



## **Strategies for Promoting Literacy Skills and Students with CVI**

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### **General Tips**

- Make reading time fun. Make custom books specifically for your student with his/her familiar, favorite visual targets in it.
- For the student functioning in Phase II, repeat the familiar target on each page. Ask the student to locate it, touch it, and then find the real, 3D target he/she is familiar with.
- Keep reading time short at first, but do it many times per day.
- Use “CVI Friendly” materials to custom make your books (see “Creating CVI Friendly Books” handout).
- Use apps such as, “Smart Image Search” to help locate specific pictures and images you might need to create your books.
- Use apps such as Pictello, iBooks and Book Creator to help make books on tablets.
- Read aloud to your student as often as possible. Point to individual pictures and words as you read. Discuss salient features of pictures and words.
- Present literacy materials in the student’s best field of view and at the best distance. Generally students in Phase II and often students in Phase III need their literacy materials within 36 inches.
- Lower visual fields are often difficult to view targets in (or neglected), especially for the student functioning in Phase II. Use a slant board, Invisiboard or All In One Board to raise materials up to approx. eye height. Avoid laying materials flat on a tray or table.
- Allow time for the student to process what he/she is seeing before turning to the next page. Allow for latency.

### **Activities to Promote Early Literacy for Students in Phase II**

- Create books using color photographs of student’s favored, familiar targets such as a pacifier, sippy cup and mylar pom pom.
- Photograph the target against a black background.

- Have only one target per photo and only one photo per page.
- Encourage your student to touch the photograph and then give the student the real, 3D favored target.
- Use “bumpers” between each page to separate the pages and encourage easy turning.
- If you are working on Eyegaze as a form of communication, separate the pages of the book and use only two of the pages with wide separation, mounted on an Invisiboard (or other slant board) at far left and far right. When the child looks at one of the targets, promptly give the student the real, 3D item that is associated with that picture. Hint; Spray painting clothes pins black and attaching black Velcro on one side is an excellent way to clip pages to the Invisiboard as the fabric on the Invisiboard is Velcro compatible.
- If the student is able to identify color illustrations, such as Elmo, purchase 3 or 4 Early Literacy Elmo books (3 or 4 copies of the same book) and create “CVI Friendly” Elmo Books by cutting up the commercial books. Start with a simple version, cutting out only the illustrations of Elmo from one book and putting one illustration of Elmo on each page of the “CVI Friendly” version. Gradually add more complexity to each “CVI Friendly” book by adding one other target per page in addition to Elmo. By the fourth book, you might be able to add simple text.
- When using a commercial book, use a high-powered flashlight behind the page and flush with the page to highlight a specific picture or word.
- Use SpotLIGHTing techniques to illuminate a specific picture or word with the spotlight coming from in front of the page.

### **Activities to Promote Literacy for Students in Phase III**

- Create “CVI Friendly” books in conjunction with themes being worked on in the classroom setting.
- Assemble separate “Book Bags” that each contains objects featured in a particular story to add interest to storytelling and convey important concepts. Pull each object out of the bag at the appropriate moment in the story and discuss the salient features of that object.
- Encourage your student to turn the pages of a favorite book and “retell” the story in his/her own words. This early approximation of reading behavior is an important step for all children, whether sighted, blind or cortically visually impaired.

- Help your student label belongings and important landmarks – such as a toy box, drawer, cubby or coat hook, in “CVI Friendly” print. This might mean that you print the word in bold black letters on a bright yellow strip of paper, and then mount this “label” on a larger piece of black paper before mounting it on the item. Remember to use a non-curlicue font such as APHont or Arial.
- Provide your student plenty of opportunities to “scribble” with traditional paper and marker or use tablet technology with an apps such as iFluids, fluidity, KaleidoBalls, Glow Draw or Light Box.
- Talk about letter sounds throughout the day and during naturally occurring routines. This will help to develop phonemic awareness and phonics skills. Remember to make discussions about letter sounds part of your conversation as you walk to recess, fix a snack or change motor activities. Emphasize the initial consonant sound of each word you talk about and discuss the salient features of that letter that makes that sound. Play rhyming games and read poems with rhyming words.
- It will be important that your student read at home as well as at school. As soon as your student is able to read a short story, arrange to send a “CVI Friendly” teacher-made story home. It should be something your student can read with 90% accuracy; this is usually a story he/she has read repeatedly at school. The book or story can be the same for several nights in a row. Encourage parents to make “CVI Friendly” books as well. The topic could be about a special family event or outing, favorite toys or about different family members.