

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

LITERACY FACT SHEET

Literacy for Learners with Visual Impairment

Role of the Teacher Certified in the Area of Visual Impairment

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 covers the primary areas to be addressed by the teacher of students with visual impairments and supported by parents and other professionals.

Questions that will guide the assessment process may include:

Vision, Hearing, and General Health Status

- What are the results of the most current ophthalmological/optometric/ low vision evaluation? Is this evaluation(s) current? Are there prescribed lenses and/or low vision aids for the learner? Are they used on an appropriate basis?
- What are the results of the most recent audiology evaluation? If there is a history of ear infections and/or a sensorineural loss, has an audiological exam been done in the past year? Have any assistive listening devices been prescribed or recommended? If so, are they used in an appropriate manner? If a learner is deafblind, has a functional hearing assessment been completed by appropriate personnel?
- What medical conditions does the learner have? Do any require surgical treatment or other types of medical interventions? Does the learner take medication on a regular basis? If so, what is the name of the medication, what is it used for, and how often is it taken? Are there any side effects of the medication that effect the learner's day to day or long term health status? Are there any physical restrictions upon the student? If so, what are they?

Learning Style: Response and Motivation Related to Sensory Information

- What are the learner's sensory abilities and learning modes? Is there a discernible learning style or pattern? Does the child demonstrate a preferred sense and/or order of how senses are engaged? What are the results of a Functional Vision Assessment / Sensory Channels Form Assessment / Learning Media Assessment? Was parent input gathered to secure a better home / community perspective of the learner's sensory preferences?
- What are the learner's sensory motivators? What sensory activities calm or alert the learner? What sensory stimuli assist or distract the learner's attention span? Is the child adequately prepared for sensory-information experiences?

Primary and Secondary Literacy Mode(s)

- What tools and testing methods were used to complete a Learning Media Assessment to determine the learner's primary and secondary literacy modes?
- What were the results of the testing? Was there a difference between the current literacy mode(s) and the recommended literacy mode(s)?

Team Members in Developing a Literacy Modality Plan

- Who are the team members who play a key role in the learner's education?
- Was the learner and his or her parents an active part of the assessment team? Was their input incorporated into the assessment findings and program recommendations?
- Is there a documented need for a paraprofessional and/or an intervener to support and enhance the learner's literacy within the school environment?

Developmental and Educational Considerations of Literacy

- Is the learner's literacy status age appropriate with his or her peers?
- Are there time considerations for the learner to process and complete a literacy task? Are there efficiency constraints upon the learner's literacy skills across a variety of environments and over the course of a day?
- How does the learner view him/herself and his/her disability, literacy mode(s), future goals, and quest for independence?
- What is the primary language in the learner's home? What is the preferred language(s) for speaking, reading, and writing at school and at home?
- Are there working and meaningful augmentative or assistive communication systems in place for the learner? Does everyone on the learner's educational team understand the importance of these systems?
- What are the fine and gross motor considerations of the learner's literacy mode(s)?

Environmental Conditions and Tools to Support Literacy

- What is the preferred "working distance" of the learner?
- What optical and nonoptical environmental supports (e.g., lighting, contrast, tactual markers, etc.) need to be in place for the learner? What literacy tools are necessary for the learner to achieve optimal literacy? Does the learner and his or her educational team members know how to utilize these tools?

School to Adult Life Literacy Goals

- What activities and strategies are in place to prepare the learner to transition to each level of school and adult life?
- What are the long term goals for the student's literacy achievements and how are these goals supported the learner's literacy mode(s)?

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.
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