

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. For the individual with visual impairment, especially those students with additional disabilities, it is critical that literacy be addressed through 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 a child's communication needs. These areas might be best addressed by the learner’s speech language therapist in conjunction with the teacher certified in the area of visual impairment.

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 through the auditory channel?
- 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	commenting	seeking attention
obtaining information	requesting	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?

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
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