



A Toolkit for Success: Children with Visual Impairments in the Inclusive Classroom

Posted by [Natalie Martiniello](#) on 13 October 2012 - 12:08pm

Parents of children with visual impairments often become the very first advocates of their child. With very little guidance and with no road map to steer them, these parents navigate with perseverance through what can sometimes feel like a very confusing system. Questions abound: Will my child be left behind? What resources are available, and how do I know which are appropriate for my child?

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Though it can seem daunting at first - fear not - a number of resources and supports to foster success exist.

I would like to start by saying that blindness is but one thread in the rich tapestry that make some of us who we are. I would also like to say that blindness, in and of itself, is often not the obstacle. Often, the greatest obstacles we face are the preconceived notions about blindness – the myths, stereotypes and misconceptions – that lead to ableism and maintain inequality. And for this reason, knowledge truly is power.

When I think of blindness, I think of pride. I think of the blind men and women before me who have fought for our right to equal citizenship, and who continue to do so today, many of whom are members of the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians.

I would like to say that we, Canadians who are blind, deaf-blind and partially sighted, are so much more than the often inaccurate image of blindness that is frequently perpetuated in the media and in the public conscience as a whole.

I recently read an interesting article titled [Introducing Your Blind Child to a New Teacher](#). The author, a parent of a child with a visual impairment, shares her thoughts and provides a list of useful ideas and resources. Among them, the author suggests writing a “welcome letter” to your child’s new teacher, a personal fact sheet to address common questions, and the kinds of things to mention when meeting a new teacher for the first time. Knowledge truly is power.

Here are some additional ideas that come to mind that could promote an inclusive, accessible classroom environment:

- Try to read aloud what is written on the board so that all students can access information being conveyed.
- Provide concrete descriptors when demonstrating a visual concept, such as a lab experiment. E.g. “I will first pour the water into this glass”. This is a simple way to accommodate students without singling them out, because you are making these statements to the entire class as a whole.
- Practise using concrete words when describing the location of an object in the classroom. E.g. “ten steps to your right” rather than using vague, visual statements such as “over there”.

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- Whenever possible, provide students (or the appropriate vision professional) with a copy of handouts you will be using in advance, in the event that these documents will need to be transcribed into an alternative format (such as braille, electronic format, or large print).
- Remember that students with visual impairments, just like other students, are diverse and individual learners. Avoid generalizing or using a “one-size-fits-all” approach to accommodation.
- Promote self-confidence and self-worth, whenever possible.

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Here are some additional resources that parents and teachers may want to add to their “toolkit for success”. I do not have first-hand experience with all of the resources listed below, but I hope that they prove to be helpful. Though not an exhaustive list, also included here are some resources for finding braille books for children:

- [The Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians](#)
- [National Braille Press](#)
- [Seedlings Braille Books for Kids](#)
- [Braille Bug Registered](#)
- [Family Connect Registered](#)
- [CNIB](#)
- [Institut Nazareth et Louis-Braille \(Quebec\)](#)
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