested. These handouts can be downloaded from the Preparation section of each chapter at **aliveinchrist.osv.com**. Instructions for the use of each additional handout can be found in the Adaptive Learning & Special Needs instructions under the same Preparation section for that chapter. These handouts are generally used to provide a visual element to an activity. Each specific handout will help children with different learning needs.

“Peer Mentor” Partners for Adaptations

There are many times throughout the adaption suggestions for Grade 1 where you will be asked to pair learners who have special needs with a partner. These partners will become “peer mentors” and will be instrumental, especially at this grade level, in helping to support learners with all types of special needs. These peer mentors may help

to give a voice to children who do not have expressive language skills, which includes many learners with **intellectual/ developmental delays (such as autism)** or learners with **language difficulties**. These peer mentors may also help learners find pictures in their picture banks or to express ideas regarding activity responses. Peer mentors may even be asked to be the hands of learners who have **writing or fine motor difficulties (such as dysgraphia)**, helping them to draw lines between correct matches or writing responses for the learners who do not have the ability to do so.

The essence of what a “peer mentor” partner needs to learn is how to be a good and helpful friend to those who have a special need of any sort. In doing so, the peer mentor will learn what the other child, who has a special need, likes or is good at. He or she will begin to understand the best way to prompt the learner, what the learner does and does not need help with, what might upset the learner, and what might make the learner feel better. Yet the most important thing that the peer mentor partner will learn is that as disciples of Jesus, we are all meant to help and support each other. It is important to emphasize that the peer mentor partners are not “taking care of” individuals with special needs. Rather, they are helping them to express themselves as they learn and grow as disciples of Jesus. Children are typically great at being effective peer mentor partners if given the opportunity and the support to do so.

As you begin to plan a lesson, it is a good idea to look ahead at the activities in the chapter and at the Adaptive Learning and Special Needs suggestions for each chapter to see where pairing children who have special learning needs with partners is recommended. Building “partnering” into your lesson plans helps to foster interaction between all of your learners, which is good for developing a sense of community. It also minimizes the amount of attention that is placed on those who need additional support more often than others. When

pairing partners with each other, consider each child's personality, gifts, and specific needs. For example, as you pair children together, make sure that at least one partner has verbal expressive language, reads, writes, or has the ability to perform any other task that might be required to complete an activity.

Catechist Support Suggestions

Creating puzzles, word puzzles, and picture banks for the Grade 1 adaptations is a great way to get other people in your parish involved in the faith formation of the parish's children. The catechist does not need to be the only person who provides support and assistance to learners. Teens involved in ministry work, senior parish members, retirees, and anyone else who is interested in helping are all great assets and are usually more than willing to contribute to this effort. As you prepare for the Grade 1 adaptations, these helpers can be instrumental in printing out PDF documents that you will need to use, cutting out Picture Bank cards, Word Puzzles pieces, other activity Puzzle pieces, and gathering any additional materials that you may need for the suggested adaptations.

GRADE ONE, OPENING LESSON: A New Year

The Opening Lesson of Grade 1 is the very first catechesis that most of the children in your group will receive. Therefore, we have provided Adaptive Learning and Special Needs adaptations for the Opening Lesson of this grade only. You will also see an Opening Lesson Additional Activity which will be beneficial for all of the children that you teach, but especially those with Adaptive Learning and Special Needs.

Share Your Faith (p. 3)

Print out, on card stock if possible, a copy of the “Jesus” Word Puzzle (which can be found in the Preparation Section for Chapter 16) for learners with **writing or fine motor difficulties (such as dysgraphia)**. Page 1 shows the letters in Jesus’ name, which you will need to cut out. Page 2 has the outline of each of the letters in Jesus’ name. Give page 2 to the learners. Invite them to take the letters that you have cut out and fit them into the correct letter outlines on the page that you have given them. (Optional: You can cut out the letter-squares on page 1 and have each learner arrange the letters to spell JESUS using page 3. Have the learners look at the word at the top of the page to guide them as they arrange the letters in the correct order on the line below.)

Connect Your Faith (p. 5)

Learners with **writing or fine motor difficulties (such as dysgraphia)** or learners who are **blind or visually impaired** will benefit from being able to share with a partner about his or her favorite Bible story.

Live Your Faith (p. 6)

Learners with **writing or fine motor difficulties (such as dysgraphia)** will benefit from the following options for varying degrees of difficulty.

- If learners can write, but have trouble doing so, have each learner trace his or her name on a separate piece of handwriting paper.
- An option for children who cannot write would be to have them work on a Word Puzzle that you will need to create. Print or write out each learner’s name in large letters twice. Cut out one set of letters for the children to use to try and match to the other set.

If the learners have personal pictures in their Picture Bank,

an alternative option would be to give each learner a sheet of construction paper that says “[Name] is a friend of Jesus” across the top. Have learners choose a picture of themselves from their Picture Bank. Then have them choose a picture of Jesus (either from their Picture Bank or provided by you). Invite them to glue both pictures onto their sheet of construction paper.

Opening Lesson Additional Activity

Consider having the children create “Getting to Know Me, Getting to Know You” collages. Send a letter home to parents asking each family to create a “Getting to Know Me, Getting to Know You” collage of pictures of their child and their family that their child will then present to the group. Explain that in the center of the collage there should be a picture of their child with his or her name above or below the picture. Then, all around this central picture, the parents and their child should add pictures of things that their child likes and activities that their child enjoys doing, especially with the entire family. Explain that this will be used for the children to get to know each other and that these collage presentations will help to form the basis for the relationships that their child will build with the group over the coming year. This letter to parents is also an excellent opportunity for you to introduce yourself as their child’s catechist and provide any contact information you wish to share with them.

You may choose to send this letter out early before sessions begin and ask that parents have their children bring their collages to the Opening Lesson session. Or you may wait and have the children share their collage before you begin one of the first few chapters. Either way, make sure that you give each child a chance to share his or her collage with the rest of the group as early on in the meeting process as possible. For any learners who may struggle to express themselves

verbally, meaning learners with **language difficulties** or learners with **intellectual/developmental delays (such as autism)**, select a peer to help introduce the learner based on the pictures in his or her collage. Be sure to display these collages and leave them up in your room throughout the year.