

Observation Guidelines

For use by the Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments

The following are guidelines for observing students with visual impairments in classroom situations. The purpose of this observation is to monitor the student's functioning in the classroom, and determine the focus for VI services, including instruction.

Evaluating Classroom Functions

Organization:

- Materials
- Furniture
- Extra work space
- Walkways
- Desk layouts
- Maps
- Placement of educational *prompts* (e.g., alphabet, number line, colors, periodic chart of elements)
- Class rules
- Placement of chalkboards / smartboards
- Overhead screen

Discipline:

- Are rules clearly posted?
- Does the teacher have a system of discipline?
- Does the teacher follow the system with all students, particularly the VI student?
- Are students respectful of the system?

Classroom (group) behaviors:

- Are students on-task?
- Can most keep up?
- Are more than just a few *fooling around* when they shouldn't be?
- Do students get up to turn in papers, get materials, and go to the bathroom?
- Do they wait for cues from the teacher to move from one activity to another or do they do so independently?
- Are most attentive during the teacher's presentations?
- Is the activity in the room constructive?

Evaluating an Activity

- Does the teacher present or introduce lessons or is there an established routine that is more auto-tutorial?
- Are tangible objects used to demonstrate concepts where applicable?
- Does everyone need to follow along in a book?

- Do students have to read aloud?
- Does the activity involve a concept, which is very visual in nature (e.g., adding with carrying)?
- Are visual materials used (e.g., maps, charts, diagrams)?
- Is the chalkboard or overhead screen used frequently?
- Do students use a dictionary?
- Is the pace fast, slow, or medium?
- What do students do when the activity is completed?
- How many handouts are used and what is their quality?
- Are materials enlarged or brailled for an activity if needed?

Observing Student Functioning

- Is the student on task?
- Does student look in teacher's general direction?
- Is student able to get out materials on time?
- Is student using low vision devices, or other necessary devices?
- Is student attending?
- In what condition is the student's desk?
- Does the student know how to access the educational *prompts* posted around the room?
- Is the student organized?
- Can the student maintain the pace of the lesson presented?
- Does the student get up to get his own materials?
- Do other students help the student in any way?
- Could the student be acting more independently?
- Does the student raise a hand to participate and ask questions?
- Does the student interrupt appropriately?
- Does the student have any distracting mannerisms?
- Does the student use time wisely?
- What does the student do when work is finished?
- Does the student interact appropriately with peers in the room, on the playground, in the cafeteria?
- How does the student get around?
- How does the student go through the cafeteria line and to the table?
- What is the student's eating skills?
- Does the student's appearance blend with the group?
- Does the student have friends?
- What does the student do during free time and on the playground?
- Does the student speak before the class, such as in show and tell?

- If the student fails to complete his seatwork, is it due to lack of understanding, poor work habits, or inability to keep up with the pace?
- How does the general quality of the student's work compare to peers?
- Does the student talk too much to neighbors?
- Are the student's materials placed so as to be accessible to him?
- Are games, toys, and materials available for the student to use in interactive play during free time?
- Are lighting and desk location appropriate?
- Are any of the student's materials or equipment inconveniencing another student?
- Can the student fully operate any equipment given to him?
- Is a system in place for the student to correct malfunctioning equipment?
- Can the student manage equipment and materials through class changes?
- How does the student ask for and accept assistance from peers and others.
- How do peers relate to the student; how is he treated?
- Is the student displaying age-appropriate skills?

Observing Teacher Behaviors

- Does the teacher move about the room or remain fairly stationary?
- Does the teacher's voice carry well?
- Are chalkboards, overhead screen, and charts used frequently? Does the teacher read aloud what is written down?
- Will a student teacher be taking the class?
- How does the teacher handle misbehavior and off-task behavior?
- Does the teacher check for understanding and how is this done with the VI student?
- If brailled materials are to be handed out, is the teacher organized enough to have the materials ready?
- Can the teacher communicate her concerns and observations of the VI student during a conference (beware the teacher who always reports that "everything's just fine")?