

Guadalupe River Park Conservancy

438 Coleman Avenue
San Jose, CA 95110
408-298-7657
www.grpg.org
education@grpg.org

Leading Nature Programs for Those with Special Needs

General Strategies:

- Prepare
- Be patient
- Person first, disability second
- Emphasize all the senses
- Pick the right energy level for the group

Impaired Hearing

- Quick to complete projects; give them lots of tasks and plan on them finishing projects early
- May have a translator or a hearing device
- Look at the child when you're talking
- Talk, then point, then talk
- If they aren't looking at the interpreter (or your lips), they aren't hearing what you're saying
- Emphasize other senses

Sight Impaired

- Familiarize them with their surroundings
- Touch is key - use tactile replicas of natural objects
- Scan the facility or park ahead of time for potential hazards
- Use a microscope or large magnifier
- Use other senses

Mobility Impaired

- Potential fear of animals
- Poor motor skills
- Distressing medical devices
- Emphasize non-verbal communication
- Scan the area ahead of time for potential hazards

ADD/ADHD

- Poor impulse control, easily frustrated
- Affinity for nature, very creative
- Need to be patient with them
- Need to repeat
- Give them tasks to do
- Monitor your energy level - maintain a relaxed, calm demeanor

Down Syndrome

- Motor challenges and health problems
- Most are not severely retarded
- May have repetitive motions
- Learn through touching
- Need high energy from the teacher; opposite of ADD
- Fearless, excited to try new things

Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Sometimes accompanied with mental retardation, but not always
- Can be extremely or averagely intelligent
- Highly fearful
- Echolalia
- Need familiarity and consistence
- Resistant to change
- Don't recognize social cues
- Hypersensitive to sensations
 - Loud noises, smells, light, colors
 - No strong perfume
 - Consider supplying ear muffs
- Attachment to objects; know this ahead of time
- Meltdowns may occur; the caretakers may appear to be violent
- Stemming
- Literal, concrete thinkers; use simple language with no metaphors
- Make the space familiar- use photos, wear the same clothes
- Move through activities slowly, and repeat directions
- Remind them about upcoming transitions

Name of Activity or Program: _____

General Considerations:

How can you make this activity more tactile? Are there props you can use? How can you transform your language into a tangible experience?

How can you make this activity appeal to the other senses?

Taste	Sound	Sight	Smell

Do you think you'll need more staff to do this activity?

How will you advertise this program?

Impaired Hearing:

Does your staff know how to give interpretation to the deaf? How might you train them?

What is another activity you could do in case the students finish early?

List some common phrases and vocabulary words that you'd like to translate into sign language (ex. hello, goodbye, thank you, name of your organization, etc)

Sight Impaired:

Can you use a large magnifying lens or microscope to make this activity more accessible? How?

Mobility Impaired:

Sometimes persons with mobility impairments fear animals. If you have educational animals, how can you introduce them in a safe, approachable way to the students?

Is the space where the activity is conducted wheelchair accessible? Are there potential hazards to a wheelchair in the space?

Autism:

Is your staff familiar with some of the behaviors associated with Autism? How might you train them?

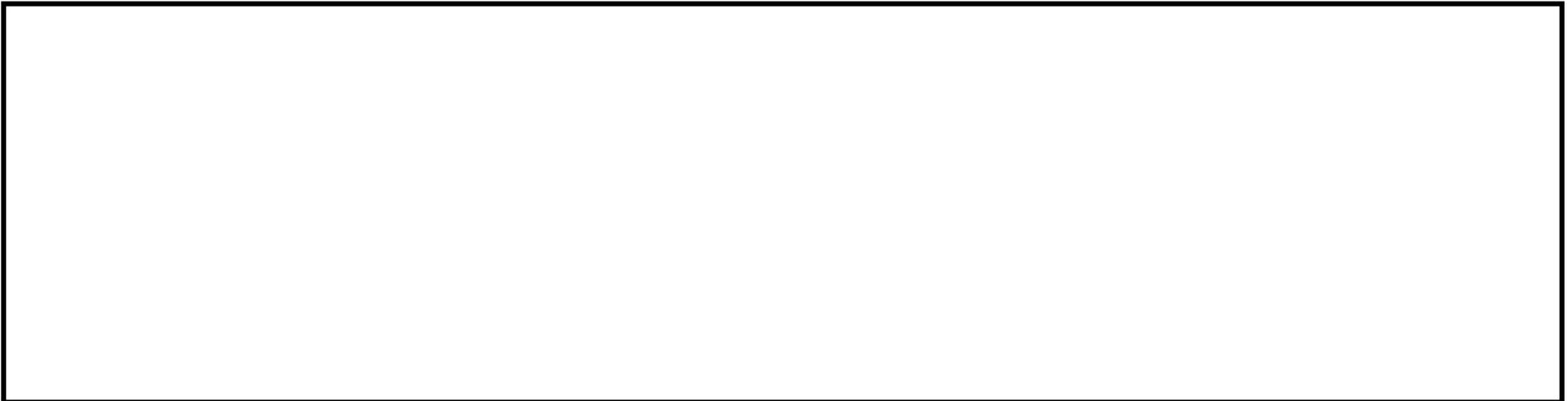
Many persons with Autism are highly sensitive to sensory experiences. Are there loud sounds, bright colors, bright lights, or strong smells in the space where you will be conducting the activity?

Consider advising your staff to wear the same color shirt, avoid using fragrant perfumes or colognes, and leave technological devices in a separate area as these can be distracting.

Is your location close to a busy intersection or road? (If so, you may need to have extra staff on hand to monitor runners.)

Do you need to change the language you use to describe the program?

Create a visual schedule for your program. Use this format: “First” (PICTURE) “Then” (PICTURE). “Then” (PICTURE).

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for creating a visual schedule. The box is currently blank.