QUALITY INDICATORS FOR PROGRAMS SERVING STUDENTS WHO ARE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED WITH ADDITIONAL DISABILITIES OR DEAFBLINDNESS

On the following pages is a list of program quality indicators for school programs serving students who are blind and visually impaired, and who have additional disabilities or deafblindness. These indicators are the result of extensive discussion between the professional staff of Perkins International and respected colleagues from throughout the regions served by this program.

We anticipate these indicators being used in two key ways. Primarily, we hope this tool will be used by programs for self-reflection and self-evaluation, as a part of the process of developing their internal plans for training and program development. It can also be used as a tool for outside evaluators to measure the capacity of a program, and thus to develop a plan to provide future support and to measure the impact of such support in building capacity.

The key program areas that are covered include:
- Assessment
- Program Planning and Classroom Organization
- Environment
- Communication and Social Relationships
- Curriculum
- Family Support
- Administration and Support
- Governmental Collaborations

The staff of Perkins International hopes that this document will be translated into local languages. To assure that this happens in a way that preserves the intent of each item, key terminology used in the document will be defined. Throughout the document, the acronym VIMD/DB is used. This means Visual Impairment with Multiple Disabilities or Deafblindness. Below you will find a clarification of terms that are found within specific subsections of the tool. We have included terms that might have multiple interpretations or that may be specific to the field of special education in North America.

- Assessment: The process by which an educator or non-clinical professional evaluates the strengths, needs, and learning style of a student.
- Evaluator: The person who conducts an assessment. A number of different people may evaluate a student, including teachers, psychologists, speech and language pathologists, and other educationally-related service providers. The term "evaluator" does not include medical professionals unless specifically mentioned.
- Assessment tools: Printed checklists and other developmental or functional scales used to assess overall development or specific skill or sensory areas.
- Individualized Educational Plan: A plan that is designed to meet the unique educational needs of one student. The IEP should describe how the student learns, how the student best demonstrates that learning, and what teachers and service providers will do to help the student learn more effectively.

- **Transition goals:** Goals developed for students as they approach adulthood. They relate to employment, independent living, community participation, and/or post-secondary education.
- **Teaching staff:** Teachers, teaching assistants, and others who provide direct instruction during the school day.
- **Age appropriate:** Activities, materials, curriculum, and environments that are consistent with the chronological age of the child being served.
- **Age and developmentally appropriate:** Activities, materials, curriculum, and environments that are consistent both with the chronological age of the student and that are also beneficial at his or her cognitive level. For example, a teenaged student who has very severe cognitive disability and low vision might have a goal of keeping his head up. An age and developmentally appropriate strategy might be to hang a brightly-colored poster of a rock star on the wall with a light shining on it, rather that hanging a baby mobile above his head.
- **Sensory loss:** For the purpose of this document, "sensory loss" refers to vision loss or combined vision and hearing losses.
- **Calendar:** For the purpose of this document, a calendar is an individual student's schedule. It is designed using objects, pictures, and/or drawings that include print and braille. It is used as a means for the student to anticipate and converse about part or all of the important daily, weekly, or monthly activities and/or events.
- **Natural environments:** Places or situations in which a student would be called upon to use the knowledge and skills being taught. For example, a natural environment for teaching bed-making would use the student's own bed during his or her natural morning routine.
- **Objects of reference:** An object used to represent a person, activity, or event. For example, a cup may be used as an object of reference for snack time.

Rating scale

Each indicator is rated according to the following categories.

Excellent: The program is doing an exemplary job at addressing this indicator.

Satisfactory: The program is doing an adequate job at addressing the indicator.

Not observed: This an area that should be addressed in the program, but is not.

Not applicable: The item is not relevant to the program. For example, the item that refers to transition goals for adult life would be not applicable for a preschool program.

Comments: Available for notes that will provide more specific information which might be useful in discussions or planning.

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Assessment	Excellent	Satisfactory	Not observed	Not applicable	Comments
Do evaluators demonstrate an understanding of the implication of VIMD/DB on development, learning style, and communication?					
Do evaluation team members work in a well-coordinated way (e.g., sharing information in advance, joint observation and discussion)?					
Are family members encouraged to share information and to express their expectations during the assessment process?					
Are assessment team members comfortable communicating and interacting with students with multiple disabilities and sensory loss?					
Do program staff coordinate or facilitate annual vision and hearing assessments by qualified eye-care or hearing specialists (ophthalmologist, optometrist, audiologist, etc.)?					
Are functional sensory (vision and hearing) assessments completed on each child?					
Are the assessment tools used appropriate (although not necessarily standardized) for students with VIMD/DB?					

