

# COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## LITERACY FACT SHEET

### Literacy for Learners with Visual Impairment

Role of Speech Language Pathologist and/or  
a Teacher Certified in the Area of Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Completed by a CDE Workgroup on Literacy for Learners with Visual Impairments

**“Literacy is the ability to read and write, to access information,  
and to communicate thoughts and ideas to others.” (p. 171)**

Holbrook, C. (1996). *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 90(3), 171-172.

Literacy is important for all learners. It is critical that literacy be addressed within a team approach. Assessment information from key developmental and academic domains is necessary to build a total picture of literacy needs for a student with visual impairment, including the student with additional disabilities. Assessment information from key developmental and academic domains is necessary to build a total picture of literacy needs.

This Fact Sheet covers the primary areas that can be addressed by the classroom teacher and/or a district reading specialist. Some of the information will be provided in conjunction with the teacher of students with visual impairments.

#### **Listening and Receptive Language**

- Does the learner have normal hearing? If not, is there a need for assistive listening devices such as hearing aids? If such a device is prescribed, is it used appropriately?
- What are the results of the most recent audiology evaluation? If there is a history of ear infections and/or a sensorineural loss, has an audiological exam been done in the past year?
- Does the child use auditory information to support the development of receptive language?
- What is the status of listening as an alternate or compensatory skill?
- What is the learner’s ability to listen to classroom and community activities?
- What is the learner’s ability to discriminate figure-ground auditory information? Can the learner identify subtler innuendos of speech and tones (as age appropriate)?
- What is the learner’s ability to follow simple and/or complex directions?
- What is the learner’s ability to demonstrate comprehension to information presented auditorially?
- Does the learner enjoy listening to music, books on tape, voices, and environmental sounds?

- If the learner uses an object or other tactile system, does he or she understand such symbols as meaningful?

### **Expressive Communication**

- Can the learner demonstrate turn taking?
- Is the learner's communication system available across environments?
- Does the learner have strategies for topic setting?
- What are all of the different ways the learner communicates? Examples might include object or tangible symbol systems, body movement, body gesture, eye gaze, verbalization/sounds verbal language, facial expression. sign language, written expression, etc.
- What are the functions of the child's communication?
  - greeting
  - obtaining information
  - commenting
  - requesting
  - seeking attention
  - protesting
- How can symbolic and nonsymbolic levels of understanding be addressed to further literacy?
- Can the learner appropriately answer questions?
- Is the learner's communication generally meaningful?
- Is the learner's language development age and/or grade appropriate?

### **Primary and/or Secondary Language**

- What is the primary language spoken in the learner's home?
- What is the learner's preferred language for speaking at home and/or school?
- What is the learner's instructional language for reading and writing?
- Is the learner involved in, or would s/he benefit from bilingual or ELL (English Language Learners) or other programs for second language learners? Are appropriate experts in ELL involved in the learner's literacy assessment and programming?

### **Need for Assistive Technology**

- Are there language or communication disorders that require an assistive technology assessment (e.g., SWAAC evaluation)?
- Is there a need for low and/or high technology communication and literacy supports? If so, what are they?

### **Environmental Influences**

- How do environments and circumstances influence communication and literacy modes?

*For more information about Learning Media Plans for students with visual impairments, please contact your local teacher of students with visual impairments or Tanni Anthony, State Consultant on Visual Impairment, Colorado Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services Unit, 1560 Broadway, Suite 1175, Denver, Colorado 80202, phone - (303) 866-6681 or email: [Anthony\\_t@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us).  
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