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## OSB Blind Hints

By Bob Disher

Note: The following was compiled while I served as an Itinerant Teacher of the Visually Impaired while working for the Coos County (now South Coast) ESD with Donna Penny. The information is general enough to be applicable to a wide variety of educational environments.

1. Do use words such as "look", "see", "observe", etc.
2. Use specific directions with words such as "left" or "right".
3. Avoid directions such as "over there".
4. Verbalize what you are writing on the chalkboard.
5. Encourage the student to explore his/her environment.
6. Change the position of classroom furniture as you deem it necessary. Tell the blind child the new location of said furniture.
7. Provide concrete, multi-sensory objects during the presentation of a lesson.
8. Discipline the blind child as you would any other child.
9. Encourage the blind child to verbalize how objects appear from their perspective.
10. Provide as many experiences with real objects as possible. Abstract learning is more difficult for a blind student.
11. Half-way open cupboards or doors may pose a problem. It is better if they were left all the way open ... or all the way closed.
12. Encourage the blind child to participate in all activities with any necessary adaptations.
13. How an adult treats or accepts a blind child will set the example for the other students.
14. Blindisms (rocking, head movement, poking the eyes) should be quietly corrected in a gentle--but firm--manner. Never scold or publicly ridicule the child.

15. You should notify the necessary people when taking the class on a field trip/tour of a community facility. This way, they will be more apt to have materials on hand of a multi-sensory nature. Also, the blind child may be allowed to go beyond "barriers" to tactually explore certain objects.
16. Organizational skills do not come instinctively. Rather, they are gained through imitation and instruction in both the home and school setting.
17. Concept development does not come as readily for a blind child. Therefore, these must be introduced and taught when the child is intellectually able to comprehend the material.
18. Avoid phrases that give a double message: "The King who Reigned".
19. The blind student may wish to give a presentation on his/her eye condition to the class. This could be either by itself ... or part of a larger unit on vision and visual impairment.
20. The blind child frequently has a great deal of equipment to help them function on an equal level as their sighted counterparts.
21. The blind student does not see the "big picture" of large objects. Rather, these objects are viewed in smaller parts when the sense of touch is employed. At times, the blind child will be unable to actually explore the entire object. For instance, when learning about a water tower, it is unwise to have the blind child climb to the top just to explore the tank.
22. Braille is a comparatively slow method of reading. A top reading speed with braille rarely exceeds 150 words per minute.
23. Bear in mind that the use of a braille writer is much noisier than the use of a paper or pencil.
24. Braille volumes are much bulkier than their print counterparts. A "Vest Pocket Dictionary" can have in excess of 30 full-sized volumes!
25. Because braille books consist of a great deal of volumes, special space consideration needs to be made within the school "book room".
26. Preparation of braille materials can be a time consuming process. Therefore, we ask that ample time (to be discussed for each individual student) be provided the Technology Center for this purpose.
27. Access to a computer is frequently beneficial for a blind student. This doesn't mean the sole user, but it would be good if the student was able to use the same machine each time. This way a speech synthesizer could be installed into the computer.
28. Tests can be frequently given orally with either another student--or an adult-- taking down the answers.
29. It is best, while taking oral test answers from a blind student, to write down his/her answer as literally as possible. In this way, the student's teacher can make the judgement as to whether or not the answer is correct.

30. Handwriting instruction is important in that the student needs to learn to sign his/her name. This is done with one continuous stroke (all letters connected). The teacher of the visually impaired can assist with this at the appropriate time.

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