Assessment	Excellent	Satisfactory	Not observed	Not applicable	Comments
Are assessments conducted during natural routines of the day?					
Are assessment recommendations integrated into the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?					
Is assessment information used to plan and modify the child's program?					
Is developmental/educational assessment completed at least once a year for each child?					
Program Planning and Classroom Organization					
Is there a documented process and format for developing Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) that are appropriate for the age of the students?					
Do children come to school everyday?					
Is there sufficient teaching staff to meet the learning needs of each child?					
Are class schedules and staff people consistent?					
Is there sufficient time for transitions between activities and for self-help skills, to allow for calm understanding and participation by the students?					
Do transition goals reflect student/family preferences for adult life?					
Environment					
Are indoor and outdoor spaces safe and accessible for students to move about as independently as possible?					

Environment	Excellent	Satisfactory	Not observed	Not applicable	Comments
Are the space and work areas adapted to accommodate for students' visual impairments (lighting, contrast, defined spaces, etc.)?					
Is the space adapted for students' hearing loss (e.g., floor and window covering for noise reduction)?					
Is the amount of sensory input controlled within the learning environment to encourage attention and maximum access to learning?					
Is the environment adapted for students with physical disabilities?					
Are multiple locations in the school and within the community used to encourage teaching in natural environments?					
Communication and Social Relationships					
Does the staff display a comfortable and mutually pleasant relationship with their students?					
Are staff fluent in the modes of communication that are most natural for their students?					
Do staff understand, acknowledge and respond to the communication of their students.					
Do students have full access to communication throughout their day?					
Are staff able to model the next higher level of communication, thus to encourage communication growth in their students?					
Do staff understand the communicative intent of challenging behaviors, and respond in an appropriate manner?					

Curriculum	Excellent	Satisfactory	Not observed	Not applicable	Comments
Does each student have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?					
Do lesson plans, activities, and teaching strategies clearly relate to the student goals and objectives contained in the IEP?					
Are concepts and skills taught through activities that are both age and developmentally appropriate?					
Do staff use teaching methods and activities that are associated with the interests of their students?					
Are sharing and choice-making a part of every activity?					
Are teaching materials appropriate for the students' ages and levels of development?					
Are materials accessible to the student?					
Is there a clearly defined and consistent schedule that is accessible to the students?					
• Are individualized calendar systems developed and used appropriately, with consideration for the student's vision and motor and communication abilities? (Examples: objects of reference, pictures, braille.) And do these reflect a progression from concrete to more abstract symbols?					
• Do staff members demonstrate an understanding of how to use calendars to help children anticipate and converse about activities?					

Curriculum	Excellent	Satisfactory	Not observed	Not applicable	Comments
• Is the day organized in a way that creates a flow, connecting activities to one another? (For example, writing a list of items to be purchased for a cooking activity, going to the store to buy them, completing the cooking activity, writing about it in a journal.) And is there a balance of preferred and non-preferred activities?					
Do activities have a clear beginning, middle, and end?					
Do staff members follow and build on the student's interests whenever possible?					
Does each student fully participate in all activities, regardless of his or her level of development?					
Do teachers provide an appropriate level of assistance (that is, with a minimum amount of cues) for completing a task?					
Do students receive the support services necessary to meet their educational needs (physical therapy, orientation and mobility, etc.)?					
Is literacy addressed at an appropriate level for individual students?					
Is there on-going development of life/vocational skills?					
Family Support					
Are there coordinated activities that promote networking among families?					
Are families encouraged to visit the program?					

Family Support	Excellent	Satisfactory	Not observed	Not applicable	Comments
Do program staff meet families in their homes and/or at school on a regular basis?					
Is there an effective system of home-school communication (home visits, communication books, etc.), so staff and families can keep each other well informed about the student?					
Are training workshops offered for families who have children in the program?					
Are families offered support and instruction in effective communication strategies for their child?					
Administration and Support					
Record-keeping and supervision					
Are files maintained for each student, containing important assessment, social, and educational reports?					
Do teaching staff receive supervision and support in an organized way by someone with knowledge and skills in the education of children with VIMD/DB?					
Are there planned opportunities for staff (including houseparent and auxiliary staff) to support each other and share information?					
Staff training					
Are staff encouraged to participate in training activities that will further their knowledge and skills in working with students who are VIMD/DB and their families? Is support provided for such training?					

Administration and Support	Excellent	Satisfactory	Not observed	Not applicable	Comments
Does the program link with colleges, universities, and other institutions that offer training in special education or related fields?					
Do administrators coordinate/conduct regularly scheduled staff training activities on topics that are relevant to the needs of the students they serve?					
Is there an accessible library of educational materials that are appropriate resources for teachers and are in a language that is accessible to them?					
Are staff encouraged and permitted to participate in training events conducted in the country or region on topics that are relevant to their work?					
Do teachers and administrators communicate clearly with each other?					
Governmental Collaboration					
Does the program comply with Ministry of Education (or other appropriate agency) standards for administration and service delivery?					
Do program administrators interact with the local, regional, and country level officers who are responsible for program monitoring?					
Are local, regional, and country level officers routinely invited to visit or attend events at the school or program?					