

# ***REPUBLIC OF KOREA***

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Education for Children with Visual  
Impairment in Regular Schools

## **1. The Inclusive Education of Students with Visual impairment in Korea**

In contrast to other areas of disabilities, students with visual impairment in Korea have not been educated inclusively, but they usually get education at a special school with a dormitory system until high school. However, it is much easier to educate students with visual impairment in an inclusive setting than students with other disabilities, if there are some subsidiary facilities to help them and they get educative cares by general teachers.

There are 12 special schools for the students with visual impairment all over the country, which means there is one school of that kind in a province or city and we have two in Seoul. And a recent research has shown that many students with low vision(above 60%) are included naturally in general schools(2001, KISE). Now it is the time to support students with visual impairment who are being educated in general classes. This year, two-year Hankuk National College of Rehabilitation & Welfare has opened, whose admission and school fees are paid by national treasury. 7 students with visual disabilities are attending academic courses in that college. Hence the students with visual impairment have an opportunity to be high-educated together with general students.

The advantages of inclusive education contain the opportunities to get social interaction with their peers, to have access to the same curriculum as their peers, and to live in their home communities without residing away from home. If these opportunities are not given to the students with visual impairment, they cannot make their self-conception realistic by living only with their classmates in small classes from the 1st grade of elementary school to the 3rd grade of high school. It can make them show a tendency not to get along with general persons after they have grown up.

There is also an advantage of inclusive education to the general people including their sighted classmates. They will learn the differences among human beings and see how people with visual impairment adapt to the visual world in order to accomplish their goals.

However, there is a factor to make inclusion more difficult. At present, the occupational subjects for the students with visual impairment are restricted to the oriental massage as physiotherapy including acupuncture. Owing to the fact that most people with visual impairment can be economically independent if they finish the course of the oriental massage as physiotherapy, the administrators and the oriental massage teachers don't feel keenly the necessity of inclusive education and don't want to practice it. But when the inclusive education is activated, the range

of subjects will be broader and it can lead them to more various job areas according to student's interests and talents.

And, if the parents want their children with visual disabilities to study in general classes, the students can get an inclusive education. When a student with visual impairment has ability to take an academic participation, most parents prefer that the student remain in a regular school as long as a special teacher(itinerant teacher) is available to support his or her academic activities. Most students who have only visual impairment should be in regular classrooms because they can get both academic and social benefit. Actually over 1/3 of students with visual impairment have been preparing for the scholastic aptitude test for universities through self-study after classes.

## **2. Constructing an Educational Environment to Facilitate the Inclusive Education**

In the situation of inclusive education, the students with visual impairment should be given sufficient chances to be familiar with the environment around the classroom. Students should have access to regular orientation and mobility. Instruction for orientation and mobility should take its emphasis on familiar routes and destinations, which will help the children become independent in their own environment.

To include the students with visual impairment, it is needed to get cooperation from general teachers, and there should be realistic support rather than an enormous change in the aspect of facilities, in other words, reasonable accommodation is needed.

### **1) Academic factors**

#### (1) Teaching content and method

- ① Curriculum accommodation: Teaching method should be accommodated only when it is necessary. And the educational goal is to be applied equally to both general students and students with visual impairment.
- ② Evaluation accommodation: The students with visual impairment can take much more time on test and when submitting homework than general students, and enlarged copies, braille and recorded materials should be offered on test. This is a good way for the students with visual impairment to be prepared for the OECD academic achievement test.

#### (2) Material and device support

- ① The students with blind: For blind children who cannot read, the use of textured or auditory materials is helpful to identify features. And they can listen to the classmates who read out stories while they touch the texture. And a large desk should be provided to put a braille typewriter and various learning materials on it.
- ② The students with low vision: A magnifying glass and CCTV can be useful, but the main reading medium is general or magnified letters. Recorded materials, technical devices, and

braille are also needed. The arrangement of lighting and the seats of students with low vision should be taken into consideration so as to help them preserve their remained eyesight. Students with low vision get benefit from high color contrast of the devices. High contrast in lighting and in color would be helpful for the students with low vision to see the environment more clearly.

- ③ The students with multiple and visual disabilities: In general, the students who have visual and multiple disabilities have difficulty in understanding how communication is associated with objects, events, and people. Teachers should work out to help these students understand the meanings of words by relating them to experiences and events. Often, the best materials are real objects, not highly technological materials.

Learning should be achieved by functional and concrete method, using tangible materials and events that can be felt by physical senses instead of broad ideas that are described only in languages.

## 2) Social skill factors

As shown in the passage above, teaching method, text utilization and evaluation should be considered for inclusion in general setting. In addition to that, training for human relationship should be provided to decrease a sense of inferiority, and to solve the psychological matter of the students with visual impairment. Because of the visual limitations, students find it difficult to catch what others are showing by facial expressions. Especially when a student with visual impairment has other disabilities, he/she may not want to interact with others.

