



{inclusion outreach}

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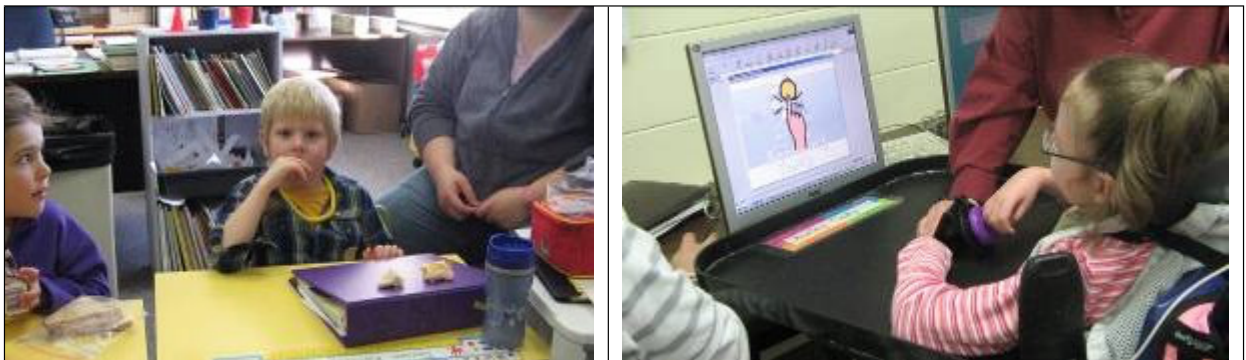
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Tools for the Teacher: Adapting the Classroom and Activities to Support Students with Visual Impairments

Below you will find some thoughtful suggestions, strategies and ideas to increase the accessibility of the class environment for your student with a visual impairment. **Your Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments will have specific suggestions tailored to your particular student's needs.**

Classroom set-up:

- Use daylight lighting when possible/avoid the use of overhead lighting when possible
- Reduce clutter on the walls and floors: this limits distractions and visual clutter
- Be mindful of glare from white boards (glare affects ability to see)
- Organize the class for ease of access (line the desks or place them in a semicircle)
- Have accessible storage spaces
- Use contrasting colours to identify and separate spaces in the classroom
- Do not change the classroom floor plan once the student is familiar with it
- Place materials in a consistent place within the class
- Use a desk slant board to bring visual information closer to the student's visual field
- Promote a quiet environment to support students' focus during discussions



Position of Student:

- Student should be positioned for their best visual field to see full range of the board (e.g. if best visual field is the right, student should sit to the left of the class)
- Student's desk placement should remain consistent throughout the year
- There should be an easy pathway to the student's seat
- Most (but not all!) students benefit from sitting fairly close to the board/teacher

Respect

Competence

Inclusion

Presence

Choice



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Tools for the Teacher:

- Universal Design: use as many modalities as possible when teaching (e.g. visual, auditory, tactile, etc.)
- Always use your voice to tell the student the class routine. Tell them when the lesson is beginning, call them by name when you require their attention, use your voice to emphasize important points, describe what is happening in the class and verbally explain your expectation of your student
- Keep visual information simple and support with verbal cues
- Use adaptive technology tools: projectors, document cams, SMARTboards, etc.
- Use colours/contrasts when presenting information: highlight important/new concepts
- Use simple, concrete and descriptive language (e.g. say 'to the right', vs. 'over there...')
- Adapt materials to meet your student's visual needs (e.g. use of tactile input, colour, voice output, tapes for auditory instructions, etc.)*with TSVI guidance
- Ensure that the student is aware of the concepts being spoken about (e.g. does the student know that a car moves or do they think that the ground is moving?)
- Encourage your student to choose a sound to attract their attention in a crowded environment (e.g. a clap)

Including the Student:

- Encourage group activities where the student actively participates
- Ensure your student has a specific job within projects. The job can match the student's abilities and may be as complex as working on data on the computer, to simply collecting materials with assistance
- The student with a visual impairment could present an 'oral' report or presentation
- If able, oral tests may be better suited
- Buddy the student with another student for some class activities and recess
- Encourage writing as a group. Journals, autobiographical books, how to books, travel books, favorite sports, hobbies etc.
- Have the student or group create books for younger students that could be made bigger, more colourful, etc.
- Some math projects could be completed in a group setting. Extra tactile input and a more structured setting supports attention to verbal instruction.
- For students who also have physical and cognitive difficulties, use voice activated or assistive technology for participation (e.g. give a test on a step by step; use CanAssist Spinner for math questions, etc.)

A Teacher of the Visually Impaired will be able to provide more direct and student-specific strategies. Collaborate with your student, Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments, and the Educational Assistant to identify additional strategies that will work for all (i.e., you, the class and your student).

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