CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS WHO ARE: VISUALLY IMPAIRED

1. Every student with a visual impairment is unique. Visual functioning can change from day to day, hour to hour or minute to minute.
2. Individual learners with visual disabilities may present a wide range of cognitive and other disabilities (severe cognitive needs, deaf blindness, gifted and talented, physically challenged, etc.)
3. Each student may need learning materials in alternative media that may change over time.
4. Incidental learning (learning without specific instruction) is affected by lack of or limited day-to-day visual observation.
5. Learners may have difficulty traveling independently and safely without direct intervention.
6. Learners need to have visual information presented in multisensory modalities.
7. Learners may need alternative organizational skills to be directly taught.
8. Learners will have difficulty in physical environments that are not consistent and predictable.
9. Many learners cannot visually receive nonverbal communication and must be specifically taught how to express thoughts and feelings nonverbally.
10. Learners depend upon adaptive equipment and technology to facilitate learning in the general classroom and on the job.
11. Learners require specialized strategies in order to acquire independent living skills (cooking, marking appliances, etc.)
ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE: VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Students who are visually impaired need to learn:

1. Literacy skills
   - Skills in the use of all appropriate media for reading and writing in a variety of settings to include but not be limited to the following:
     • auditory
     • print
     • print enlargement
     • Braille/tactile
   - Skills for the use of technology associated with reading and writing media (keyboarding, electronic texts, closed circuit television, Braille access technology, screen readers, screen output devices, tape recorders, etc.)
   - Skills for using adapted and non-adapted tools -- rulers, maps, graphs, globes, calculators, abacuses, optical aids, corrective lenses, compasses, protractors, watches, signature guides, etc.

2. Orientation and mobility skills
   - Fine and gross motor development
   - Concept development (time, distance, interpretation of physical objects)
   - Orientation skills to new environments (home, school, community)
   - Pre-cane skills
   - Sighted guide technique (using and teaching untrained guides)
   - Knowledge of different modes of mobility (cane, dog guide, electronic travel aids, adapted aids, etc.)
   - Techniques for cane travel
   - Soliciting and refusing aid
   - Street crossings (urban and rural settings)
   - Cardinal directions
   - Planning and using routes
   - Knowledge/ familiarization with community
   - Using public transportation (buses, taxis, planes, and trains)
   - Sensory use

   understanding concepts not directly accessible when one has little or no vision
   eccentric viewing (positioning to see when central vision is unavailable)
   visual efficiency (or maximizing remaining vision)
   tactile exploration and skills
   identification and localization of sound listening skills
3. Self advocacy/social skills
• Taking responsibility for self in the learning environment
  • devising strategies for seeking help and assistance
  • explaining needs to others
  • acquiring adaptations and materials
  • adjusting light, seating, and location of materials
  • transferring self advocacy skills to different environments
  • understanding eye condition and its impacts

• Dealing with psychological issues associated with blindness
• Acquiring knowledge of and accessing agencies that can provide support
• Participating in social activities with peers with sight and peers with visual disabilities
• Acquiring knowledge and use of nonverbal communication skills
  • body language
  • facial expression
  • gestures
  • eye contact

• Finding solutions to problems, establishing a safe physical environment, and handling emergencies
  • Concepts of sexuality

4. Skills and knowledge related to employment and career options
• strategies for dealing with preconceived biases of employers regarding impact of visual loss
• exploring a variety of job experiences
• developing a realistic and accurate concept of self and abilities
• acquiring skills in technology to be competitive in the job market
• linking with adult services
• acquiring strategies for planning and setting goals after high school

5. Life management skills (strategies to include but not limited to acquiring the following skills with little or no vision)
• Eating independently in different settings
• Dressing
• Personal hygiene
• Recreation/leisure
• Telephone use
• Shopping
• familiarization
• money
• using a guide
• calling ahead
• Laundry
• Cooking
• Money, finances, checking, budgeting
• House cleaning
• Handling emergency situations
6. **Organizational skills** (particular to visual impairment/blindness)

- Generalizing organizational skills from one environment to another
- Labeling and marking
- Study skills

- note taking
- tape recording — organizing notebooks and other data sources — outlining research
- accessing computer bulletin boards

- Goal setting
- Time management

**CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE: VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

*To provide effective classroom practices for students who are visually impaired, educators need to:*

1. Provide adapted tools, texts, and materials.
2. Provide disability awareness for peers with sight.
3. Provide materials in appropriate media.
4. Provide environmental modifications.

- lighting
- positioning
- increasing/decreasing visual information

1. Encourage use of a variety of literacy options.
2. Adapt assignments and tests as needed.
3. Provide opportunities for pre-teaching skills.
4. Provide opportunities for direct instruction and practice of nonverbal communication skills.
5. Provide opportunities for students with visual disabilities to discuss the impact of their disabilities with other people with visual disabilities.
6. Provide opportunities to role-play social situations.
7. Provide audio descriptions of visual presentations.
8. Provide community referenced instruction.
9. Provide adaptations and opportunities to practice life management skills.
10. Provide opportunities to learn organizational systems for home, school and work.
11. Provide direct instruction in travel skills in the home, school and community.
12. Provide instruction in and opportunities for proactive self-advocacy skills.
ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES
FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE:
VISUALLY IMPAIRED

In assessing the learning of students who are visually impaired, educators need to:
1. Provide tests in appropriate media.
2. Provide alternative methods of assessment (oral response, format change, time change, etc.).
3. Explain unusual or difficult-to-access test format.
4. Use technology and adapted tools.
5. Create and assess attainment of IEP goals to specify learnings, in addition to state and local content guidelines.
6. Provide environmental changes for assessments.

SERVICE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE: VISUALLY IMPAIRED

For students who are visually impaired to have adequate opportunities to learn, schools need to:
1. Allow teacher for students with visual disabilities to plan or co-teach with general education teacher.
2. Provide one-on-one and small group instruction.
3. Offer consultation with general education teachers and other service providers.
4. Offer parent training in skills specific to students with visual disabilities.
5. Link with adult services.
6. Provide extended school day or school year.
7. Provide team meetings with service providers and parents.
8. Ensure specialized instruction by Orientation and Mobility Specialist and Teacher for Students with Visual Disabilities (Braille, cane travel, specific technology, etc.).
9. Provide use of paid or volunteer readers.
10. Provide use of audio descriptor service.