

Helping Slow Learners in Sparks

Children who attend Awana have a variety of learning abilities. Those who are academically strong generally do very well with the completion of their handbooks. However, many children, though very intelligent, struggle with memorization and handbook sections. Below are some strategies to assist leaders. The *Awana Ministry Guide* also has resources available for assistance such as *T&T for Me* (while this book is written for the T&T clubs, there is valuable information that is appropriate for any age).

One-on-one Time

For clubbers who have difficulty with handbooks, one-on-one time with a parent, listener or leader can be very helpful. During Sparkle Time it is extremely helpful to have an extra leader available to provide additional help to clubbers who need it. It's also helpful if a leader can schedule some time with the clubber to work one-on-one, perhaps before club, to provide assistance. This help should be provided only after checking with the clubber's parent and in the presence of other adults.

Lower the Bar

Some children get discouraged with trying to complete sections. For these children it can be helpful to break their memory verses into smaller pieces to help it look more manageable. You might want to adjust the number of helps for children who have special needs. Children need to feel some success to build their self-confidence.

Recognition and Reward

Sparkies who struggle with handbook sections need to be recognized and rewarded often. It's important once they have reached a milestone to praise the child. Some children especially like public praise while others prefer private praise. Special rewards can be established as incentives for these clubbers. However, seek permission from the parent or guardian of the child before establishing a special reward.

Biblical View

Our culture defines success in terms of abilities, talents, accomplishments and achievement. When we examine Scripture we see a different model of what success is, from God's perspective. It is important that children with special needs or learning disabilities understand that not only is Jesus here to help us, but Christ's power is perfected in our weakness. Our deficiencies are opportunities for God to show His power. See the following devotional for a brief teaching on this view.

Read: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Key Verse: 2 Corinthians 12:9b

BIBLE VIEW:

... Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses ... (NIV)

OVERVIEW:

Paul, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, had been tormented by a thorn in the flesh. We don't know what the ailment was, but we do see how Paul was able to cope. Even though he had asked the Lord three times to take the thorn away, Paul learned that Christ's power is made perfect in his own weakness.

LIFE VIEW:

1. We all have a pretty good sense of what success looks like, at least from the world's perspective. Paul knew success from the world's view and he learned a much different perspective from Christ. In our culture, weaknesses and disabilities are generally looked down upon. Paul challenges us to trust in God and correct our wrong thinking of success.
2. All disabilities can be difficult; however nonvisible ones have a unique challenge. Children who have a learning disability can feel shame when someone notices their challenge. Sometimes children will do whatever possible to keep the learning disability a secret.
3. What a wonderful perspective if we can help children see their disability as a gift. It's an opportunity for God to make His power perfect. I pray God will use my nonvisible weakness for His glory. Let's all help children to know that when they are weak He (Christ) is strong. Often God does more from brokenness than wholeness.

WORLDVIEW:

Our worldview needs to include: *For when I am weak, then I am strong (10b, NIV).*

This is a radical change from how the world views our shortcomings and disabilities. Let's instill a "Christ view" in all children!