



## VISION RESOURCE TEACHER

The primary purpose of the Vision Resource Teacher is to provide services necessary for visually impaired students to function more effectively within the school system. The requirements of each student will differ with the degree of visual impairment, age and the presence of additional handicapping factors. The Vision Resource Teacher, in consultation with the classroom teacher, develops programs to meet the specific needs of visually impaired students.

The Teacher for Students with Visual Impairment:

- provides remediation in all academic areas;
- teaches specialized skills including: Braille, the use of visual aids and visual efficiency training;
- provides orientation and mobility within the school;
- adapts teacher-prepared materials, including brailled transcription and enlarging of print, maps and diagrams;
- teaches compensatory skills such as typing, social interaction and life skills;
- consults with teachers and parents; and
- evaluates visual functioning.

### Students with Visual Impairment

#### Definition

Visual impairment is a generic term which covers a range of difficulties with vision and includes the following categories: blind, legally blind, partially sighted, low vision and cortically visually impaired.

For educational purposes, a student with visual impairment is one whose visual acuity is not sufficient for the student to participate in everyday activities with ease. The impairment interferes with optimal learning and achievement and can result in a substantial educational disadvantage, unless adaptations are made in the methods of presenting learning opportunities, the nature of the materials used and/or the learning environment. It is not intended to include students described as having visual perceptual difficulties unless they also have a vision loss as described below.

To be eligible for supplemental funding as a visually impaired student, the following three conditions must be met:

- in the opinion of an ophthalmologist, optometrist, orthoptist or the Visually Impaired Program at British Columbia's Children's Hospital, the student's functioning may be described by one of the following:
  - a visual acuity of 6/21 (20/70) or less in the better eye after correction;
  - a visual field of 20 degrees or less;
  - any progressive eye disease with a prognosis of becoming one of the above in the next few years; or
  - a visual problem or related visual stamina that is not correctable and that results in the

student functioning as if his or her visual acuity is limited to 6/21 (20/70) or less;  
and

- a current IEP must be in place;

and

- the student must be receiving additional special education services that are directly related to the student's visual impairment on a regular and frequent basis from a qualified teacher of the visually impaired. The special education service(s) must be in addition to any services provided under formula funding based on total student enrolment (e.g. learning assistance, counselling). Reduction in class size is not by itself a sufficient service to meet the definition.

### **Identification and Assessment**

School districts should co-operate with the Ministry of Health personnel to ensure all students participate in a vision screening program for the identification and prevention of visual impairments.

Schools should also request a vision and hearing screening whenever they suspect a student is experiencing difficulties or is having trouble learning. These programs should be conducted by local health personnel in accordance with the inter-ministerial protocol, "Generalized School Health Services".

The school district should develop and implement referral procedures to ensure that every visually impaired student is identified and receives an appropriate educational program.

In order to plan the educational program the teacher of the visually impaired should conduct a functional vision assessment to identify the educational implications of the student's vision loss. In the case of students with a severe visual impairment, a qualified orientation and mobility instructor should also assess the students' skills in orientation and mobility.

### **Planning and Implementation**

A component essential to the establishment of an effective system of delivery of services to students with visual impairment is the availability of qualified, experienced teachers who have regular classroom experience and in addition are competent to adapt materials, teach Braille, use visual aids and technological devices and plan, develop, deliver and monitor all aspects of schooling affected by visual impairment.

With appropriate support services, many students can follow the curriculum with adaptation of learning resources or instructional methods. When necessary, however, the curriculum should be

modified to reflect individual needs. The student's educational requirements and any special measures that are to be taken in order to help meet those requirements should be documented in a formal Individual Education Plan.

When an IEP is developed, the following needs should be considered:

- orientation and mobility skills;
- visual skills;
- specialized skills in reading (e.g. Braille, taped books, enhance print, CCTV);
- specialized skills in mathematics (e.g. abacus, Nemeth Code);
- access to technology (e.g. Braille 'n Speak, tape recorders, computers);
- daily living skills;
- social skills;
- vocational planning and skill development;
- study skills and note-taking strategies; and
- concept development.

Orientation and mobility (O&M) is an essential component of the curriculum for students with severe visual impairments. It provides students with the skills necessary to know where they are in the school or community, where they want to go and how to get there in a safe and efficient manner with as much independence as possible. Orientation and mobility training should not be restricted to the school environment but should include other environments in which the student is required to function at different times of the day.

At the secondary level, school districts may develop and approve orientation and mobility programs or Braille programs for visually impaired students as locally developed or independent study courses for credit toward graduation.

Most students with visual impairment require specialized equipment (e.g. Braille, closed-circuit televisions, cassette recorders, optical aids) and adapted learning resources (e.g. Braille texts, enlarged print books, tapes). These tend to be very bulky. Schools should ensure there is adequate, accessible storage available to the student.

A working or instructional area for instruction in specific skill development by the itinerant or resource teacher should also be provided. This instructional area should be conducive to effective instruction (i.e. in compliance with health and safety codes, quiet, adequately lit, ventilated and free from distractions).

### **Evaluation and Reporting**

The student's IEP should outline the specific strategies which will be used to evaluate the student's progress. Parents should receive reports on the student's progress for all aspects of the IEP as part of the school's usual reporting process.

