

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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A University Center for Excellence in Developmental
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Deaf-Blind Program

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Environment (continued)

- Provide extra storage and/or working space to accommodate supplies
 - Tape player/recorder
 - Braille
 - 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.