**A Guide for Teachers and Therapists Working With A Child Who is Blind Or Has Low vision**

* **Say "Hello" and "Good-bye."** A young with blindness or low vision will need to get to know you before you touch him or pick him up. You may need to sit close and talk to a parent and their child with blindness or low vision so that he can become familiar with your voice. Always talk to an infant or toddler with blindness or low vision before you pick him up; let him know what you are going to do. This will keep him or her from becoming startled. When leaving, don't "disappear"; be sure to say good-bye. "Hello" and "good-bye" rituals are important to children who are visually impaired because they usually cannot see people coming and going in their world.
* **Let a child with blindness or low vision know what you are going to do.** Because a child with blindness or low vision may not have the vision to know what is going to happen next, let her know what you are going to do. For example, before picking her up, say her name and give a verbal cue that the family uses ("Ready to come up, up, up!").

* **Most children with visual impairments have some functional vision.** Very few children are totally blind. Ask the parent, Resource Teacher of Vision or Independent Living Skills instructor to describe how a child with blindness or low vision sees things or you can explore this together with them. There are things that help a child use his vision the best. This may include how they use light, color, contrast, and how toys are present presented to them. Be careful not to bombard a child with blindness or low vision with too much information. A child with blindness or low vision may be visually attracted to familiar people and toys more than unfamiliar people and toys. Also, the way that a child is positioned will affect how he can use his vision.
* **Feel comfortable using words such as *see* and *look.*** These words are as much a part of the vocabulary of the child with a visual impairment as they are of anyone else's. She uses them to describe her methods of seeing, either touching or looking very closely, and in expressions used in daily conversations, such as "See you later, alligator!"
* **Encourage a child with blindness or low vision to explore actively.** Arrange the environment to allow a child with blindness or low vision to explore independently. This involves considering child’s developmental level, providing objects that consider the child’s sensory preferences and interests, being responsive to his cues and vocalizations, and sharing his interests.
* **Introduce new activities slowly and give plenty of time for a child with blindness or low vision to do an activity.** Without good vision, a child with blindness or low vision does not know what a new toy or new activity is like. It may take him more time to be willing to touch and play with toys or engage in activities. Activate toys away from the child so he can become familiar with them. Let him be the one to reach out or show interest in the toy before initiating play. Be sure to give him plenty of time to play with the toy so he can become familiar with it and be able to understand what is going to happen during the activity. He may "tell" you he is unsure by acting scared or starting to cry. If he does, stop and see if he can explore it in a different way.
* **Help a child with blindness or low vision become familiar with new spaces.** A child with blindness or low vision will usually do better in his home or in a familiar place because he understands where he is and feels secure. In new spaces and places, the child will focus on trying to learn where he is and may not be ready to play. Use sounds to help him understand where things are (e.g., sound of water in bathroom, refrigerator in kitchen). Allow time to let him move (e.g., roll, crawl, scoot, move in his walker, wheelchair) and find areas of the room (e.g., the rug, tile floor).
* **Help a child with blindness or low vision understand language.** It is not meaningful to provide a nonstop verbal description of everything that is happening all of the time. You can talk about what the child has her hands on or the noises that she is hearing. Remember that you don't have to talk loudly!
* **Provide ample experiences with real objects.** Use real objects as much as possible to provide the experiences needed to develop concepts.

Reference:

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