

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

LITERACY FACT SHEET Literacy for Learners with Visual Impairment

Role of the Physical Therapist

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. For the individual with visual impairment, especially those students with additional disabilities, it is critical that literacy be addressed through a developmental domains and the learner’s academic performance is necessary to build a total picture of literacy needs.

This Fact Sheet addresses the primary areas specifically relating to physical developmental and positioning needs. These areas might be best addressed by the learner’s physical therapist in conjunction with the teacher certified in the area of visual impairment.

Motor and Physical Health Status

- What are the learner’s current medications and their potential secondary effects on alertness, movement, balance, and physical stamina?
- Does the learner have any health problems that may interfere with his or her learning and communication? Are there any physical restrictions upon the learner’s activities?

Learning Style: Response and Motivation Related to Sensory Information

- What is the learner’s level of arousal/alertness and how are these states related to the environment and the activity level of the learner?
- What is the motivation for movement? How and to what does the learner respond?
- Does the child demonstrate any sensitivity to tactile information?

- What are the issues affecting the learner’s literacy such as physical stamina, range of motion, volitional movement, and positioning?

Positioning

- What kind of positioning needs are important for learning, communicating, and literacy activities?
- What equipment, if any, is needed to assist with proper positioning?

General Gross Motor and Movement Skills

- Does the learner demonstrate age-appropriate gross motor skills?
- Does the learner have motor limitations due to abnormal-postural tone?
- Does the learner have motor limitations due to existing reflexes and involuntary movement?
- What are the options for the learner to move freely within his or her environment?
- Does the learner have an independent means of mobility or independent travel?
- What is the learner’s repertoire of movement of his or her head and body? Are they in a fixed pattern? Does the head position improve if hands are in midline?
- Does the learner have any restrictions on volitional movement? Where is the best location for physical access to objects, switches, literacy materials, etc?
- Does the learner use his or her body for purposeful communication?
- Does physical fatigue interfere with the learning and literacy tasks? How so?

Special Programming Concerning Sensory and Motor Skills

- Is the learner currently receiving physical therapy in school and/or within the private sector?

Data Collection / Evidence of Student Change

- Is there evidence of data collection that guides the team's decisions about the learner's literacy program? Is there a body of evidence that informs the student's ongoing instruction in literacy activities?



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.

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