

Roles and Responsibilities of the Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments

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Introduction

Students with visual impairments have the same curriculum needs as all children, but their visual impairment limits access to the curriculum presented in a typical way, and they must be taught the necessary skills to access information.

Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TVIs) are special educators trained and certified to provide direct or collaborative instruction, accommodations, and modifications that provide access to the general curriculum for those children.

TVIs serve children from birth to 22 years old through different programs based on the age of children.

Settings

TVIs can be itinerant teachers, working for a local or state agency, or for a school district. They can also work in specialized schools.

Itinerant teachers go from school to school, or from home to home for infants in Early Intervention programs.

Programs

There are three major programs/transition phases for children with visual impairments.

Early Intervention Programs for infants from birth to 3 years old.

Preschool Programs for children from 3 to 5 years old.

School-age Programs for students from 6 to 22 years old.

Roles

TVIs teach alternative skills to facilitate access to the general curriculum. They also teach the expanded core curriculum (ECC).

They also assist in transition of children with visual impairments and their parents from programs by working with other team members.

The roles of TVIs can range from teacher-consultant to classroom teacher, to specialized skills instructor.

In Early Intervention, TVIs provide guidance, counselling and coaching to the parents and children.

Responsibilities

TVIs participate in the multidisciplinary team that provide appropriate services to students who are blind or visually impaired.

They participate in the team that develop Individualized Family Services Plans (IFSPs) and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

They conduct and interpret functional vision assessments to evaluate disability-specific skills.

They conduct and interpret learning media assessments to determine the primary sense used by the child.

They conduct and interpret expanded core curriculum evaluation to determine the needs of the child in each area.

They interpret eye reports and explain implications for both distance and near vision to families, classroom teachers, and other team members.

They explain how vision impacts performances, social and family systems, and may have effects on self-esteem.

Responsibilities

They identify goals and objectives in academic areas that requires alternative approaches because of the student's visual impairment.

They identify goals and objectives in areas of the expanded core curriculum.

They identify instructional methods and materials for meeting the goals and objectives of the student.

They provide educational material in appropriate and alternative formats.

They provide training in use of non-optical, optical and assistive devices needed for learning.

Teacher-consultant

TVIs can work as teacher-consultant with classroom teachers.

They recommend seating and environmental modifications that maximize student's utilization of visual information to facilitate movement for student with visual impairment within the classroom.

They discuss with educators providing direct instruction to assure they fully understand the unique needs of the student with visual impairments.

They suggest accommodations needed for assignments or testing procedures.

They collaborate with teachers and other professionals regarding methods for including students with visual impairments in classroom activities.

They develop an understanding of visual impairment by classmates and peers without disabilities.

They can train and supervise paraeducators that will supplement the instruction provided by TVIs.

Specialized skills instructor

TVIs Instruct the student in developmental skills and academic strategies.

They Instruct school-age children in braille, keyboarding and touch typing, as well as in additional handwriting skills.

They teach the abacus, the use of talking calculators, as well as tactile graphics.

They also teach the expanded core curriculum, which is areas of skills that prepare students with visual impairments for life after school.

Classroom teacher

TVIs can work in residential schools (schools for the blind).

In this case, they become classroom teachers, working all day with a class of students with visual impairments.

They teach the same curriculum as general teachers but with modifications, adaptations and accommodations specific to each student.

Conclusion

TVIs can work in various settings, and have various functions depending on students' age, needs and abilities.

Each child learns differently.

References

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