

# Best Practices for Including Students with Visual Impairments

## Inclusion of Students with Visual Impairments in the Classroom for School Personnel

Students with visual impairments may have difficulty learning the same ways as other children. A specially trained teacher of the visually impaired (TVI) evaluates the student to determine how the visual impairment impacts their ability to learn, and what tools and accommodations will provide the student access to the curriculum. The TVI then provides specially designed instruction in the expanded core curriculum (ECC) to ensure the student can be more independent and successful.



A collaboration with Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired

### Teaching Tips:

- ▶ Collaborate with the teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI)
- ▶ Provide explicit hands-on instruction as 80-90% of learning occurs visually
- ▶ Present materials using concrete, real objects whenever possible
- ▶ Create and use materials that include the principles of Universal Design for Learning
- ▶ Ask the student if assistance is needed rather than assuming it is
- ▶ Work with the TVI to learn and teach the class how to use the human guide technique
- ▶ Encourage independence and self-determination as much as possible
- ▶ Provide specific realistic feedback
- ▶ Promote high expectations – work should be comparable to their sighted peers
- ▶ Assign grades that are earned – “gifted” grades does not help students learn
- ▶ Provide preferential seating – allow students to sit where they see best
- ▶ Allow the student to move around the classroom as necessary to view items
- ▶ Write with high-contrast markers on the white board that have not faded with age or use
- ▶ Verbalize and describe any information written on the board or demonstrated
- ▶ Encourage and expect the use of any low vision tools or technology the student has been provided
- ▶ Give oral instructions and use directional concepts: “to your left” or “on the wall at the front of the room to the right of the door”, instead of words like “over there” or “here”
- ▶ Avoiding words such as “see” or “look” is unnecessary because it is ok to use words that reference sight
- ▶ Use names when addressing students
- ▶ Notify the student if classroom furniture and/or layout is rearranged at any time
- ▶ Know the student’s IEP services and accommodations

Not all students see the same. Visual impairments impact how a person sees in a wide range of ways; from having difficulty seeing far away, to only seeing out of the periphery, to only being able to tell if the lights are on or off. There is never a one size fits all solution to accommodations for students with visual impairments.

Some students read print AND braille! Students may lose vision later in life, while others may experience visual fatigue throughout the day. Many students use and need a variety of ways to access print. Some students may also listen to text. It all depends on the student’s assessed needs and preferences.

# The Expanded Core Curriculum for Students With Visual Impairments

The Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) consists of nine skill areas known to be impacted by vision loss. TVIs assess student needs in these areas in order to identify priority goals and objectives. Instruction in these identified needs assists with student success in the Core Curriculum. TVIs are key IEP team members that provide direct standards-based instruction in the specialized areas below. This instruction is provided in a variety of settings, as well as in the classroom. The IEP team works together to ensure goals are met and students are included in all learning.



**Compensatory Skills** - vital competencies required to be functional in school including basic concept development, listening skills, organizational skills and specialized communication skills such as reading and writing braille or tactile graphics

**Career Education** - tools and knowledge needed to obtain and retain employment, in addition to increasing understanding of suitable careers



**Assistive Technology** - ability to use low- and high-tech devices to be successful at school, work or home

**Independent Living** - daily living skills needed to function as independently as possible, including personal care, household operations, eating techniques, time management and financial knowledge



**Social Skills** - learning how to behave and participate actively in social situations without the benefit of visual cues such as facial expressions or gestures

**Sensory Efficiency** - utilizing all senses, including functional vision, hearing, touch, taste, and smell in an efficient manner plus the use of optical aids or alternative communication devices when appropriate



**Self Determination** - understanding of their visual impairment to advocate for themselves based on individually identified accommodations and goals

**Orientation and Mobility** - knowing where one is in space, as well as, utilizing travel skills to move independently, effectively and safely within an environment using mobility devices such as a white cane



**Recreation and Leisure** - exploring hobbies and physical activities to learn about following rules, turn taking and decision making on how to spend free time



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