

## TIPS FOR WORKING WITH VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS

- Introduce yourself when speaking to a person with vision impairment, let them know who you are: "Hi, it's Scooter, etc."
- Don't get caught up on language. Don't be afraid to use vision related terms. The best way to know what is and what is not acceptable or comfortable for someone is to ask that person.
- Use descriptive language. Give clear instructions. Example: left, right, on top of, to the right of, at six-o'clock. Expressions like: "it's over there" or "here it shows" are not clear and don't provide very much information about what is being asked or described.
- Take a multi-sensory approach to your teaching. Try and make things tactile, use manipulatives, try activities that use more than one sense or that focus on different senses other than vision.
- Look at the individual and work with that individual to come up with strategies that best meet their individual needs. Every vision impaired student is different just as every student is different. It is important to know that even one vision impaired student can experience differences in their vision depending on things like lighting conditions, tiredness, glare on materials, color contrast, etc. Be flexible.
- Encourage independence. Provide your students with opportunities to do things on their own, unassisted. When you do something for someone that they are capable of doing themselves, it takes away from that person's independence.
- If ever physical guidance is needed, offer your arm bent at the elbow to the person. Do not grab them by the arm and "lead them."

\*If you have never had any experience with a person who has a disability then it is easy to feel uncertain, intimidated or frightened. It's OK to have these feelings; it's not OK to do nothing about them. Talk to people: people with disabilities, parents or siblings of people with disabilities, people who work with people with disabilities. Glean information: read, investigate disability information on the internet, get in touch with organizations, community groups, etc.