



# Ottawa-Carleton Education Program for Students with Visual Impairment

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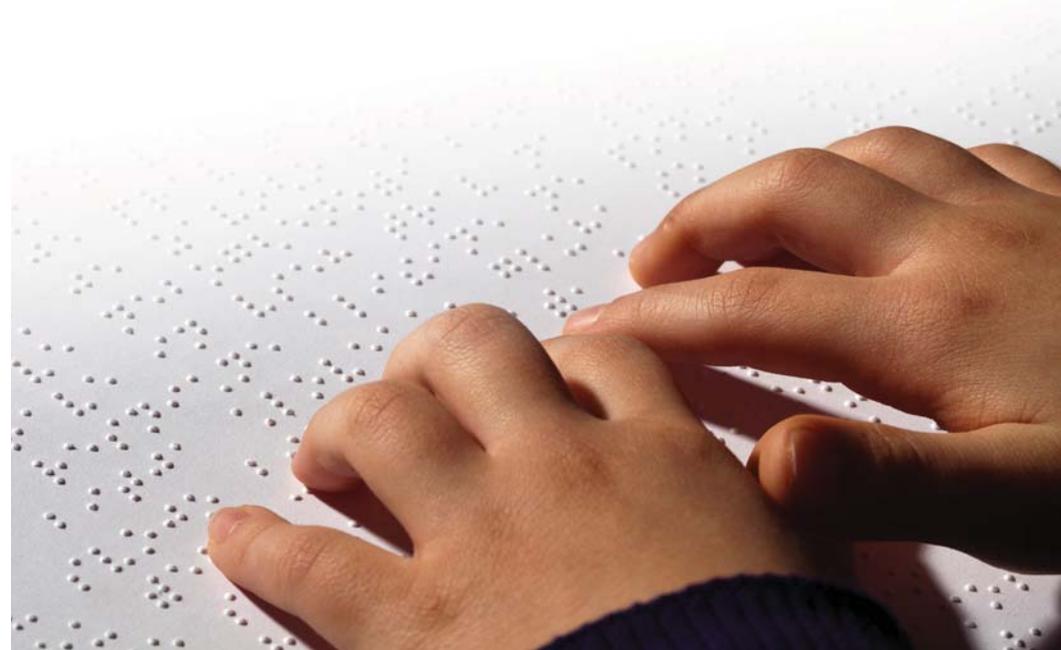
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Screen-enlarging software allows students to read and write notes using laptop computers.



This portable CCTV, which enlarges print, can be easily transported by students to various classroom settings.

## A Vision for Learning Services for low-vision and blind students

Do you have a school-age child who is blind or has low vision? Ottawa's two English school boards have a special program (Ottawa-Carleton Education Program for Students with Visual Impairment) to help such students achieve their best. Under the program, itinerant teachers of the blind/low vision travel to schools where blind and low-vision students attend. These itinerant teachers work with students, teachers, and parents.

### Did you know?

1. No two individuals with impaired vision see the same way.
2. Support services must be tailored to each student's needs.
3. Blind and low-vision students have much in common with other students.
4. Only one student in 1,000 has low vision and one in 10,000 is a braille user.

### What is visual impairment?

#### Low Vision

Anyone whose vision cannot be corrected to more than 20/70 in his or her good eye has low vision. Students with low vision have some useful sight. However, they may have



### Step 3: Level of Service

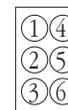
The Functional Vision Assessment determines whether the student meets the necessary criteria to receive services and at what level. Service can range from consultation with school teaching staff to direct weekly contact with the student to develop specific skills, e.g., keyboarding, software, assistive technology, orientation and mobility travel skills. Students who use braille require intensive support on a daily basis. The level of service may vary from year to year depending on identified needs and goals of the student.

#### Low-vision students

- Monitor — two to four visits a year
- Indirect — one to four visits a month
- Direct — up to five visits a week

