

The Expanded Core Curriculum for Students Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired ¹

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Activities, Ideas, and Resources for Developing ECC Skills: What Parents Need to Know

Your child needs to study the same basic academic subjects that sighted children do, from how to tell time to how to write a persuasive essay. But in order to master these subjects (often known as the “core curriculum”) and complete their schoolwork—as well as to eventually live and work independently—children who are visually impaired usually need to learn an additional set of skills known as the “expanded core curriculum.”

They are sometimes also referred to as “disability-specific skills” or “vision-related skills” because they are useful specifically for individuals who are visually impaired. They may include activities such as

- using braille to read and write, instead of reading printed books or using a pencil and paper to write;
- learning how to move about in the environment safely and independently, which is known as orientation and mobility (O&M);
- knowing how to use specialized computer equipment and other technology devices designed for children with visual impairments; and
- learning how to use what vision they have effectively and efficiently.

The classroom teacher is responsible for teaching your child the basic academic curriculum, but because the expanded core curriculum covers the unique, specialized needs of visually impaired students, the subjects included within it should be taught by a teacher who specializes in working with students who have visual impairments. This teacher is a pivotal member of the [educational team](#) that works with your child.

Expanded Core Curriculum Subjects and Skills: Resources for Families

The following are the subjects and skills that students who are visually impaired are taught to enable them to study the basic educational curriculum along with their sighted classmates.

¹ <https://familyconnect.org/educacion/el-curriculo-central-ampliado/>

- **Compensatory academics**—critical skills that students need to be successful in school, such as concept development, organizational skills, speaking and listening, and communication skills such as braille or print reading and writing.
- **Orientation and mobility**—skills to orient children who are visually impaired to their surroundings and travel skills to enable them to move independently and safely in the environment, such as:
 - Human guide techniques (also known as sighted guide)
 - Using standard and adaptive canes
 - Recognizing cues and landmarks
 - Moving through space by walking or using a wheelchair
 - Requesting assistance
- **Social interaction**—skills needed to respond appropriately and participate actively in social situations, such as:
 - Shaking hands
 - Turning toward others when speaking or being spoken to
 - Using language to make a request, decline assistance, or express a need
 - Expressing emotion and affection appropriately
 - Participating appropriately in conversations in various situations
- **Independent living**—skills needed to function as independently as possible in school and at home, including personal grooming, time management, cooking, cleaning, clothing care, and money management.
- **Recreation and leisure**—skills to ensure students' enjoyment of physical and leisure-time activities, including
 - Making choices about how to spend leisure time,
 - Actively participating in physical and social recreational activities
 - Trying new leisure activities
 - Following rules in games and activities at an appropriate level
 - Maintaining safety during leisure activities

- **Sensory efficiency**—skills that help students use the senses, including any functional vision, hearing, touch, smell (olfactory), and taste (gustatory). Examples of sensory efficiency skills your child may learn include:
 - Using optical aids
 - Using augmentative and alternative communication devices
 - Using touch and vision to identify personal items
 - Using sense of smell to know when nearing the school cafeteria
- **Use of technology**—skills to use devices such as computers or other electronic equipment that make it easier to function effectively in school, at home, and in the workplace.
- **Career education**—skills that enable students who are visually impaired to move toward working as an adult, including
 - Exploring and expressing preferences about work roles
 - Assuming work responsibilities at home and school
 - Understanding concepts of reward for work
 - Participating in job experiences
 - Learning about jobs and adult work roles at a developmentally appropriate level
- **Self-determination**—skills to enable students to become effective advocates for themselves based on their own needs and goals.

Although this may seem like a lot for any child to accomplish, your child's education team will decide which of these skills your child needs to focus on at any given time.