



Making your Church Welcome Packets Kid Friendly

Many churches have welcome packets these days filled with some information about your church and the church doctrine, your programs and activities. These are great for your first time guests! We will talk more about some of the information that should be a part of the Welcome Packets in a future issue. But today I want to focus on the school age kids who come as guests.



I don't recall ever seeing any information particularly written to the kids! I have occasionally seen materials ABOUT kids programs, which is written to parents, but I cannot recall seeing information written TO kids!

Today, I have included a lesson plan for your Church Education staff to use to help create letters of welcome TO kids FROM kids!!!

Most churches that are growing have realized that when kids are happy at

church, and when kids feel welcomed, their parents are also much more likely to stay! If kids are unhappy, one of the most common reasons for the anxiety is that the child has to join into already organized classes and meet new classmates. The child may be worried that "they won't like me", or that "they don't want me to join them".

Simple preparations RIGHT NOW can help the new child to anticipate the new relationships and understand that the kids in his/her class are also looking forward to having a new friend join them! BEFORE the summer, ask students from each grade level to write a few sentences or a short paragraph of welcome on a letter (which is attached) that you will be able to add to your church welcome packets. A simple way to organize this would be to make some small welcome packets or a letter for every grade

of children in elementary school. When guests come to visit, each child could be given a letter which is written TO THEM by their “new friends.”

We have attached several different printable letters to this newsletter. Download your copies now and give them to the teachers at the next staff meeting. To make it easy, there is a lesson plan included for you to give to the teachers.

Not only does this activity help the guest, but it also creates the perfect opportunity for the current attenders to think about the needs of guests and to grow in their awareness and sensitivity for being a “First Friend” to the guests. Encourage the students to be “First Friends” to any new kids in their neighborhood.

This lesson and fun activity are sure to encourage students to think about others, and it gives them a critical role to play in welcoming new guests. Just think about new families who come to your membership class and say “Our children love it here! The rest of the kids made them feel SOO welcome!”



This letter accompanies a lesson plan created by the EXODUS Network for the Welcoming Community Newsletter. This newsletter is sent free of charge to any church, school or family that requests it at www.WelcomingCommunity.com. The EXODUS Network is a free REALTOR referral network that connects moving families with highly recommended REALTORS throughout the US and Canada. The REALTORS are Christian Community Specialists and each provides resources to support their local Christian community and the families moving in and out. Each agent sponsors a national Church database and a Christian School database in his/her local communities so that people are able to connect with the churches and Christian schools as they desire. The EXODUS Network REALTORS also provide a free web-based Move Organizer for anyone who uses their service. Contact the EXODUS Network at 1-800-395-8556 or by visiting www.ExodusNetwork.com to request the free services for yourself or a friend who may be moving. Make sure moving families are able to find your school by adding your school information to the ChristianSchoolSearch.com.



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Lesson Plan

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Objectives:

- 1) To ensure that guests who visit the church are able to receive a letter of written specifically TO them, by the rest of the kids in their age group. This will help the guest to anticipate meeting new friends and can reduce the level of anxiety before church education or programs begin.
- 2) To make all the children of the church more aware and more sensitive to the needs of guests.

Procedures:

- 1) Read the story in Mark 10:13-16
- 2) Ask for children to talk about times when they felt as though they were not “welcome” in a situation.
- 3) Probe for examples of times when someone acted like Jesus in the story and instead of confirming the feeling of “you don’t belong here”, stood up for you and said, “No, this person belongs here!”
- 4) Talk about how it feels to have someone stick up for you and “invite” you to be a part of something.
- 5) Comment about the fact that on one level the story of Jesus and the little children is about something much more significant than just “welcoming” someone into a room. In this story, Jesus is saying that children are a part of the KINGDOM OF GOD! Children matter to God! Children don’t need to be adults to accept Jesus as their Savior and to begin serving Him! Talk about some of the other meanings of this story. The story DOES have some surface meaning as well. Jesus is a great example for us.
- 6) Talk about kids that “will be coming” to visit church during the year. Ask the students to talk about how those kids might feel when they come.
- 7) Ask them to think about ways that they can help that person to feel welcome, in a similar way that Jesus did for the children in our story. Encourage them to remember to do these things as they present ideas that would be practical and possible.