Due to factors such as visual fatigue, slow reading and writing speed and the visual components of evaluation tools such as video or maps the student may require adaptations to the usual classroom testing situation. Such adaptations could involve additional time, the use of a reader or scribe, the use of specialized equipment, reduction in the volume of work to be completed while retaining the same learning outcomes, the provision of a description of the visual components, such as a video and the use of an alternate setting for completing the work. These adaptations should be documented in the student's IEP and monitored for their appropriateness and effectiveness.

For students writing provincial examinations, Braille, large print, computer disk and audio tape copies of the examinations can be provided if applied for well in advance.

## **Personnel**

### **Vision Resource Teacher**

Where supplemental funding is requested by districts for students with visual impairments, teachers must have appropriate qualifications. The ministry defines a qualified teacher of the visually impaired as one with:

- a valid B.C. Teaching Certificate, and
- a Master's degree or diploma in the education of the visually impaired.

Where a district is unable to employ a teacher of the visually impaired, this requirement may be met by providing regular services through sharing arrangements with other districts or through a fee-for-service arrangement with qualified specialist teachers of the visually impaired.

### **Orientation and mobility instructor**

To ensure that students have access to appropriate orientation and mobility services, school districts should obtain services from qualified orientation and mobility instructors. The ministry defines a qualified orientation and mobility instructor as one who:

- meets standards established by the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER); or
- has a Master's degree in orientation and mobility; or
- has completed post-graduate studies in orientation and mobility which include at least 300 hours of supervised practice in orientation and mobility working with individuals with a variety of visual impairments.

They should have a solid foundation and expertise in the areas of education of students with visual impairment and child growth and development. They should also demonstrate skills in human relations and communication.

Many teachers of the visually impaired have taken additional training and are also qualified as orientation and mobility instructors. In other cases, school districts may find it necessary to contract for specialized orientation and mobility instructors to provide this training.

### **Education Assistants**

If the support of an education assistant is warranted, the teacher of the visually impaired should consult with the classroom teacher to assist him or her in developing, directing and monitoring the assistant's activities. Education assistants should have sufficient training and understanding of visual impairments for the duties they are assigned and to be able to demonstrate an understanding of the social, emotional and educational implications of vision loss.

Education assistants working with Braille-using students should either have, or be working in a timely manner toward completion of, a Braille transcribing course.

### **Braillists**

District enrolling Braille-using students will need to obtain Braille transcription services for tests, examinations and teacher-made materials. These transcription services can be provided by a staff Brailist or they can be contracted to a Brailist or the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB).

If the district does not have a qualified Brailist it may apply to have personnel trained through the Braille correspondence course.

### **Resources**

#### **Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired - SET-BC**

School districts may borrow learning resources, reference materials and equipment for the use of students with visual impairments from the Provincial Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired (PRCVI) and Special Education Technology-British Columbia (SET-BC).

#### **Specialized equipment grants**

Targeted funds are provided on an annual basis for students who are visually impaired to assist school boards in providing the specialized equipment required by these students.

#### **Protocol to support pre-school children**

A protocol has been established in recognition of the unique needs of young children who are visually impaired and who require the specialized skills of teachers of the visually impaired. This protocol allows for boards to contract the services of teachers of the visually impaired to local agencies, preschools and parents.

January 24, 1994

S.D. NO. 2 (CRANBROOK)

POSITION: TEACHER OF THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

SCOPE AND PURPOSE:

The primary purpose of the teacher of the visually impaired is to provide appropriate support services to best meet the individual needs of the students identified by the school based team.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

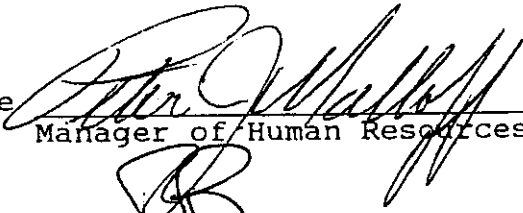
1. To determine the individual needs of the visually impaired students by:
  - a) observation
  - b) informal assessment
  - c) formal assessment
  - d) consultation with the classroom teacher
  - e) consultation with parents
2. To work with the school based team to develop an Individual Educational Program.
3. To provide appropriate levels of instruction for students:
  - a) giving extra instruction in reading and printing
  - b) giving additional explanations
  - c) giving instruction in specialized subjects such as braille, pre-mobility training and listening skills
4. To assist teachers and students to accept, accommodate and understand the visually impaired student.
5. To act as a resource person for accessing specialized materials for the visually impaired student.

6. To liaise with school personnel, parents and other agencies directly involved with the visually impaired student.
7. To provide inservice for students, teachers, child care workers and parents on issues related to the visually impaired child.
8. To perform other job related duties as assigned by the Director of Instruction: Student Services.

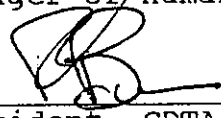
**QUALIFICATIONS:**

1. Masters Degree or diploma in the field of Visually Impaired.
2. Brailleing
3. Knowledge of elementary and secondary curricula
4. Must be eligible for membership in the C.D.T.A.
5. Must be eligible for membership in the B.C. College of Teachers

Board Representative

  
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Manager of Human Resources & Operations

CDTA Representative

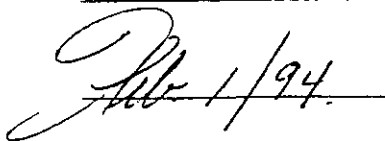
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
President, CDTA

District Supervisor

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Director of Instruction: Student Services

Employee

Date

  
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Feb 1/94