

VI Times

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MN Regions 5 & 7 Vision - O&M Staff
Barb Lhotka, Editor



Vision-O&M Staff

The purpose of a newsletter is to provide specialized information to parents and teachers of students with vision impairments. We hope to send regular newsletters that will cover topics of interest that are informative and create a base of knowledge that will assist our students with their on-going success!

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Upcoming Events

- ◆ Parent-Child Institute June
- ◆ Sports Camp July
- ◆ Lake Carlos September

Benton-Stearns Ed District

Amy Ormerod, TBVI, O&M

Buffalo District #877

Diane Grundyson, O&M

Glen Hoppe, TBVI

Elk River

Molly Ouellette, TBVI, O&M (intern)

Pam Schumacher, TBVI, O&M

Freshwater

Diane Grundyson, O&M

Nicole Schmidt, TBVI

Little Falls

Diane Grundyson, O&M

Beth Lehn, TBVI

MAWSECO

Liz Karels, TBVI, O&M (intern)

Barb Lhotka, O&M

Midstate

Diane Grundyson, O&M

Beth Lehn, TBVI

Paul Bunyan

Louise Flickinger, TBVI

Diane Grundyson, TBVI, O&M

Rum River

Lois Jacobson, TBVI, O&M

Tracy Shimer, TBVI

Sherburne-Northern Wright

Karen Maruska, TBVI, O&M

St Cloud

Doreen Bohm, TBVI, O&M (intern)

Marissa Mahowald, TBVI

St Croix Ed District (SCRED)

Cindy Bruning

West Central

Diane Grundyson, O&M

Glen Hoppe, TBVI

Physical Activity

Regardless of the age of the child, physical activity is an essential part of life. Living with a vision impairment may or may not limit the interest the child has in movement and exploration. It is very necessary that families and teachers create accessible and user-friendly environmental opportunities for children with visual impairments.

Working with very young children, we need to provide play areas with and without boundaries. The boundaries keep little ones safe and secure. Moving the boundaries allows the student to move in an area free of obstacles. Large areas with no points of reference can be too open and overwhelming for many students. Watch the child for cues as to how comfortable he or she is in moving within the environment.

Placing objects within reach of the child in the play area helps with search and exploration. For example, putting Velcro on toys and attaching them to the crib sheet helps the child to know where to search time after time.

Access to Playgrounds



Accessible Glider



Activity Panel

Accessible Playgrounds

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (enacted in 1992) provides several guidelines for playground accessibility.

“The guidelines require looking at play areas as a collection of individual play components to determine the minimum amount required to be accessible.” (Assistive Technology Partners, p. 2) “An accessible playground is one that offers a range of play experiences to children of varying abilities. This does not mean that each and every feature or event must be usable by every child.” (Assistive Technology Partners, p. 3)

Features to look for:

- Soft Surfaces—rubber mat to make surface soft around and under equipment.
- Accessible Swings—molded bucket seat that supports the child’s head, neck and trunk.
- Playground Equipment Transfer Platform: platform to allow child to transfer from a

wheelchair onto the playground equipment.

- Accessible Ramp—made of concrete at access points.
- Activity Panels—should be accessible to children with a forward or side reach. Panels include turning, pushing, twisting, etc.
- Enjoyment Centers—include activation areas for musical instruments, interactive activity panels, stepping pods, a balance beam or crawl tubes.
- Sway Fun—features allow wheelchair accessibility to gliders and other group pieces of equipment.
- Safety Features—warning strips, handrails, soft-rounded surfaces, and weatherproof services.
- Sensory Features—bright colors, bells, music, braille, textures, etc.

Physical Skills Needed

Students who are visually impaired and physically active need to have skills in the following areas:

Gross Motor:

- Balance—the ability to maintain equilibrium.
- Body awareness—for improved posture and control.
- Crossing of midline—being able to reach across the body.
- Laterality—knowing the left and right sides of the body.
- Spatial orientation—

awareness of the body position in space and in relation to other objects or people.

- Locomotor Skills:
 - Walking
 - Running
 - Hopping
 - Jumping
 - Skipping
 - Galloping
 - Sliding
 - Leaping
- Nonlocomotor Skills:
 - Swinging
 - Twisting
 - Turning
 - Stretching

- Swaying
- Bending.

Teaching children with vision impairments to be comfortable in movement is essential for the development of good travel skills as they get older. Confidence is essential.

Fine motor skills are also needed. It is important for the child to develop good hand skills that will allow him / her to pick small things up, sort objects, explore objects with the hands, etc.

