

Mid Primary Teacher – Introduction to Accommodations for the student with Albinism



By S. George, Secondary teacher.

Children with low vision feel no different to anyone else - they just do things differently! Assistance from teachers/assistants to access the curriculum alongside peers will be necessary, without it being obvious to other students. They desperately want to be “one of the crowd” and not treated differently. They are **enabled** by excellent memory, other senses, use of technology, ability to adapt and to efficiently use the sight that they have (don’t let him trick you into thinking that they see more than they actually can). Encourage self-advocacy, independence and resilience.

In the classroom

- Seat them with their back to the window or source of bright light, making sure you do not have the light source behind you as they will not see you (especially if they are photophobic/light sensitive).
- Ask them to describe what they see (not “can you see that?” as they will usually say “Yes” to avoid attention).
- Verbalise what is going on in the room (to all students) so that they can follow what is happening. (eg. “Mrs Smith has just come into the room”, etc.)
- You will generally need to be within a metre or two for the student to easily recognise facial expressions –either verbalise your signals from a distance or come close to them to communicate facial expressions.
- Use students’ names as you ask or answer their questions, so that they know who is talking.
- Give directional instructions (next to the window) rather than “over there” or pointing.
- Use blinds to block out glare from outside, but ensure sufficient light to see clearly.

Demonstrations and Presentations

- Ensure they are close enough to see the picture or what is happening.
- Allow them to have a look at any new equipment or layout before the class.
- Provide an electronic copy of any presentations or videos the day before, so that they can go through it at their own pace then and again later if necessary.

Board work:

- Seat them at the front of the class near the board, with other students or provide a copy to their iPad/computer.
- Use solid black pens on white boards (high contrast).
- Ensure there is no glare on whiteboards (from lights or windows)
- Use bold open print (space between letters or numbers), enlarged for the student to see.
- Reduce clutter on the board and keep diagrams simple.
- Read aloud as you write on the board and describe diagrams.

Printed material for students

- Pictures/photos should be high contrast, without too much detail and at least A4 size.
- Diagrams simple and high contrast, bold text enlarged for the student to see (up to 36 point?).
- Use a font without serifs – ask the student which is easiest for them to see.
- Some students prefer cream or buff paper as they produce less glare.
- Provide rest breaks with alternative work to rest the eyes when necessary (listening books or voice recordings).

Working with the Visiting Teacher - Vision Impaired (VT-VI)

- The Visiting Teacher for Vision Impaired will work with the child on the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC, see below) and advise you on how this can be practiced and reinforced in the classroom.
- The VT-VI will be included in Student Support Groups as they develop and monitor the Individual student Plan.

Working with the Classroom Assistant

- Ensure that they understand their role – to support the child with low vision issues, checking that they are able to access all visual work and displays. This may include (but is not limited to) provision of enlargements, ensuring they have the correct assistive technology and software in that lesson, safe practice and movement in practical classes.
- Discourage the assistant from sitting with the child (unless working 1:1 for a short time), as this isolates them from peers and can encourage reliance, rather than independence in the child.
- Where appropriate, to work one to one with the student to practice skills from the Expanded Core Curriculum.
- If the child has a regularly timetabled classroom assistant, they should also be included in at least part of the Student Support Group.
- Use a general classroom assistant for enlargement copies or to prepare electronic versions of your normal class material for the student, if they do not have assistant time allocated to them.

Adaptive Technology for Low Vision

- All members of the Student Support Group (student, class teachers, VT-VI, parents, assistant) work together to plan the best use of all technology, software and applications in the classroom and specialist classes.
- The VT-VI will work with the student and teacher to further build Assistive Technology (AT) skills. This can be reinforced one to one with an appropriate classroom assistant.
- From Grade 4 in Victoria, the student will have the opportunity to attend the Statewide Vision Resource Centre Support Skills days (perhaps once a term) to meet with other low vision students and work on ECC skills.
- Encourage independence in the choice of this equipment – they will know which equipment suits an activity or assists them to see effectively.
- The student should be responsible for the safe usage and storage of equipment, including the reporting of any hardware or software issues.
- Where possible link the student's iPad or computer to any electronic presentations or videos in the classroom.

Going outside (Recess, Lunch, PE etc)

- Requirements for the student – remind them if necessary, but encourage independent management.
 - Always wear hat and sunglasses to protect the eyes from glare.
 - Reapply sunscreen at start of lunch – they will burn severely within minutes without sun protection at any time of the year! Keep a box at the door for hat, sunglasses, sunscreen.
 - On high UV days, wear long sleeves and allow access to shade.
- They may not see fine detail, have poor depth perception, and do not easily focus on moving objects. They may not see changes in surface, steps, judge distance or track moving objects (other children, balls etc).
- See the separate document for PE support.
- Have a mobility specialist (Guide Dogs or Vision Australia etc) visit to assess the environment each year, providing advice for the child and the school to ensure safety and highlight hazards.