

Expanded Core Curriculum

Your child will study the same basic academic subjects that children without disabilities do, from how to tell time to how to read. But in order to master these subjects (often referred to as the *core curriculum*) and complete 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*. These skills are sometimes also referred to as *disability-specific skills* because they are necessary specifically for individuals who are visually impaired. They may include activities such as these:

- 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 (O&M)
- Knowing how to use specialized computer equipment and other technology devices designed for children with visual impairments
- Learning how to use remaining vision and other senses 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 have to be taught by a teacher who specializes in working with students who have visual impairments. The full list of expanded core areas includes the following:

- Compensatory (or alternative) academic skills, such as learning braille
- Orientation and mobility skills, such as traveling with a cane

- Social interaction skills, such as initiating conversations
- Independent living skills, such as cooking or using a checkbook
- Recreation and leisure skills, such as hiking or crocheting
- Sensory efficiency skills, such as how to use a magnifier or other specialized device
- Use of technology, for reading, writing, and browsing the Internet
- Career education, such as applying for jobs
- Self-determination, such as setting goals for college and choosing a career

When she is in kindergarten, your child may have the need for only a few areas of this expanded core curriculum, such as alternative academic skills and orientation and mobility. As she grows older, she may have additional needs that can be met by some of the other areas. For example, as her schoolwork becomes more complex, specialized technology may become more important to help her keep up. Social skills for interacting with other students and independent living or self-help skills to perform chores around the house may become more important as well. Your child's teacher of students with visual impairments can give you more information about the expanded core curriculum when you and your child need it.

The expanded core curriculum is not universally implemented. There is some discussion about whether these skills are the responsibility of the school district or of the family. While it is clear that children with visual impairments need instruction in braille, orientation and mobility, and technology in order to access the core curriculum, the other expanded core curriculum areas are not clear-cut entitlements, primarily because these curriculum areas are not usually taught to children without disabilities.

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