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- 8) Suggest that you will now work on a letter that they can give to the guests their age who visit their church. Choose one or more of the “welcoming letters” for your class.
- 9) Ask the students to write a short paragraph or a couple of sentences that will help someone who may be coming as a guest. Explain that this is something we are doing “to be ready” for new guests. Divide the class into a group of 6 or 7 and have those members write their paragraph onto a letter. In this way your class can make a few different letters to be ready.
- 10) Even if no new children arrive for their class during the next year, the lesson is an important one to generally reinforce the concept of welcoming and hospitality!
- 11) Spend a bit of time talking about how it feels when someone invites you to go somewhere with them, or invites them to their home. Let the children share how good it makes them feel. Suggest that the same is true of visitors to church. If we would be willing to invite them to our homes, or invite them to share an ice cream cone or a bike ride with us during the week, it would make them much more excited about returning. Ask if there are any children who would like to approach their parents about being a “First Friend” to visitors that come. If some of the children volunteer, please send the attached note to parents along with them so that the parents will be able to consider the idea and respond.



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An invitation to be a “First Friend”!

Today, in class we talked about new kids who might visit our church. Your son or daughter wrote a paragraph of welcome to any guest who might visit the church and their class or activities.



We also talked about the need for those of us who are members or regular attenders at church to be willing to go out of our way to welcome new guests! We also asked for volunteers who might be willing to invite a visiting guest over to his/her house for an afternoon or evening. This visit would be intended to help the guest get to know a friend or two more quickly so that the guest is excited to come back. Your son or daughter said that he/she would be interested in asking for permission from you to host a guest if the opportunity arose.

If you decide to give your permission, you are only saying that you would be willing to host a guest IF the circumstances worked out for your family. You are NOT committing to hosting anyone at this point

With that understanding, if you would be willing to have us contact you and your son or daughter to ask if you would be able to invite a visitor from your child’s class to your home if the situation arises, please sign the sheet and return it to your child’s teacher ASAP.

Thanks in advance for your help!

Sure, if we are able, we would love to help welcome a new family to our church!

Name of parent(s)/guardian(s)

Daytime summer phone number(s) Home
Email

Cell

Other

If you have students in different grades and would be willing to host for each, please note that on this form as well. You only need to turn in one form per family.

Student(s) name(s)

Grade(s) in the fall



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**We will celebrate
when you join us!**

A free **Be the First Friend** Resource from WelcomingCommunity.com.

Moving or know someone who is? Connect with a pre-screened REA LTOR and Christian Community Specialist by calling 1-800-95-8556 or visit www.ExodusNetwork.com. It's a free service anywhere in the US and Canada.

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A group of diverse young people, including men and women of various ethnicities, are smiling and laughing together. The image is bright and warm, with a soft, golden light. The text "We can't wait til u join us! TTYL" is overlaid at the top in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

We can't wait til u join us! TTYL

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We are eager for you to join us!

