

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT: CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

General Statements

1. There are degrees of visual impairment.
2. The visually impaired have problems in a visual world.
3. Resources are available to aid the visually impaired.
4. There are appropriate behaviors, both functional and attitudinal, in relating to the visually impaired.

Objectives

- I. To help the student identify several degrees of visual impairment (total blindness, legal blindness, partial sightedness, impairments correctable with glasses or lenses, and color blindness).

A. Discussion Starters

1. What does blind mean to you?
2. Do you know anyone with a visual impairment? What is the impairment?
3. Is blindness always a disability?
4. How do we see?
5. Is it important to be able to see?

B. Activities

1. Bring in a model of the eye and discuss its structure and function.
2. Discuss the many ways people rely on eyesight. Try closing eyes and describing different things.
3. Construct a “feel box” which includes various objects. The student selects an object and tries to identify it by touch.
4. Play some visual games.
 - a. *Guess Who’s Missing* (K-2nd)
Have all children cover eyes. Teacher will tap one child on shoulder. That child will leave the room. The rest of the class opens eyes and tries to guess who is missing.
 - b. *What Do Your Eyes Remember?* (3rd-6th)
Ask students to mentally picture the visual characteristics of a particular place, with as many details as possible. This might include the entrance to the school, the library or the cafeteria. Check observations. Encourage students to picture the area visually in terms of form, color, light, shade and spatial relationship.

- II. To help the student understand some problems that the visually impaired experience in a visual world.

A. Discussion Starters

1. What are some problems that a visually impaired person might have performing the following functions:
 - a. Cooking
 - b. Dressing
 - c. Grooming
 - d. Eating
 - e. Shopping
 - f. Transportation
2. How do you feel in a dark room?
3. How do you feel when you get something in your eye?
4. Can you think of a situation where a blind person might have an advantage over a sighted person?

B. Activities

1. Ask a student to leave the classroom. Rearrange the furniture in the room. Blindfold the student and have him/her reenter the room. Discuss the experience.
2. Bring in different coins and paper money. Have students count out money by touch. Discuss the difficulties encountered. Discuss how they could make it easier.

- III. To help the student identify manipulative aids available to the visually impaired.

A. Discussion Starters

1. How does a blind person read?
2. If a child were blind, would he or she be allowed to walk to a friend's house? How would the child get there alone?
3. Do blind people cook and clean house?
4. How do visually impaired people tell differences in money?

B. Activities

1. Share Braille charts with the students and allow them to write messages in Braille.
2. Blindfold a student and let him/her try any daily living skill (tying shoes, writing name, etc.)
3. Discuss the purpose of a seeing-eye dog.
4. Give the students an opportunity to develop a system for identifying money (e.g., folding money in different ways according to denomination, placing money in different compartments of a wallet or purse).

IV. To help the child understand appropriate behavior when relating to the visually impaired.

A. Discussion Starters

1. How would you greet a blind person? How would he/she greet you?
2. How would the blind person know who you are?
3. Would you treat a blind child as you would a sighted child? Why?
4. What games could you play with a blind child?
5. What could you do to help a blind person adjust to a new situation?
6. How would your life change if you lost your sight?
7. How is a visually impaired person like you?

B. Activities

1. Study the life stories of several famous blind people, such as Helen Keller, Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, Jose Feliciano. Include in the discussion their accomplishments and their struggles.
2. Make a chart illustrating the ways in which a visually impaired person is like a sighted person.

* Taken from, *Handicapped People in Society: A Curriculum Guide*, by Ruth-Ellen Ross and I. Robert Freeland and Easter Seal Society of Oregon, *People with Disabilities*