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Subject: What is the Expanded Core Curriculum?

Core Curriculum:

Math, science, social studies, language arts

Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC):

Everything else you need to learn to be successful in life!

The ECC was created in 1993. This curriculum was developed to assure the unique needs of students with vision impairment were being met in schools and in the community. The ECC focuses on all the things needed to help children with vision impairment, including those with multiple challenges, be as successful as possible in all areas of life.

How does the ECC relate to babies and young children?

So much is learned in the early years of development! For babies and young children with vision impairment The ECC helps build the foundation of skills that sighted children *learn incidentally, or through imitation*. This requires careful attention to adapting/modifying things in the school, home and play environments, using specific teaching and parenting strategies and focusing on how to best meet the unique needs of each child. Our goal at The Anchor Center for Blind Children is to help parents and their children develop a strong foundation for a lifetime of learning.

9 ECC Domains

Sensory efficiency: We all use our senses to explore, understand and interact with things and people in our world. Vision impairment has a huge impact on sensory processing as it is one of our most important senses for taking in information. Effectively using all of the senses that are not impaired is something that starts at birth and needs to be well developed for higher level learning in all areas of life. Having additional sensory impairment like hearing or physical challenges makes sensory efficiency even more challenging (but not impossible) In most cases the other senses do not automatically work better because of vision loss- it must be thoughtfully taught/introduced and adapted.

Compensatory: This area focuses on compensating for vision impairment through use of things like magnification, auditory/hearing skills and tactile/touch skills for learning. This is very closely related to sensory efficiency. Light boxes, braille books, exploring use of a braille and using the CCTV are examples of compensatory skills that can be introduced at an early age. Children with vision impairment need to play with these compensatory tools early just like sighted children scribble with crayons or look at picture books long before they learn to read or write. Concept development is a big part of compensatory skills. for example- big/little, rough/smooth, heavy/light...

Life skills/independent living: This is a very important domain for children birth to 5! It includes foundational self help skills all babies and children learn in the early years of life. Some children will always need help with daily care, but there are many things they can do to participate and help. Starting at birth children must first learn to eat and regulate their sleep. As they get older children can learn to help more with bathing, dressing, toileting, keeping track of their belongings and doing simple chores. For children with typical vision a great deal of these skills are learned through watching and imitation. Children with vision impairment require more adaptations and intentional teaching to learn these skills.

Social skills: This also begins at birth as babies begin by bonding with parents/caregivers. Having any medical issue including vision impairment can make bonding and development of typical social skills more challenging. Helping babies and children learn the skills needed to be happy, function as part of a group and develop friendships is an essential part of parenting and teaching in the first 5 years of life. This area of life can be impacted significantly by sensory processing issues and other medical challenges common with many vision diagnoses.

self determination: learning to be confident, independent and a good self-advocate is an essential part of being well adjusted and successful. Again, this begins early in life with the first steps of playing independently and separating from caregivers. Later it is important a child feels comfortable speaking up and saying: "I can't see that"; "the lights are too bright,"; "I want to try."; "I need help."; or "I can do it!".

Orientation and mobility: *Orientation* refers to the ability to know where you are and where you want to go. *Mobility* refers to the ability to move safely, efficiently, and effectively from one place to another.

For babies and young children with vision impairment this starts with understanding their own body movements and where they are in relationship to other things and people in their world. A baby putting his hands in his mouth and playing with his feet are examples of very early orientation and mobility skills. As a child learns to move out more in space (rolling, scooting and walking) their orientation and mobility skills grow. Even a child who cannot walk or crawl can learn orientation and mobility skills. Everyone can understand where they are and where they are going and should be an active part of that process.

Rec and leisure: Everyone needs to have things they do for fun both independently and as part of a group. From a very early age children need to be exposed to a variety of rec and leisure activities such as music, movement games, board games, manipulative toys, gardening/play in nature.... Again, this is something that may require adaptations for vision impairment and more hands on exposure to a variety of activities.

Assistive technology: This may be as simple as playing on a phone or tablet to using very complex communication device. Exploring which assistive technology may be helpful in the realm of teaching and rec and leisure can begin early. But it is important to introduce the right technology at the right time.