

Inclusive Student Services Impact Update

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Blind and Low Vision Student Supports

Intervention for a child or young person who is blind or visually impaired is based on the degree to which that individual can access, assimilate, and respond to the wealth of sensory information encountered through daily experience (*Ferrell, 2011 Canadian National Standards Document 2017*). Individualized programming is designed for each student through the Expanded Core Curriculum and is delivered through an Individual Education Plan (IEP) with the aim of building to the strengths of each student.

Students who are blind or visually impaired are supported by a team including classroom educators, Teachers of the Blind and Low Vision (TOBLV) and may include support from Education Assistants (EAs) and/or an Orientation and Mobility Specialist particularly around transitions (e.g., school and/or semester changes).

TOBLV are qualified instructors who provide educational service across a variety of settings to students in their school environment. In working with families, staff and school teams, the TOBLV build educator knowledge and understanding of the strengths and needs of each student. They are responsible to directly teach the Expanded Core Curriculum to those who meet Ministry criteria of Blind/Low Vision exceptionality. Typical instructional and support services have been determined in research to be critical in mitigating the impact of visual impairment on learning and development (*Holbrook, Kamei-Hannan, & McCarthy, 2017, Canadian National Standards 2017*).

"The DDSB and the Vision Resource team have done nothing but support me in all my endeavors, ambitions and aspirations. With all that I was taught and with all the support I have received throughout my youth, I know that I have the skills to continue to succeed throughout adulthood—and for that, I couldn't be more grateful."

—Student



Who We Are

Currently, the DDSB vision department is compiled of five TOBLV, one Teacher of the Deaf/Blind, two Braille Transcriptionists, one Orientation and Mobility Instructor, and ten EAs Supporting Vision. This team of DDSB staff members offer various program support to 82 students (2024/2025 school year) across the DDSB.



"The amazing vision resource teacher not only took the time to explain the complexities of Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) she also provided a bounty of valuable ideas and resources. So much so that we have incorporated many of these into our daily program; used by all of our students... and has changed the way that we present new learning..."

—Educator

What We Do

One of the direct roles of TOBLV is to teach and deliver the Expanded Core Curriculum. This curriculum is composed of nine categories of experiences and concepts casually and incidentally learned by sighted students that need to be systematically and sequentially taught to learners who are visually impaired. These areas include:

Compensatory Skills: These include skills like braille, tactile symbols, and sign language, which are essential for learning academic content.

Sensory Efficiency: These skills help students make the best use of their senses, including functional vision, hearing, touch, taste, and smell.

Assistive Technology Skills: This includes the use of computers and other electronic devices such as Brailers, magnification devices and notetakers that help students function independently in school, at home, and in the workplace.

Independent Living Skills: These are the daily tasks necessary for independent living and include areas such as personal hygiene, food preparation, and money management skills.

Career Education: Prepares students for the workforce by exploring career options and teaching job-related skills.

Recreation and Leisure Skills: Encourages students to explore and enjoy leisure activities, promoting a balanced lifestyle. Here, students are introduced to hobbies and interests they may find enjoyment in.

Self-Determination: These skills enable students to advocate for themselves, make informed decisions, and set personal goals.

Social Interaction Skills: Visual impairments can limit the ability to learn social cues through observation, this area provides explicit instruction in social behaviors and interactions.

Orientation and Mobility Skills: Focuses on helping students navigate their environment safely and independently, using tools like white canes or monoculars. In older ages, it could include instruction working with a guide dog.

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“I learned simple things that became second nature that really improved my independence. I learned to how to read and write in both print and braille, and type on a keyboard before many my age could. I learned how to use assistive technology to my advantage in my daily life, and I learned at a young age to navigate my immediate environment with ease. I learned how to advocate for my own needs when I need support, both in my post-secondary education, and throughout my career. A skill that can never be underestimated when you have a relatively invisible disability.”

–Student

“From teaching me Braille at a young age to making sure my textbooks were always put into a format I could read, to conversations about life skills, everything was amazing. If I didn’t have the support of the vision department, I wouldn’t be where I am today. Now, thanks to the help of my vision itinerants and educational assistance, I am a braille user and have been trained in multiple different types of assistive technology. I have gone on to work with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and provide resources to people with sight loss.”

–Student

“We’re very happy with the support from vision services. It has been invaluable and we can’t imagine what his school experience would’ve been like without their hard work and dedication. We have seen him learn and benefit tremendously from the care they’ve all taken with his overall growth. We are convinced his self-confidence has been boosted tremendously.”

–Parent/Caregiver

“The DDSB’s Blind/Low Vision program staff have been such an important part of my son’s development as both a student and a member of his community. Their dedication, expertise, and genuine care for his academic, social, and independence needs impresses me as both a parent and an educator myself. Having a unique set of needs, my son’s education requires out of the box creative thinking that his teachers and educational assistants have excelled at. Strong school to home communication has been so important for me to know how to best help meet my son’s needs as a parent. I appreciate the role that all of my son’s special educators have helped provide for him!”

–Parent/Caregiver

“Working with vision resource teachers and EAs in the classroom has a profound impact on students and educators. These specialists bring unique knowledge and a skill set that ensures our visually impaired students have access to all educational opportunities ensuring their success. Students thrive because of this team of professionals who utilize a range of inclusive strategies which ensures students feel supported, valued, and empowered in their educational pursuits. Collaborating with our vision resource team fosters our commitment to inclusivity, thus creating a dynamic classroom where all students have the opportunity to thrive.”

–Educator

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DDSB Inclusive Student Services Impact Update,
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