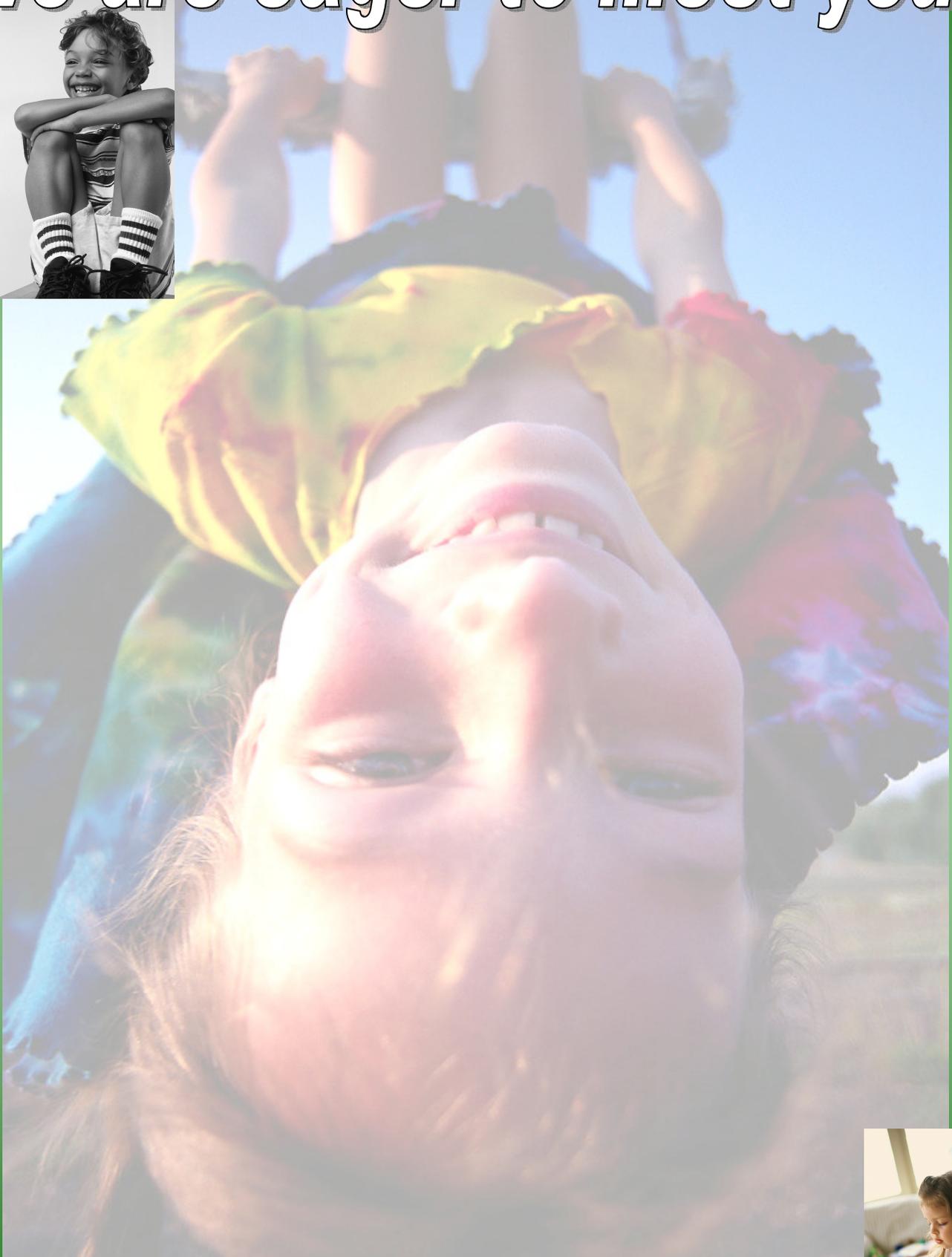
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We are eager to meet you!



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The best things
about our class
are....



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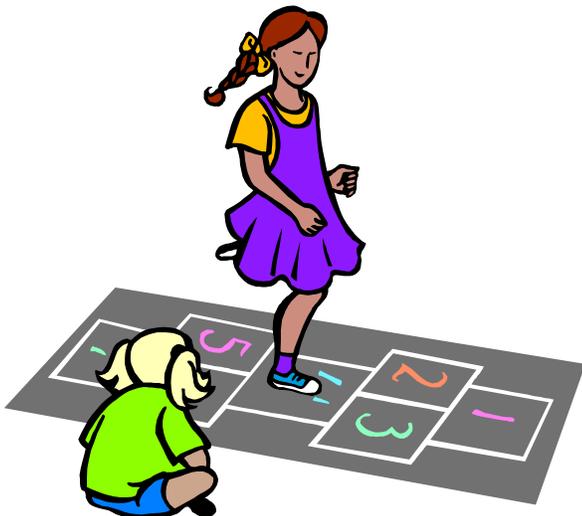
hope you join our team.

