

## *Classroom Suggestions:* Suggestions for Early Childhood Programming for Students with Blindness or Low Vision

- Use developmentally appropriate practice. That is, learning activities should take into account the child's age, individual needs, and family culture and perspectives.
- Use of touch and hands-on activities are important. Cognitive skill development requires active participation and real-life experiences through direct instruction.
- Teach the meaning of spatial relationship words such as up/down, in/out, beside/behind. Learning physical characteristics of objects such as size, color, and shape as well as tactile qualities (e.g., smooth/rough) should be emphasized.
- Teach speech and language skills. Although these students will learn these skills in a manner similar to sighted children, this is still an important area for intervention, particularly if other disabilities are present (e.g., hearing loss).
- Promote social and play skills, which serve as the foundation for establishing peer relationships and friendships.
- Emphasize motor development along with orientation and mobility skills. Children with blindness or low vision may lack the visual stimulation that inspires and compels young children to move. Walking is a rewarding skill for sighted children but can be less fun for one who has severe blindness or low vision (Lowry & Hatton, 2002).
- Adaptive skills including independence in self-care are important for all children as well as those with blindness or low vision.

Source: Chen, D. (2001). *Visual impairment in young children: A review of the literature with implications for working with families of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds*. Washington, DC: Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS). ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 478 932.