

Recess for Students with Visual Impairments

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Abstract

During recess, the participation of a student with visual impairments in terms of movement can often be both challenging and rewarding for the student and general education teacher. This paper will address common characteristics of students with visual impairments and present basic solutions to improve the participation of these students in the recess setting. Initially the definition and prevalence of visual impairments will be presented. This will be followed by a discussion of possible challenges and general solutions for children with visual impairments in the recess setting. Lastly, specific methods of including a student with visual impairments in movement recess activities will be discussed.

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Definition and Prevalence of Visual impairments

Visual impairments is defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness (I.D.E.A., 2004). The incidence of this impairment for school-age children is approximately one out of every thousand (United States Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). This may seem like a low number but since the average elementary school size in the United States is approximately 500 (U.S. Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics, 2007), about one half of elementary schools will have a student with a visual impairment enrolled during most school years and this child could possibly be enrolled at this school for about six years.

Possible Challenges for Children with Visual impairments in the Recess Setting

When discussing the challenges for children with visual impairments in the recess setting, one should note the fact that children with visual impairments often experience a delay in motor skills. This is true especially in locomotion and mobility. It is to be remembered, however, that these children often possess many of the same motor capabilities as their peers and thus every opportunity should be given in order for the child to reach their full physical potential and also develop in a social context (Foundations of Special Education, 2007). It goes without saying that a lack of an opportunity to fully participate in recess can have a variety of negative effects on the child.

General Solutions to Challenges for Children with Visual Impairments in the Recess Setting

One general solution to including children with visual impairments in the recess setting includes the technique entitled Physical Guidance. In this technique, children with visual impairments are guided verbally and physically in the desired motion to increase their understanding of the movement. This is important because children with visual impairments cannot use visual cues and thus need to be guided in an alternative manner. For example, during a recess activity when children are involved in a game of hopscotch, the partner can perform the “hops” while holding the student’s hand and giving a verbal cue of how and when to jump (Foundations of Special Education, 2007).

The second general solution to including the student in the recess setting involves the method entitled Tactile Modeling. In this method the partner does not touch the student but instead allows the student to initiate the touch as the movement is demonstrated and verbal cues are provided. In using the example of a hopscotch game, the partner, while providing verbal cues, performs the hops as the student with the visual impairment places a hand on the student. The student thus acquires a sense of the motion to be performed and subsequently performs the motion individually. It is to be remembered that both methods require one-on-one attention (Foundations of Special Education, 2007).

As noted the two solutions to including a student in the recess are very general in nature. To follow are specific modifications to common recess activities for children with visual impairments.

Methods of Including a Student with Visual impairments in Specific Movement Recess Activities

| Activities | Modifications for Students with Visual Impairments |
|------------------------|--|
| All Activities | Remember safety is the most important element and depending on the activity an adult or partner may need to be assigned to the student |
| Jump Rope (individual) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Jump over rope that is placed on ground (touch the rope with feet to gain orientation), continue jumping over the rope, back and forth▪ Provide verbal cues as to when to jump over the rope during the beginning of the activity▪ Provide physical assistance |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allow the student to touch the arm of the student or teacher as a looping of the rope is demonstrated so the student with the visual impairment can then loop the rope ▪ Provide physical assistance in looping the rope when needed |
| Hop Scotch | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have the student jump with two feet – instead of hop - for the number of times that the other students hopped not being concerned with their foot placement ▪ Provide verbal cues as to when to hop/jump during the beginning of the activity ▪ Allow the student to touch the shoulder of the student or teacher as a hop/jump in the proper direction is demonstrated ▪ Provide physical assistance when hopping/jumping when needed |
| Throwing/Catching | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allow the student to roll the ball to a student providing verbal cues ▪ Have the student sit as a ball is rolled softly to the student so it can be trapped instead of caught ▪ Have a partner catch the ball and hand the ball to the student with the visual impairment so the throw can then be performed ▪ Provide verbal cues to the student when throwing the ball ▪ Provide physical assistance in throwing the ball when needed ▪ Allow the student to touch the arm of the student or teacher as a throw is demonstrated ▪ Provide physical assistance in rolling the ball when needed |
| Kick Ball | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allow the student to kick a stationary ball that has been located with the hands and/or feet ▪ Allow the student to run with a peer (holding hands) between the bases ▪ Allow the student to play with a partner as the position of catcher and roll the ball back to pitcher as the pitcher gives a verbal cue ▪ When the student with the visual impairment is batting and running the bases with assistance, have the students in the field throw and catch the ball, without dropping it, to five partners, before a throw is made to the base to get the student with the visual impairment out ▪ Provide verbal cues to the student continuously throughout the game ▪ Allow the student to touch the leg of another student as a kick is demonstrated ▪ Provide physical assistance in kicking the ball when needed |
| Bowling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allow the student to touch the pins before walking to the position to roll the ball in order to gain orientation ▪ Have a peer stand in front of the head pin and give a verbal cue and then move out of the way after the ball has been rolled ▪ Allow the student to touch the arm of the student or teacher as a roll is demonstrated ▪ Provide physical assistance in rolling the ball when needed |
| Basketball (Horse) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have a student roll a ball at a target such as a bowling pin that is placed under the goal as a modification to shooting in a basket – provide verbal cues as to the location of the pin. The student follows all other rules in terms of location of shooting ▪ Allow the student to touch the arm of the student or teacher as a roll is demonstrated |

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| | ▪ Provide physical assistance in rolling the ball when needed |
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Conclusion

The participation of a student with visual impairments in recess can often be both challenging and rewarding for the student and general education teacher. This paper addressed common characteristics of students with visual impairments and presented basic solutions to improve the education of these students in the recess setting. It is to be remembered that all children should be included in recess as the benefits of this activity are paramount.

References

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