Vision Specific Synthesis Domain 6: Assessment theories and practices

Focus Question: Where When and How do I assess?

The quantity of assessment tools and the range of assessment for children who are blind or have low vision is enormous. In addition to the usual national curriculum assessments the learner will have Expanded Core Curriculum assessment. This is essential to ensure that learning that supports access to National Curriculums is taught systematically. It may mean that learning occurs to a different schedule to the rest of the classroom. In early childhood additional assessment is provided through the Oregon and for children who have more complex interrelated needs the Carolina, Ferrell, or Help may be used. As well as these key curriculum and assessment tools children will also have therapy goals included in their IEP’s and these will require assessment and information gathering. In early childhood the use of Narrative assessment for children has become as much a part of specialised early childhood settings as it a part of mainstream settings. BLENNZ is working towards including narrative assessments in other sectors. A key area of this is the use of exemplars on BLENNZ website. The use of digital technologies, specifically video and photos has become commonplace as evidence gathering. It is important that these are annotated and shared with other members of the learners team during the information gathering stages of the IEP.

Assessments for classroom use often need to be adapted. Braille reading may take more time depending on the learner’s proficiency, test font may need enlarging for a low vision learner. A reader or writer may need to be provided. Additional time may need to be given with breaks to avoid fatigue. These factors mean that the results of learners who are blind or have low vision may not be included in normative testing graphs.

In addition to assessment based on IEP goals and classroom curriculum the learner will have vision assessment. A key component of this is the functional vision testing that is done by the Specialist Teacher Vision or by the National Assessment Team. Functional Vision assessments (FVA) look at how a young person uses his/her vision to perform everyday tasks, to move around, to gain information and to interact socially.

It is very effective for assessing a students;

-         optical functioning, their visual awareness, visual attention, fixation, focus, fusion, tracking and scanning and light and colour reception.

-         Visual acuity for near and distance viewing

-         Perceptual functioning

-         Individual factors affecting a students’ vision

-         Environmental factors affecting a students vision such as lighting. Space, contrast, clutter, colour and positioning

Assessment is also important as a support to Assistive Technology applications as these are always based on measurable data.