

# COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## LITERACY FACT SHEET

### Literacy for Learners with Visual Impairment

#### Role of Classroom Teacher and/or a Reading Specialist in Providing a Team Approach of Literacy Instruction

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 team approach. 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. Questions that will guide the assessment process may include:

#### **Specifics about the Learner’s Reading Ability**

- ◆ What kind of access (quality and quantity) does the learner have to the general-education curriculum? Are the child's Individual Education Program goals and objectives reflective of standards and expanded benchmarks?
- ◆ What is the learner’s reading modality (e.g., braille, print, auditory material)? *This information must be documented through a Literacy Modality Assessment, which has been completed by a teacher certified in the area of visual impairment.*
- ◆ What is the grade-level status of learner’s reading skills?
- ◆ Is the learner’s reading rate comparable to his or her peers?
- ◆ Is the learner’s comprehension of read material comparable to his or her peers?
- ◆ How has the learner’s reading skills progressed over time?

- ◆ Does the learner demonstrate fatigue or inattention when using visual, auditory, and/or tactual materials for extended periods of time?
- ◆ Are the learner's reading skills transferable across a variety of reading materials?
- ◆ Are there appropriate expectations for the learner to be an age appropriate reader?

### **Environmental Factors of Communication and Literacy**

- ◆ Is the child using the environmental adaptations, as recommended by the teacher certified in the area of visual impairment, in literacy and learning settings (e.g., task lighting, use of natural light, reduced visual clutter, glare-free materials, increased contrast, preferential seating, etc.)?

### **Materials and Equipment Needed for Communication and Literacy**

- ◆ Is the child using equipment recommended by the teacher certified in the area of visual impairments? For example, does the learner utilize magnification tools (e.g. screen enlargement software, CCTV, hand-held or other magnifiers) to assist with reading?
- ◆ Does the learner have a variety of communication and literacy tools to use across environments? Does the learner use various media materials in different environments (large print at home, magnifier at school etc.)? Are these tools available to the student after school hours?
- ◆ Do other classroom personnel and peers understand how the learner uses his or her communication and literacy tools?
- ◆ Will these tools be available to the learner after graduation?
- ◆ Are these literacy tools promoting independence in communication and literacy?

### **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 Literacy Modality 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, 201 East Colfax, Denver, Colorado 80203, phone - (303) 866-6681 or email: [Anthony\\_t@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us)*

*Fact Sheet Updated – 1/12*