Classroom Accommodations for People with a Visual Impairment

Lighting
- Lighting is always a primary, never a secondary, consideration
- Benefits of good lighting
  - More effective use of vision
  - Better concentration
  - Better posture and comfort
  - Less eye fatigue
  - Greater neatness, accuracy and achievement
- Good lighting is not always bright lighting
- Good lighting is not always more lighting
- Factors to consider when making decisions about lighting
  - Amount
  - Location
  - Ability to control
  - Glare reduction
- Different eye diseases require different levels of light
- Position the student according to their visual condition and lighting needs
- Avoid glare
  - Desk should not face the window
  - Teacher should not stand in front of a window
  - Position the television, closed captioned television or computer so it does not receive glare from the window or other lighting source
  - Cover glass doors on cabinets and metal surfaces
  - Remove glass from pictures
  - Pull shades or window covering
  - Use lampshades to control glare
  - Provide colored filters/acetates over light bulbs
  - Minimize glare from shiny surfaces, such as glossy paper, table tops, desk, floors, etc. by covering surfaces with dark, non-glossy cloth or construction paper.
  - Arrange desks and working areas so the light falls on the desk and working area without shadows
  - Position lamps directly above the task
  - Allow student to change their seat to obtain the best lighting
  - Plan for periodic adjustment of desk and working area to provide the best available light
  - Provide reading stands/slant board to maintain good posture and optimum use of lighting for near tasks
  - Replace light/lamp bulbs when dim or defective

Environmental
- Allow for flexible seating to accommodate for:
  - Lighting needs (time of day, sunny vs. cloudy day, amount of light coming in the window)
  - Being able to see (includes access to the chalkboard/white board)
- Clean chalkboards/whiteboards frequently

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Environment (continued)
- Provide extra storage and/or working space to accommodate supplies
  - Tape player/recorder
  - Brailler
  - Large print books
  - Reading stands/slant boards
  - Desktop lamps (gooseneck, adjustable arm, clip-on)
- Without other students present, allow the student with a visual impairment to explore the room in order to become familiar with the layout

Materials
- Provide reading stand/slant board to relieve neck and back fatigue
- Provide typoscope/straight edge ruler to isolate lines or sections in texts or on paper to maintain the student’s place in the text
- Allow and provide for a combination of devices and materials
  - Large print
  - Regular print
  - Magnifiers
  - Monocular/binocular telescopes
  - Closed captioned television
  - Reading with print close to eyes
  - Provide Appropriate writing material
    - Bold lined paper
    - Raised line paper
    - Black felt tip pens
    - Non-glossy paper

Techniques
- Know the functional visual needs of each student
- Alternate the student’s day between near tasks and less demanding tasks
- Verbalize all writing on the board as well as other information (the student may miss seeing a smile of encouragement)
- Minimize coping
- Make all writing on the board large and clear and place in the line of vision of the student
- Be aware that vision can fluctuate from minute to minute, hour to hour and day to day based upon a variety of factors, including:
  - Environmental conditions
  - Lighting
  - Visual condition or disease
  - Fatigue
  - Amount of contrast
  - Medications
- Provide rest periods
- Minimize clutter on pictures and materials
- Provide list of assignments in advance
- Provide copies of overheads in advance
- Be aware of benefits of color and contrast in materials
- Use concrete rather than abstract objects as much as possible
- Allow students to tacitly handle materials being shown or demonstrated
- Allow extra time to complete assignments

Some of the above information is from the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.