



What do you do when...

The "What Do You Do When..." Tutorial Series is a self-paced collection of tutorials created by instructional leaders working in the fields of severe and sensory disabilities. The tutorials are designed to familiarize teachers with research-based and promising practices that facilitate the inclusion of students who are visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or who have severe disabilities into various educational environments. Included within the tutorials are resources and activities designed to support learning.

School Administrators and a Student with Vision Impairment:

- The second tutorial is called [As a School Administrator, What Do You Do When... A student With Vision Impairment Attends Your School For The First Time?](#) This tutorial is intended for use by school administrators, principals, assistant principals, and guidance counselors, who, for the first time, are enrolling a student with vision impairment in their schools.

Introduction

This information is intended for use by school administrators, principals, assistant principals, and guidance counselors, who, for the first time, are enrolling a student with vision impairment in their schools. Although vision impairment is considered a low-incidence disability -- only 0.5% of the total school population -- the majority of students with vision impairment are mainstreamed and educated in the regular classroom. This information is a concisely developed packet of relevant issues regarding the education of children who are blind or visually impaired. The first document is common questions and answers and the second is readings or resources that are relevant to the education of children who are blind or visually impaired.

The FAQs of Vision Impairment

1. What does visually impaired (VI) mean?

Students who are visually impaired have met your state's criteria for a special education disability category. Many states define visual impairment as an acuity of 20/70 or less with the best correction possible, OR a visual field of 20 degrees or less, OR a degenerative eye disease. The label visually impaired applies to students' functional abilities which range from appearing to see very well to appearing totally blind. In fact, students with vision impairments who have the same etiology and acuity may have vastly different functional vision abilities making them, as a group, more heterogeneous than homogeneous.

2. Where are students with vision impairments educated?

Today, most nearly 87% of students with vision impairments are educated in the regular classroom for all or a portion of their day. Approximately 13% are educated in schools for the blind or some other non-neighborhood school or setting. Resource rooms for students with vision impairments only may be an option used as well in areas that are more populous.

3. What about schools for the blind?

Students attending schools for the blind may have only vision impairment while others have additional disabilities. Some schools for the blind offer short courses for students to learn Braille and other disability specific skills as well as weekends or summer camps. Schools for the blind can be an excellent additional resource for school administrators, teachers, counselors, the students and the students' families.* (For the school for the blind in your state, see the resources and references document .) *Most states have a school for the blind. Several states combined their schools for the blind with the schools for the deaf.

4. Who teaches students who are visually impaired?

The regular classroom teacher is responsible for teaching students with vision impairment the same content that the other students in the classroom are expected to learn. However, itinerant teachers of the visually impaired (TVI)--usually traveling between schools or even school districts-- support that teacher. Together, they modify how academic and functional material is taught. Additionally, the TVI has specialized equipment which gives the student with vision impairment equal access to the information being provided to the rest of the class.

5. What else do Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) do?

Students without vision impairment tend to learn many skills and concepts incidentally by watching others. Students with vision impairment must learn these explicitly. TVIs teach these skills and concepts explicitly to students with vision impairment, so they can participate in the regular classroom without the TVI. These skills and concepts-- known as the Expanded Core

Curriculum--include using assistive technology, interacting with other students in a socially appropriate manner, and maximizing the vision they do have to the best of their abilities. (For an explanation of the Expanded Core Curriculum areas, please refer to the resources and references document and see Hatlen, P. (1996)).

6. Will the student use a white cane?

A teacher certified as an Orientation and Mobility Specialist assesses students with vision impairments to determine whether they need a white cane and will instruct them in its use. Additionally, the use of a cane may be indicated on the student's IEP. The administrator notifies all staff members regarding the need to allow the student to use his or her cane to travel anywhere within the school, on field trips, or other school-related activities.

7. How about Braille?

Students with visual impairment typically access classroom materials through a combination of Braille, print, and assistive technology devices. A student's need to read in Braille is a decision made on a student-by-student basis each year at the student's IEP meeting. When students read Braille, the TVI orders the Braille books and Brailles the daily worksheets. To facilitate this, regular classroom teachers must inform the TVI regarding what texts the students will need and give the TVI copies of the daily work sheets, both in a timely manner. Other professionals called Braillists Braille materials for students with vision impairments. The TVI assigned to the student in your school will inform the administrator as to how the student will get Braille materials.

8. Will the student need an aide in the classroom?

Again, this is a decision that is often made at an IEP meeting. Many school districts are moving away from assigning an aide to a particular student. However, recognizing that the classroom teacher teaching students with visual impairments may need more planning time or time to get materials ready for the TVI, some districts assign an aide to the classroom to assist with the teacher as necessary.

9. Where do I find a Teacher of the Visually Impaired?

There are several places to find a TVI. School districts in medium to large metropolitan areas typically employ TVIs. In that case, contact your district's special education department. If your school district does not employ TVIs, contact the equivalent of your state's intermediate school district or regional services provider. Another place is your state's school for the blind. (For a complete list, see the resources and references document.) If your state does not have a school for the blind, contact your State Department of Education.

Resources and References for School Administrators

The following articles concern the education of students who are visually impaired. These articles should be considered a must read.

1. Bina, M. J. (1999). Schools for the visually disabled: Dinosaurs or mainstays? *Educational Leadership*, 56(6), 78-81.

-Examines the value of schools for the blind in today's inclusion environment.

2. Hatlen, P. (1996). The core curriculum for blind and visually impaired students, including those with additional disabilities. *RE:view*, 28(1), 25-32.

-An excellent explanation of what teachers of the visually impaired teach and why it is necessary.

3. Klotz, M. B. (2004). Help kids welcome disabled students. *Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed for Quick Review*, 69(6), 41-42.

-Suggestions and strategies designed to help principals and teachers of inclusive schools to promote a positive and accepting learning environment.

4. Ryles, R. (1996). The Impact of Braille reading skills on employment, income, education, and reading habits. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 90(3), 219-226.

The following are links to other websites for additional information.

Position Paper on the role and the function of the teacher of the visually impaired from the Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Visual Impairments.

<http://www.cecdvi.org/positionpapers.html>

-A very detailed explanation of the various roles and functions a teacher of the visually impaired fulfills.

The Policy Guidance Statement Issued by the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services concerning the education of children who are visually impaired.

<http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/other/2000-2/060800a.html>

The American Foundation for the Blind A comprehensive website containing information for and about individuals who are visually impaired.

<http://www.afb.org>

The Pop Up IEP (found on this website) A resource to help teachers, parents, and administrators come to grips with the often tricky problems of creating and implementing an IEP.

<http://www.unco.edu/nccsd/bviIEP/index.shtml>

The Texas School for the Blind This site contains a lot of useful information for administrators, teachers, counselors, students, and teachers of the visually impaired.

<http://www.tsbvi.edu/>

Listings of schools for the blind

<http://www.sdsbvi.sdbor.edu/wwwresources/list.htm>

<http://www.cosb1.org/membership/memberlist.php>