



Sightless Children Club

Newsletter

Attitudes, Environments, & Techniques that Promote Concept Development for Visually Impaired

APRIL 2008

It is important to cultivate attitudes, environments, and techniques that enable blind children to learn concepts—all day long—from the time they wake up in the morning until the time they go to bed at night. It is essential that they have many opportunities everyday to make-up for what they miss due to limited sight. More formal lessons that teach specific concepts and associated vocabulary are necessary, but these lessons must always be taught within an environment that naturally, moment to moment, cultivates the development of positive social and self-concepts and gives blind children access to their surrounding environments.

You can promote concept development through conversation, by helping the child access the world around him, and by enhancing his participation in activities and the routines of everyday life. Below are some suggestions that describe how to do this.

Be a skilled, caring conversation partner. Taking turns in meaningful ways and sharing interests and feelings are the basis elements of conversational interest and relationships. Children who are blind need available conversation partners who understand this. A skilled partner will interact with a child's feelings and communication efforts so that he knows he has been "heard" and that his natural responses to the world have been understood. During conversations, use opportunities that arise to establish mutual attention.

Become curious about the child's concepts and the stories he has to tell. Every child has stories to tell and his communication efforts are their attempt to tell stories. By regarding a child's movements as attempts to tell stories and by responding respectfully, you encourage them to express themselves further. You co-create meaning and greatly aid their concept development. And you will learn fascinating things about their experience of the world.

Invite the child to have access to what is going on around him. At very young ages, providing a connection to the world might involve moving in a stroller or walking along beside you helps them to experience what is going on around them such as the rhythm of walking, environmental smells, tactile experiences and sounds. Seek to supply as much missing information as possible by interpretation the world in whatever way works for your child.

Demonstrate actions that you want the child to do before you ask him to do them. Children who can see learn are motivated to do things by seeing those around them model all types of actions and activities. A child learns to tie his shoes, for example, because he sees his big brother or father tie shoes. When a child is unable to see he has no concept of what is possible. Models must be provided in a thoughtful way. Let the child feel things as

you do them or invite them to observe you closely if he has usable vision.

Make experiences tactual close-up. Provide interesting materials that encourage exploration. Concepts broaden and develop through curiosity. Be alert for materials that excite a child's curiosity and stimulate further exploration. Watch carefully as he interacts with objects and seek to understand the source of interest. Does he like a particular color, texture, sound or movement.

Include the child in the whole process do activities. Rather than having things "magically" appear or disappear (as it may seem to a blind child when objects and people suddenly go), invite him or her to come with you as you get things. Let him accompany to the refrigerator or material for a project. Including a child in the full process of activities will likely mean that he participates in fewer activities throughout a course of a day, but each one will be more meaningful and full of learning.

The development of concepts is a shared adventure, one in which you and a child who is visually impaired can learn from each other and explore the world together. Concepts are dynamic and continually developing. This is true for everyone, regardless of whether or not we can see.

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**Request Granted for
March went to:**

- *Meghan Phipps
CD Burner*
- *Shay Hayden
Computer Equip-
ment*
- *Tambie Trask
CCTV*



Walking with a friend
alone in the dark is
better than walking
alone in the Light.

—Helen Keller

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Rhea Collett spoke at the March meeting about her ski trip that she attended. It is put together by a organization call Ski for Light. It has been around since 1975 and Rhea first attended in 1976. Ski for Light is a program of cross-country skinning benefiting blind, visually-impaired, and mobility-impaired individuals and their guides. They cut 2 sets of parallel tracks in the snow . Each person has their own guide and they can do either a 10K race or a 5K rally. The minimum age for this event is 18 years old. . Information and applications for next years event will come out around July. You can get contact information from their web page at www.sfl.osg.



President's Corner

Lisa Buckingham (937) 746-5473

Aprils Meeting we will be having someone from UVLA demonstrating some of their new equipment . You won't want to miss this.

Also May will be our last meeting until September. So please remember if you have any requests, they need to be in since we do not meet over the summer months.

If anyone is interested we need 2 new board members. You must have been a member for 3 years and have also served on a committee. Please get with Lisa Buckingham if you are interested or have any questions.



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Meet-

Monday April 21st, 2008

10 Wilmington Place

Dayton, Ohio 45420

7:00pm

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