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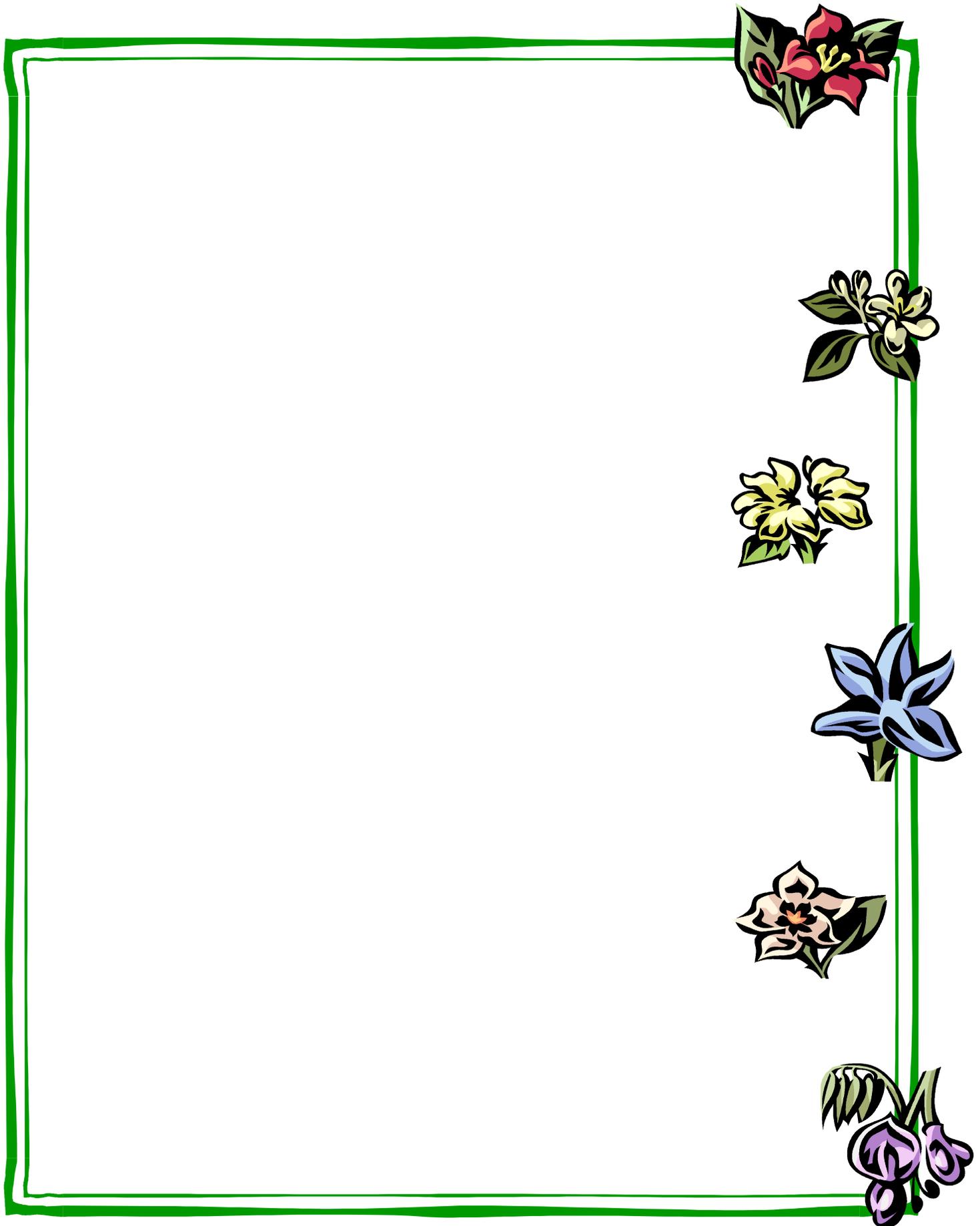
We can't wait to play with you!



A FREE Welcoming Community resource available from our website. www.welcomingcommunity.org.

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Our class just heard the good news!



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WE WANT YOU TO KNOW
WHOOOO YOUR NEW FRIENDS WILL BE!



WE ARE EAGER
TO MEET YOU!

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Our class is lots of fun!

We can't wait until you join us!



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Here's the report from our class!



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