

The Role of Paraprofessionals for Students with Visual Impairments

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Friday, April 13, 2018
Session 406 - 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.

California Transcribers and Educators of the Blind and Visually Impaired

Independence:
The main goal is to provide support to help students learn how to do things for themselves, not to do the work for the student.

Time and Speed

The speed of acquisition of skills for a student with visual impairments will initially be slower.

So what gives?

Differences in learning

Incidental Learning

- About 90% of what sighted children learn is acquired by visual experiences.
- Vision helps a child take in a lot of information at one time and get the whole picture.
- Paraprofessionals are an important link to what is going on around the visually impaired child throughout the day during many activities.
- Visually impaired children miss learning about this incidental information unless it is directly taught to them.
 - Students should be encouraged to look at items and materials as a whole prior to inspecting individual elements. (such as toys and tactile graphics)
 - *Whole to part vs. Part to whole*

Expanded Core Curriculum

Orientation and Mobility

Social Interaction Skills

Independent Living Skills

Recreation and Leisure Skills

Compensatory
or functional
academic skills

Career Education

Use of Assistive Technology

Sensory Efficiency Skills

Self-determination

Staff behaviors influence student outcomes

Standard Classroom Environment

One-on-One Assistance

I am helping the student learn to do this; I am not doing it for them.

Under direction of credentialed staff:

- Supporting behavior plans
- Supporting mobility
- Sensory integration and vision stimulus
- Access to common core curriculum

Hand under Hand

“Even though we may be tempted to put our hands on top of the child’s hands in order to guide them, we need to remember that the more freedom we give her hands, the more she will be encouraged to exercise that freedom.”

The Role of Task Analysis

To support a student follow a known set of steps to produce a behavior or complete a task independently.

Under direction of credentialed staff:

- Backwards chaining
- Helping with personal care

Consistency across locations and staff:

- Positive reinforcement
- Everyone in the classroom can follow the same steps and support the student the same way.

Teaching Organization

- Knowing where things are in your environment and being able to retrieve them.

Strategies for the Student with Visual Impairments

- Start early with these skills, as organization is the key to independent living
- Students with visual impairments may not understand how the world is organized unless it is modeled or presented directly to them.
- Teach the child to take an item from a specific place and return it to the same place, such as a toy box; do the same for school supplies.

Foundations of Education Chapter 16, Volume 2 - [available at AFB.org](#)

ECC Essentials Chapter 8, Page 286 - [available at AFB.org](#)

19 Ways to Step Back

It often feels right to give help to students with visual impairments, but this may not be in their best interest. Use this list to help yourself to step back.

Standard Classroom Environment

Facilitate Group Interaction

Facilitating social inclusion is not the same as participating in it.

Para's may:

- Need to support and facilitate social skills and interaction with other students.
- Gain knowledge of your students preferences and mode of learning
- Understand and direct cooperative learning models

Supporting orientation and mobility skills

Human Guide

Knowing how to do it appropriately with your students and practice it so that it can be reinforced

It can be appropriate to narrate what's in the environment to help orient the student

The Para may identify appropriate students to help guide

Facilitating Independence

Prompting best practices

Safety checking

Positively reinforce appropriate technique and behavior

Alternative Reading Support

Access to Printed Materials

- Large Print and Braille
- Recordings and Read Aloud

Guiding Students to

- Independence in Technology
- Self-Advocacy with Teachers and Peers

Education Individualized Decisions

- When to complete or abandon an assignment
- When to forgo what's next

Forward Thinking

Forward thinking para's involve themselves in the planning and execution of lessons where they identify learning moments and initiate communication with educational team members.

A para is not only aiding in what was specifically asked but putting their own knowledge of incidental learning to work in how they explain the lesson and environment.

California School for the Blind



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