Physical Education Ideas

It is often somewhat of a stressful situation when students with vision loss approach a physical education class. The rapid movement, moving people and objects, rules, and barriers in the environment can present a challenge unless considered prior to the unit. Adaptations to units will oftentimes open up opportunities to participate with peers and learn new skills. Talk to the student about what is easy or difficult to work with in class. Here are some basic ideas for physical education:

Activity Set Up: Allow the child to explore the play area prior to playing. Know where the child is able to see best (distance, lighting, etc.). Provide equipment that is contrasted with the play surface. Keep the play area as free of barriers as possible—tell the child if there are changes. Break skills up into small steps.

Activity Starts / Stops: Should be provided with auditory cues. Signals are not helpful.

Directions: Use the child's name before giving directions if you need their attention focused. Need to be clearly stated in terms of where, how, and what to be kept in mind for safety. Directions should not be given in terms of "over there" and "in that spot." A preview or run-through of the activity with the teacher to give a hands-on explanation is helpful. Directional words should be used in giving directions: "Slide to your left using your left foot first, followed by your right foot."

Equipment: Some minor adaptations to equipment will often make it accessible. Audible balls, bells, rope guides for running, etc. are helpful.

Games with Goals or Baskets: A colored flag or marker or an auditory cue can be placed on the goal or basket for locating and aiming. Slow the movement of the ball or target with alternate materials or objects if necessary.

Independence: Although the student may need guidance at times, allow for the building of independence in skills. If you are over-protective, the child will have difficulty enjoying movement and building self-trust.

Net Games: The object that is to be struck back over the basket may need to have tape added for contrast or a bigger object be used.

Play Areas: Smaller play areas are better than large open areas as the child begins to play with a large group. Knowing where the area's boundaries are can be very reassuring.

Running: A running partner and the student with a vision loss can use a short rope or wand to stay connected when running. Colored lines or textures can be used to show boundaries for running.

Swimming: Use an auditory sound cue to help with orientation in the water and pool—in the lane or at the ladder.

Whenever a unit is approaching, the TBVI or COMS will need to work with the physical education staff to find out what the major objectives of the unit are and what can be done for the student's enjoyment and participation. It doesn't usually take much, but it is a thoughtful process that helps make the activity more accessible.



APH Rib-It Balls



Audible Ball



Running Tether
Or
Guide Rope on
Caddy



Portable Sound Source

Topic Preview

Future issues of this newsletter will address:

- Braille
- CVI—Cortical Visual Impairment
- Early Childhood Intervention
- Living Skills
- Low Vision
- Multiple Disabilities
- O&M—Orientation & Mobility
- Parenting
- Self-Determination & Advocacy
- Sensory Efficiency
- Social Skills
- Technology
- Transition

Featured Organization: Sports Camp

Dr. Jim Mastro is a seven-time paraolympian who has brought his love of sports and recreation to students in MN who are visually impaired. Mastro is a professor at Bemidji State University in Bemidji, MN. He founded and has hosted the Northern Plains Sports Camp for more than a decade. The dates of the 2011 sports and recreation camp on the BSU campus are July 12-16, 2011. For more information contact Dr. Jim Mastro at 218-755-3772.

Recreation is no different for a child who has impaired vision or not...it is the awareness of what is out there and an interest in doing it that may be different. Exposure to a wide variety of games and activities is essential for building interest in activities to entertain oneself.

Some items available for recreation:

- Braille and large print cards.
- Tactile and high contrast coloring books.
- Information on knitting, golfing,

cooking, sewing, etc.

- Riding on an adapted bike.
- Shopping.
- Going to the movies with narration.
- Eating out and using adapted menus.
- Playing games that are adapted or in braille.
- Talking dice, card trays, etc.
- Audio books for fun reading.
- Computer games.

Life-Sports & Hobbies

Archery: Need foot locaters for positioning stance, a tactile aiming device to position to aim, and a spotter to report accuracy.

Biking: A tandem or a yoked bike for side by side riding.



Tigermoth

Bowling: A bowling ramp for aiming the ball down the lane.



Dancing: Tactile boundaries for the size of the dance floor.

Gardening: Beds are arranged in formations and narrow enough for reach or elevated with braille or large print markers.

Golf: A spotter assists in locating the shot line, ball, etc.

Running: Use a tether.

Skiing: A partner goes in front of the skier and calls out the turns.

Swimming: Tactile markings on the pool edge, sound markers, etc. for orientation.

Weight / Exercise Club: Find a club with good organization and free of clutter. Go to machines in a sequence.

Disclaimer

The articles in this newsletter are for general information purposes only. MN Regions 5 & 7 do not recommend products or endorse organizational membership, we only provide information.