

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

LITERACY FACT SHEET Literacy for Learners with Visual Impairment

Role of Classroom Teacher and/or a School Psychologist in Providing
a Team Approach of Literacy Instruction

Completed by a CDE Workgroup on Literacy for Learners with Visual Impairments

**“Literacy is the ability to read and write, to access information,
and to communicate thoughts and ideas to others.” (p. 171)**

Holbrook, C. (1996). *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 90(3), 171-172.



Literacy is important for all learners. It is critical that literacy be addressed through a team approach. Assessment information from key developmental and academic domains is necessary to build a total picture of literacy needs for a student with visual impairment, including the student with additional disabilities.

This Fact Sheet addresses the primary areas specifically relating to concept development. These areas might be best addressed by the learner’s classroom teacher and/or a school psychologist, with the support and direction of a teacher certified in the area of visual impairment (TVI). Questions that will guide the assessment process may include:

Concept Development and Problem Solving

- What are the results of classroom or other literacy-related assessments regarding the learner’s ability to learn? Were the appropriate tests used to measure the learner’s conceptual status? Were appropriate test adaptations made (as necessary)?
- Is the learner’s concept development at an age and/or grade appropriate level? What kind of access (quality and quantity) does the learner have to the general-education curriculum? Are the child’s Individual Education Program goals reflective of standards and expanded benchmarks?
- Does the learner participate in life experiences that will enhance his or her concept development in areas related to literacy content and instruction? If not, what is the reason? If not, how can these experiences be built into the learner’s everyday instruction? Does the educational team understand the challenges of vision loss and incidental learning that provides foundational-conceptual learning?
- Is the learner at a level of symbolic representation? Do real objects, tangible symbols, braille or visual/print symbols represent real-life experiences (e.g., cup: drinking; coat: outside; book: library time; etc.)?

- Is the learner developing abstract concepts in an age appropriate manner? Is there evidence of progress over time with conceptual-thinking skills?
- Does the learner complete learning tasks independently in an age-appropriate manner?
- What is the status of the learner's receptive language? Does the learner appropriately respond to verbal requests?
- How does the learner think, problem solve, and learn within the environment?
- Is the learner developing the memory skills needed to support future reading and writing in an age-appropriate manner? Are activities in place to assist with memory development?

Affective and Social Emotional

- Does the learner have ample opportunities to interact with peers? Does the learner interact in an age-appropriate manner with peers? Can the learner participate in small groups appropriately for his or her age?
- Are there opportunities to spend time with adults who are blind/visually impaired?
- Can the learner communicate his or her feelings in an age appropriate manner? Is there a communication system in place, as needed, for the learner's personal expression?
- What are the activities that the learner chooses both indoors and outdoors? Are there literacy activities related to his or her personal interests?
- Does the learner choose play activities that require vision, listening, touching/manipulation, verbal communication or any combination of these? Is there a preference for activities that focus on a specific sensory modality(ies)? If so, is there an obvious learning pattern or preference of a single or combined modality?
- Does the learner have especially adverse feelings about some environmental conditions that the service providers should be aware of such as poor or intermittent lighting?
- Can the learner explain his or her visual impairment to others when asked about it (as age appropriate)?

Data Collection / Evidence of Student Change

- Is there evidence of data collection that guides the team's decisions about the learner's literacy program? Is there a body of evidence that informs the student's ongoing instruction in literacy activities?



For more information about Literacy Modality Plans for students with visual impairments, please contact your local teacher of students with visual impairments or Tanni Anthony, State Consultant on Visual Impairment, Colorado Department of Education, 201 East Colfax, Denver, Colorado 80203, phone - (303) 866-6681 or email: Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us. Fact Sheet Updated: 10/04