Therefore social skills need to be developed because they are indispensable for living as a member of community. The methods are: first, encouraging students to participate in an extra-curriculum such as camping, club activities and athletic meeting with general students. And making general students form peer helper groups to minimize visually impaired students' psychological stress from inclusive education. Second, giving students chances of being counseled to solve the conflicts and to get rid of the stress from inclusive education. To provide these opportunities, public welfare institutes should make efforts. Third, giving general students a chance to experience the visual disability for understanding the students with visual impairment, having them learn the braille, and making them familiar with the special technical devices for the students with visual impairment.

## 3. The Case of Successful Inclusive Education at the School level

Although the actual condition of inclusive education in special schools for the students with visual impairment is very poor, the inclusive education in schools can be classified into two: one of them is letting general students be educated in special schools in order to give them a chance to understand students with visual impairment and to share the experience of disabilities. The other is letting students with visual impairment be educated in general schools.

In the case of Seoul National School for the Blind, general students got an education with the students with blind in the class of club activities. Another inclusive education has been executed every other week in a kindergarten as an effort for inclusion.

Beside these cases, a special school has set up a plan to program an inclusive education systematically and performed it for 2 years through the cooperation with a general school. Following is the successful case of the school, which is recommendable for inclusive education.

### <Beautiful Consensus>

The students with visual impairment who are fully included in regular schools

- The case of inclusive education at Taejon School for the Blind

### \* First Session for one year

1) **Goal:** Searching for an effective management method for the inter-school inclusive education

(1) Support for the environment

: Cooperative schools were selected, an organization for the inclusive education was set up, a teacher training program was performed, and conferences were held. Also, survey for the basic management of the inclusive education was done, the facilities for the inclusive education were installed, and the 'Guide to Inclusive Education' was published and distributed.

(2) Range of inter-school inclusion

: After the students for the inclusive education had been selected and arranged in schools, the range of curriculum and education period was set. One- or two-week inclusive education program per month was scheduled for seven months per year.

(3) Searching and adaptation of the method for instructive accommodation

: The instructive accommodation, that is, the syllabus of cooperative instruction was utilized, analyzing the individual status of students visual impairment.

(4) Searching the method for improvement of peer interaction

: Natural human relationship was induced by selecting peer tutors, peer helpers, or peer special friends among the volunteer non-disabled students.

2) **Result:** The experience of inclusive education increased the confidence of students with visual impairment in their learning, everyday lives, and making friends.

\* During the second session, the subjects for the full inclusion were selected among the students with visual impairment and their special needs were analyzed while the assistant program for the full inclusion was devised and applied.

### \* Factors of Success in Inclusive Education

Students' ability of communication, intelligence or appearance were merely influential. Selfish students were unsuccessful in inclusion. The personal factors and skills of personal relationship were important in the success of inclusive education.

#### \* Difficulties in Inclusive Education

Though special teachers originally agree on the inclusive education, they cannot afford for it in the aspect of practice. Teachers in regular schools are not fully aware of inclusive education. The size of general classes is large, and the noises in the classroom hinder inclusive education when the students with visual impairment mostly depend on the aural sense.

#### 4. National Support and Effort for Inclusive Education of Students with Visual Impairment

The Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development encourages inclusive education by providing incentive to the schools designated as a model. Since it is not easy for a local school to practice the inclusive education spontaneously, national systematic supports are required. They should arrange itinerant special teachers in general schools in connection with special schools for students with visual impairment. And they should transcribe documents in braille, and explore plans for supporting technical devices. In Korea, national supports are being provided as follows:

##### 1) Technical devices

The national budget has been approved to support a private company which develops technical devices for students with visual impairment.

(1) Provide braille note taker (Hansone braille) manufactured by HIMS (Human Interface Machines)

: National budget, 2.97 billion for 600 EA, has been approved to assure the right of information accessibility for the students

The authority has determined to provide braille note takers (internet, saving files, printing out, reading out, searching) for 600 students among students in 12 special schools all over the country, who are the blind that necessarily demand braille use, or students with low vision that have difficulties in using magnified textbooks.

(2) provide the expenses to buy a speech recognition program (Computer Support)

: All devices related to the information technology, intranet installment are already provided nation wide

##### 2) Textbook in braille

: Produce and supply textbooks in braille for the students with blindness (370 million)

##### 3) Enlarged textbook

: Produce and supply enlarged textbooks transferred from all textbooks of elementary school (560 million).

4) Educational system for students with disabilities at home by Korea Institute for Special Education

: Develop another educational mode for the students with visual impairment

5) Development plan on multimedia self-study books by computer-enhanced learning

: Assist learning by connection with braille note taker

6) Deployment of Braille transcribers, embossers, cassette tape duplicators and studios for Recording

: Support learning compensatory devices for the students with visual impairment in Hankuk College of Rehabilitation and Welfare

\* In total, 230 students are enrolled and among those, about 130 are with disability, including 7 visually impaired students majoring in applied music, rehabilitation / welfare and computer game development. The students with visual impairment are supported as follows:

- During vacation, prepare electronic textbook for coming semester with the help of volunteers
- Provide Korean Braille note taker (Hansone)
- Provide classroom material for professors and students by transcribers

In conclusion, A lot of supports have to be done for the successful inclusive education of the student with visual impairment: the collaboration between the general education teacher and special education teacher, useful program for inclusion at school level, various kind of national supports like as technical devices, educational materials.