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ABSTRACT

Modifications of educational programs can enable visually impaired learners to benefit from career planning from elementary through secondary grades. Exploration and mobility issues are critical, and the student must acquire personal awareness in respect to the environment before basic work tasks can be performed. Classroom adaptations that require the visually impaired child to develop independence in traveling are important parts of the curriculum. Many modifications require only portable and useable equipment within the classroom. Appropriate teacher training is another vital concern in the successful career development of visually impaired learners. (CL)

CAREER PLANNING MODIFICATIONS FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED LEARNER

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CAREER PLANNING MODIFICATIONS

FOR THE

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ABSTRACT: Modifications of educational programs benefit the visually impaired learner when career planning is considered. Implementation of exploration, mobility, communication skills, teacher training, and student expectation provides experiences which enable a visually impaired learner to receive career development throughout elementary and secondary educational years.

CAREER PLANNING MODIFICATIONS

FOR THE

VISUALLY IMPAIRED LEARNER

Consideration of career development with modifications for the visually impaired is only a portion of the spectrum of concern for career training for the "total" student. Some areas of need are identified within the following:

Self-Awareness - positive feelings about self

Decision-Making - value and process of decision-making

Career Awareness - acquaintence of various careers and route towards career

Economic Awareness - economic system and the social and economic changes within the United States.

Educational Awareness - opportunities available through education

Skills and Competencies - selection and entrance into programs

(State of Alabama Department of Education, 1978)

These areas, with simple modifications, can become appropriate for the

visually impaired child. As the ly impaired person learns skills within the classroom of the sighted, h as competition in the work force can be indirectly learned. The w sighted can become the world in which the visually impaired student is effectively compensate for a vision problem.

MODIFICATION FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED LEARNERS:

Exploration of the environment as a method of concrete discovery provides knowledge of the surroundings for the visually impaired child. Exploration should be looked upon as environmental searching - both immediate and distant.

As exploration of rooms and objects becomes a skill which gives the student a brief idea of the environment, the mastery of tools, skills, and aids for self-sufficiency is noticed (Rottman, 1976). This is of importance because the choice of career in relation to job opportunities will be influenced by simple knowledge of the world immediately available.

When the student visits various businesses, classrooms, or home situations, personal awareness in respect to environment must be present. Before basic chores and tasks can be performed, the visually impaired student should be familiar with the immediate facility. Training with safety, map skills, and directionality may be planned for this area. An orderly and unaltered environment is important to the safety and mobility of blind students in a lab or class situation (Phelps, 1977). As these skills are developed, the student explores limits beyond the immediate body area.

When mobility skills are the objective of a lesson, a basic body-in-space concept should be the core of the plan. Orientation to the building and skills to travel alone can be developed after the student feels a certain amount of

safety. Tasks such as cafeteria functioning, elevator management, and shapes of buildings are determinations that should be basic for daily living.

Mobility as exploration seems to be important in every aspect of career education. After the exploration, the student must understand the time needed to go to and from a job. Alternate route concepts should be introduced. This assists in the punctuality portion of career education. Independence in the travel technique should aid the independence in work situations. A modification within the classroom which encourages the visually impaired child to explore and become an independent traveler may be one of the most important additions to the curriculum.

As exploration and mobility create interest in the environment, skill competencies are the focus of the next modified areas. Modifications can begin with braille adaptations, large print texts, magnification through magnifiers or closed circuit television, protective aids, or taped lessons. These basic adaptations provide the information for competency with an adjustment for the specific handicapping condition.

An example of a modification is provided in the following individual program:

SUBJECT: Small Engine Repair

OBJECTIVE: The student will receive training in parts of the main engine block

MATERIALS: Textbook, workbook, small engine, basic small engine mechanic's tool box

EVALUATION: Written test, work sheet completion, practical test

CURRICULUM ADAPTATIONS:

1. Enlargement of text and workbook
   (closed circuit television and magnifier)
2. Text on tape
   (registration with recording service,
   slow speed recorder, earphones)
3. Test enlarged
   (Magnification equipment or with felt
   tip pen)
4. Practical engine block work magnified
   (large magnifier with light source
   between magnifier and engine)

It can be noted that the regular career education plan, when modified on a regular basis, is available with little interference. Most of the equipment described is portable and useable.

Various occupations are available if modifications are suitable and reasonable accomodations can be made. Although it is impractical to discourage particular occupational choices, some are more promising than others. Piano tuning, musical talents, broadcasting, blind industries jobs, and teaching seem to the the "label career" for the visually impaired individuals. With the age of computers comes an exciting opportunity for adaptations to the systems used in various business and scientific settings. Visually impaired persons are now trained in key punch, verbal command systems, and braille readout computers.

The use of tactual aids assists in higher education careers such as rehabilitation, the practice of law, medical transcription, and other scientific areas in the field of molecular design.

Part of the task of the educator, when modifying career training, is to find a mechanism to put the tool in the hands of the visually impaired person who needs it for a particular occupation (Hardy, 1972). No boundaries are

present if the student wishes to attain a goal. An understanding of strengths, weaknesses, abilities, interests, and aptitudes should start the process of job training (Hardy, 1972). Teachers can provide topics and the students target their goals. As individual achievement is accomplished, students begin to view work as social and individual rewards (Goldberg, 1967). Each job opportunity provides work experience necessary for discovery of interests and abilities for different skills (Kent, 1983).

When adaptations are provided for classroom participation, the student receives the preparation that should allow the student to compete successfully in the "sighted" world and work force. With this competition must come some adaptations for adjustment within the economic system for independent daily living skills. Social and economic changes must be taken into consideration (Alabama State Department of Education, 1978). With this concept, the following curriculum adaptations would be important:

1) money management - how to fold money for identification and discrimination of coins by touch
2) time - braille watch or talking watch
3) talking calculator
4) raised line checks

TEACHER TRAINING AND RESOURCES:

As the preceding adaptations are administered, the visually impaired student remains in the laboratory and classroom to receive specific instruction from the classroom teacher. No time is lost by tutorial work provided by the vision specialist outside the regular setting.

Perhaps another very important aspect of modifications for the visually impaired is teacher-training. Information concerning a handicap stimulates

an easier acceptance of modifications of regular program designs.

Teacher-training involves demonstration of low vision aids, braille instruments, taped texts, and magnification tools. Examples of most frequent vision losses are helpful. Allowing a person to be blindfolded during a classroom activity is another realistic experience for teaching blindness to teachers.

Resources for materials and equipment are aspects of teacher training to be considered also. Some of the following agencies are examples of particular amd most frequently used resources:

Recording for the Blind
20 Roszel Road
Princeton, New Jersey 08540

American Printing House for the Blind
P.O. Box 6085
Louisville, Kentucky 40206-0085

Division for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
The Library of Congress
Washington, D.C. 20542

Because some professionals feel remaining in one occupation throughout life is no longer functional (Goldberg, 1967), career development is important in almost every educational program. The foundation provided, with specific modifications for handicaps, should prove to be the basis of a lifetime of employment, job changes, and a confidence in exploring new paths for successful working situations.

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Modifications for the Visually Impaired