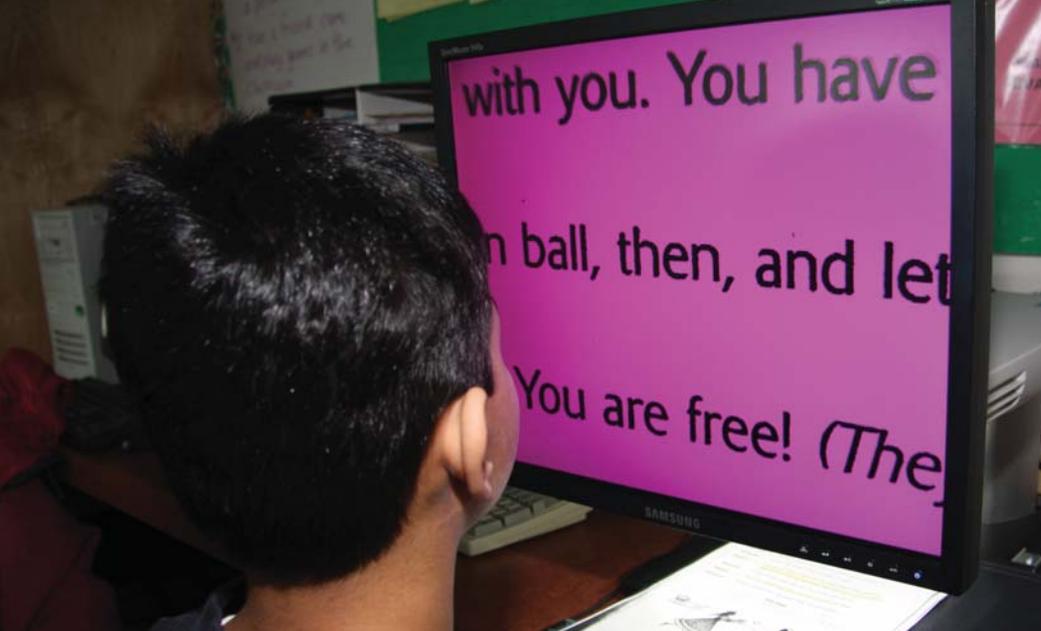
#### Blind students

- Up to five visits a week



The dots in this logo represent the braille letters O (dots 1, 3, 5) and C (dots 1, 4). All braille letters are composed of a combination of the six dots in the braille cell.





A CCTV (closed circuit television) is used by a student to enlarge regular size print from a book or worksheets, etc.

- classroom teacher information form
- parent information form
- Functional Vision Assessment Consent form (for parent to sign)

Upon receipt of completed forms, an ITB/LV will contact the school for follow-up.

### Step 2: Evaluation

An ITB/LV will complete a Functional Vision Assessment with the student. This may include:

- consultation with school/resource staff and parents
- observing the student in various settings at the school, e.g., classroom, computer, gym, school yard
- working on individual visual activities with the student
- assessment of the student's orientation and mobility travel skills

The ITB/LV will write a report explaining the student's visual impairment and make recommendations and suggestions for accommodations.

A functional visual assessment is not an eye examination.  
It is an evaluation of a student's visual skills in the school setting.



Students use a braille to complete work assignments.

difficulty reading and may not recognize images at a distance or be able to differentiate similar colours.

### Blind

People are considered blind if their vision cannot be corrected to better than 20/200 or if their peripheral vision is narrowed to 20 degrees or less in their good eye. Blind students use braille and audio tools to access learning.

### How can itinerant teachers help?

Because there are so few blind and low-vision students, the two English school boards employ specialist teachers to visit from school to school. Their expertise is a welcome support for students, teachers, and parents. For students, the itinerant teacher is a trusted adviser they can talk to, a confidant on social skills, who helps with work and study habits, problem solving, and is an advocate for them.





*A portable electronic braille notetaker allows a student to braille and save documents that can later be downloaded onto a computer.*

*A monocular is used by a student for distance viewing, e.g., reading information off a chalkboard, reading posters, street signs and house numbers.*

Here are some other ways itinerant teachers help:

#### **For low-vision students**

- making the best of remaining vision (developing visual skills)
- training in computer and specialized software (screen enlarger and readers) and technical skills to take advantage of technology, i.e., closed circuit televisions
- assisting with improving orientation and mobility travel skills
- ongoing evaluation of residual vision

#### **For blind students**

- training in computer, specialized software (screen readers), and technical skills to take advantage of technology, i.e., braille, notetakers, DAISY player
- training in literary braille, Nemeth Code, abacus, slate and stylus, signature writing, map, and diagram reading, etc.
- providing orientation and mobility travel skills/cane training
- developing improved ability to identify things by touch (developing tactile skills)
- producing low-relief diagrams for Mathematics, Science, etc.



#### **For the schools**

- explaining each student's visual difficulties to teachers and staff and advocating on their behalf
- assisting school staff with adapting the environment, teaching methods, and expectations to the student's needs and ability
- transcription of exams and resources into braille or large print
- helping to assess the technology needs, the loan of some materials, (e.g., manipulatives, large print books), and providing samples and ordering information of consumable materials such as bold or raised lined paper, non-carbon notepaper

### **How does the program work?**

#### **Step 1: Refer the Student**

Students may be referred to the program by school staff, parents, or health professionals. All requests/referrals are sent to the lead teacher of the Itinerant Teacher of the Blind/Low Vision (ITB/LV) team. The office coordinator will send out a referral package to the principal of the school. The referral package contains:

- information booklet
- blank eye examination report form (to be completed by eye doctor)

