

Teaching students with visual impairments

The Government of Alberta's *Essential Components of Educational Programming for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired* includes the Expanded Core Curriculum, which speaks to the physical education and activity needs of students with low vision and blindness.

Why is the Expanded Core Curriculum important? Research shows that children with visual impairments:

- Have fewer opportunities to participate in physical activity.
- Experience reduced motor skill development, especially in the early infancy and toddler years.
- Have lower perceptions of their motor skill competence, contributing to less activity.
- Become more sedentary than children with full sight.
- Have lower physical fitness levels as a result.

The Expanded Core Curriculum addresses these challenges in four content areas:

Recreation and Leisure Skills

- Opportunity to practice skills to ensure students derive pleasure and physical fitness from an array of recreational and leisure activities.
- Mastery of prerequisite skills, including the development of physical literacy, so students can be fully included in recreational activities, including physical education class.

Social Interaction Skills

- Opportunity to interact with students from different schools and grades who are a part of the blind and visually impaired community in Calgary.
- Social Interaction skills are essential if students are to develop friendships and participate in activities typically associated with school-age children, whether educational or extracurricular.
- Interpersonal communication skills are also correlated with employability in adulthood.

Orientation and Mobility Skills

- Opportunity to reinforce current white cane skills, personal space, human guide, and listening skills on an incidental basis.

Self-Determination Skills

- Opportunity to use self-knowledge, self-advocacy, decision-making and problem-solving skills.
- Respecting “dignity of risk.” While student safety is always paramount, research shows that sheltering children with visual impairments from all perceived risks can lead to lack of self-determination and independence.

Interested in more information to promote activity for children with visual impairments? Visit the Alberta Sports and Recreation Association for the Blind at asrab.ab.ca for additional physical activity resources and information on sport programming available to your students.