

“Kids with Learning Challenges”

Tara, Christie, and Katie

For some families, having a child with learning challenges can be the most intimidating part of choosing whether or not to homeschool. Tara and Christie each have children with varying learning challenges/needs and they will be sharing their journey of advocating for, and working with, their children so they have every advantage possible. Katie will provide resources and strategies she has used as a Special Education teacher.

Katie's Takeaways:

- God created these babies just as they are for you just as you are.
- Schedule everything and make sure they know that schedule.
- Visuals, visuals, visuals!

Tara's Takeaways:

• Find a supportive pediatrician and therapists!

You are your child's biggest advocate! Do not settle for what others say about him/her. If something feels off, keep fighting for them. Find a pediatrician who will support you both in your decision to homeschool and in your pursuit of therapy. Do not be afraid to look into private therapy, as children often don't get the time and attention they need for therapy when it's done through the school system (this can get expensive, which is why it's good to work closely with your doctor because they can code referrals to keep your costs down).

• Don't compare your child to other kids or developmental standards.

Don't be afraid to shelve the standards. Work at YOUR child's pace. If they are not reading by the end of kindergarten, THAT'S OK. Some kids take longer. Be consistent and work hard, but do not push your child to meet someone else's standards. When they are ready to learn a concept, it will happen.

• Know your child's learning style.

Are they visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or a combination? Discover your student's learning style and make sure your curriculum works with it and not against it.

• Teach "outside the box"

Jump on the trampoline, build with legos, get messy, use a wobble chair - if your student learns better with sensory integration, incorporate it! Children are not made to sit still 8 hours a day. Let them move and wiggle and adapt your teaching style to their needs.

• Know what makes your child focus/shut down/have a hard time concentrating

If you notice a pattern of behavior with your child, track what they are eating, drinking, how much sleep they get, how active they are, how much screen time they have, etc. These factors can affect typical children, but the effects are usually even more pronounced with special needs children.

Christie's Takeaways:

- Flexibility: Change curriculums if you need to. Let your child move if she needs to. Prepare multiple work areas. Be ready to scale back on a day. Notice what works and change what doesn't (start time, end time, subject order, food, excitement, etc.)

- Calm: Pray to start and pray often. Learn relaxation skills together to be able to utilize them when you need them. You dictate the mood - if you're escalated your child will be, too. Calm, uncluttered environment. Take purposeful breaks (learning walks, Bible reading, exercise, prayer, pattern blocks, etc.)
- Have goals: We have Academic, cognitive, and motor goals. We also have broader spiritual and social goals as we focus on shaping our kids to become respectful, grateful, kind, creative leaders who love the Lord.

Katie's Resources:

Resource: teacherspayteachers.com (click "free" for free options)

Visual Schedules

- Paint sticks are great for moving from place to place
- Lots of velcro
- Can have a completed line or envelope to put them in once completed
- Schedules for:
 - Tasks (circle time, lunch, etc.)
 - First, Then, Next
 - <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/First-Then-Boards-Autism-Special-Education-Visual-Schedule-2405328>
 - Full Day
 - <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Autism-Awareness-Visual-Schedule-Freebie-1189595> (move when done)
 - More of an example for school but could use some visuals for home schedule: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Visual-Schedule-Cards-4016439>
 - Weekly (events, outings)
 - <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/FreeDownload/Daily-and-Weekly-Visual-Schedule-3254709> (daily and weekly)
 - <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/FreeDownload/FREE-Weekly-Specials-Schedule-Visual-Schedules-5671208> (designed to use at school but could be edited to use for homelife activities and events)
 - Editable: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/FreeDownload/Weekly-CalendarHomework-Agenda-for-Students-5471174>
 - Rules
 - <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/FreeDownload/Visual-Schedules-for-School-Home-FREEBIE-2444399> (this has a great at home schedule with rules with visuals on the side)
 - <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/FreeDownload/Calm-Down-Warning-Chart-Board-maker-Visual-Aids-for-Autism-SPED-3026762> (Warning Board)
 - <https://app.luminpdf.com/viewer/5efd15d692537a0013a09f03> (these are again
 - Non-verbal communication

- Behavior/Emotions:
<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/FreeDownload/Visual-Schedules-Behavior-and-E-motion-2113153>
- "Visuals 2 Go" app: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/visuals2go/id417882424>
 - Sentence creator
 - Choice boards
 - Print visuals (*can use for other visuals)

Reinforcements for "work"

- Working For:
<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Positive-Reinforcement-Visual-Support-Behavior-Management-Autism-1938840>
- <https://app.luminpdf.com/viewer/5efd181492537a0013a09f73> (another "working for" with more visuals)
- First-Then: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/First-and-Then-Visual-Cards-3182906>

Tips/Ideas:

- School work buckets/baskets
 - Numbered or visual of what it is paired with visual schedule
- Visuals for lessons paired with words
- Timers (visual timers)
 - "Time Timer" app: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/visuals2go/id417882424>
- Social stories
 - Kids with autism or behavior disorders may sort pics with "good choices" or "sad choices."

Tara's Resources:

Curriculum recommendations

A Year of Playing Skillfully

(<https://www.thehomegrownpreschooler.com/store/a-year-of-playing-skillfully-printed>)

Sensory-based classical preschool curriculum. Supports neurological development through sensory interaction and learning.

The Homegrown Preschooler

(<https://www.thehomegrownpreschooler.com/store/the-homegrown-preschooler>)

Handbook that accompanies A Year of Playing Skillfully

Resources to encourage special needs moms:

- Simply Classical: A Beautiful Education for Any Child by Cheryl Swope
https://www.amazon.com/Simply-Classical-Beautiful-Education-Child/dp/1547701749/ref=sr_1_1?dclid=1&keywords=simply+classical&qid=1593720116&sr=8-1

- Different: The Story of an Outside-the-Box Kid and the Mom Who Loved Him by Sally Clarkson
https://www.amazon.com/Different-Story-Outside-Box-Loved/dp/149642011X/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=different+sally+clarkson&qid=1593720179&sr=8-1
- Teaching from Rest: A Homeschooler's Guide to Unshakable Peace by Sarah Mackenzie ****this is not specifically for specials needs families, but it's a great resource for any homeschooling parent*
https://www.amazon.com/Teaching-Rest-Homeschoolers-Guide-Unshakable/dp/1600512879/ref=sr_1_2?crid=2BSUWGVVYGOFO&dchild=1&keywords=teaching+from+rest&qid=1593720204&prefix=teaching+from%2Caps%2C167&sr=8-2

Christie's Resources:

Choose a few relaxation skills to practice together so you're familiar when you (both) may need them:

<https://gozen.com/50-calm-down-ideas-to-try-with-kids-of-all-ages/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2627541367531522/> Sensory Parenting Group

We've worked with 2 great Occupational Therapists. Let me know if you'd like a recommendation!

From an OT:

Handwriting Practice - Free packets and resources.

https://www.lwtears.com/programs/distance-learning/families/packets?pc=HWT_HM_GoogleAd

Yoga - Free Youtube classes <https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>

Visual Exercise and Games <http://eyecanlearn.com/perception/>

Games / Puzzles <https://www.highlightskids.com/games>

Hand Strengthening and other ideas from OT Mama

<https://www.ot-mom-learning-activities.com/hand-exercises-for-kids.html>

<https://www.learningresources.com/free-at-home-learning-essentials>

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Browse/Price-Range/Free#>

