

Transitioning Kindergartners to First Grade



Compiled by Diane Smith

First grade is so different from kindergarten! There are more tables and chairs. The home living center is missing! The building blocks are no more!

Let's consider ways that we might help the kindergartner transition more smoothly to the first grade classroom.

General

- Have a classroom set of Bibles in an easy-to-understand translation--NIV, Contemporary English Version, or New Living Translation.
- Allow children to move from one activity area to another when they are ready to move.
- Don't use only paper & pencil activities.
- Consider removing some of the tables & chairs from the classroom so that first graders might work on the floor; use clipboard (the brightly colored ones!) if children need a surface for writing or coloring.

Print

- Remember to print everything! Cursive writing is not for first graders.
- Avoid printing in all caps; use upper and lower case letters appropriately. Books aren't printed in all caps. At school children are taught to use upper case letters to begin names & sentences only.
- When writing on board or large chart paper, make letters large and bold, allowing ample spacing between words. The "rule" is spacing of 1 finger between words and 2 fingers between sentences written on paper. This should be doubled when writing on the board.
- Provide lined manuscript paper for the children to use; story paper is also good. They are not ready for regular notebook paper.
- Select activities that require little printing and/or reading.
- If you use large/"fat" pencils, be sure they have erasers.
- Use colors and/or shapes to help children match questions and answers, Bible verses and pictures, or parts of Bible verses. Children match the red circles, the yellow triangles, the blue paper, etc.
- Use pictures to help children to "read" the name of the activity, i.e., use a picture of a paintbrush if the activity involves painting or a puzzle if activity involves puzzles.

Music

- Use familiar songs from the preschool department, especially during the first quarter of the new year. Remember to manuscript on chart paper the new songs and help children to "follow" the words.
- Bring in tambourines, triangle, chromo harp, and other musical instruments for the children to play.
- Conduct group time (story time) on the floor and plan a variety of activities—times to move; times to sit; times to listen (3 or 4 minutes); times to talk or sing. Remember that the attention span is still 6 or 7 minutes for first graders.

Pictures

- Provide 12" X 18" for the children to use when drawing.
- Allow children to dramatize the Bible story.
- Allow children to "pose" the Bible picture.
- Use simple Bible costumes. Using 2 yards of fabric, fold fabric horizontally; cut hole for child's head. Face the opening so fabric will not ravel. Provide belt. For head covering, provide a 36" square piece of fabric. Use 36" long cording to hold head covering in place.
- Attach dialogue bubbles to Bible pictures; let children tell you the conversation to place in these bubbles.

Manipulatives

- Make a giant Memory Game, using duplicate Bible pictures. (You knew you made that picture file for some reason!)
- Cut old Bible Pictures into puzzles.
- Secure Bible pictures that relate to a specific story; allow children to sequence these pictures, telling you the “action” in the pictures. Place on each picture a different colored dot or shape. On a clothesline between two chairs, place clothespins of the same colors in proper sequence. The colored dots and clothespins help children to sequence successfully.
- Use duplicate Bible pictures to make an album puzzle. Locate a binder the size of the Bible pictures. Attach each picture to a different color paper laminate. Cut each picture into 3 pieces, horizontally. Place into binder. Children match the 3 pieces and tell you the Bible story.
- Put first parts of Bible verses (each on different color of paper) in one bag and the second parts in another bag. Children select from each bag: do the parts match?

Books

- Create a book corner, using large, overstuffed cushion, colorful beanbag chair without cartoon characters, child size beach chair, or tent like Abraham may have used. Can you secure a sheepskin to use in book area? Place there books that relate to the theme.

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