Summer Program Report
Academic Secondary Enrichment
Community Independence

Student: 
Dates: June 24th – July 4th, 2013
Teacher: Chris Tabb
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Program Overview
The Academic Secondary Enrichment (ASE) classes are designed for middle and high school academic students. These students work hard in school to learn regular core curriculum subjects such as language arts and math in classrooms with their sighted peers. In TSBVI summer programs, they have the opportunity to practice these academic skills within meaningful, high-interest activities. At the same time, they learn and practice skills in the Expanded Core Curriculum for Blind and Visually Impaired Students (ECC). The ECC includes skills that are unique to the needs of students with visual impairments. ECC skills enhance an individual’s ability to access the regular core curriculum, live independently, and enjoy social and recreational activities. Skills in the ECC include compensatory academic skills (e.g., braille and tactile graphics), orientation and mobility, social interaction skills, independent living skills, recreation and leisure skills, career education, assistive technology skills, sensory efficiency skills, and self-determination skills.

Each ASE class has a unique theme, and students participate in a wide variety of activities related to the theme of their class. During these activities, students learn and practice specific ECC skills such as applying math and literacy skills when creating and following a budget, food shopping and preparation, managing and organizing their living area, planning and evaluating a project, using public transportation, keeping up with belongings, and using technology for various purposes including research and communication with family and friends.

An additional benefit of the program is the opportunity to interact with other students with visual impairments. For many, talking with other students about the challenges they face at home and school may both alleviate feelings of isolation and increase self-confidence.

The ASE classes taught during the summer of 2013 were: Camp Challenge, Camp Fine Arts, Catching Some Rays: Space Weather, Community Independence, Adventure/Outdoor Education, Middle School Enrichment, Performance Arts Intensive, Problem Busters, Video Production, Visual Arts and More, and Wildcat Catering and Bistro.
Class Description: Community Independence

The Community Independence class was designed to provide students with an overview of skills and activities they will need as young adults, moving from high school into post-secondary education or vocational settings. These life transitions require the ability to balance interdependence with the community and self-sufficiency in a variety of areas: shopping for food, basic home care and organization, use of public transportation systems, money management and budgeting, and others. In order to prepare students for the challenges they will face, students participated in daily activities requiring them to go beyond discussion of what has to happen to live in the “real world” and actually perform the tasks required to live independently. Though this was not a “classroom” type of class, virtually all activities focused on skills found within several areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum for students with visual impairments.

Expanded Core Curriculum

Orientation and Mobility
Students traveled regularly throughout the two-week program. In addition to practicing their skills en route to the various destinations, they also learned about planning and being prepared. Each student brought appropriate gear to keep themselves safe in the elements: hats, water bottles, neck wallets for carrying bus cards and identification, small backpacks for carrying lunch and water. These items were all part of traveling into the community on the many full-day adventures. Students were exposed to many forms of travel within the community, ranging from walking to light rail service. They had the opportunity to travel by foot, taxi, fixed route bus system, and a light rail commuter train. They also learned to compare their transportation options in regard to efficiency, cost, and general availability for their intended travel. Students learned firsthand that it is a luxury to have a taxi meet you at your door, and that luxury comes at a cost. They also learned that they can save money by walking, and that if you are returning from the grocery store with ice cream, you will want to plan for a quick bus trip home if you don’t want your ice cream to melt.

Social Interaction Skills
Because of the group dynamics of this class, students needed to interact with one another in order to get things done. When they needed to identify items to purchase at the grocery store to make lunch, they had to communicate clearly to express what they wanted and listen attentively to make sure that everyone’s needs were met. There were team activities for locating areas at shopping centers where each student’s strengths were leveraged to help their team reach their goal. Students had different communication styles and they all had to learn to respect one another’s approaches in order to be effective.

Independent Living Skills
Students traveled to grocery stores to purchase food for preparing their lunches. They learned about travel in stores, interacting with store personnel, and options for working with a personal shopper. They traveled to retail shopping centers and worked with directory information; they also practiced locating stores and specific items by soliciting information. Students learned a bit about what it takes to take care of a home. Some were exposed to changing a light bulb for the first time, and others learned to label in braille to easily locate items when needed. Students all learned to do basic cleaning and heard suggestions on what to keep on hand for minor repairs and emergencies. They learned about keeping emergency information close by and practiced their independent problem solving skills. From budgeting to banking, students were exposed to strategies for keeping their money organized, safe, growing, and accessible. They met with a bank representative to learn about opening their own accounts and heard about options for accessing ATM machines with an audio connection.
Technology
Students had technology infused into many of the activities they participated in throughout the class. There were talking GPS options for orienting and route planning, iPad, iPod, and iPhone apps for everything from bar code scanning to text-to-speech translation with the built in Voice Over utility, and even ultrasonic devices for detecting obstacles and open spaces to add additional information about the students’ travel environment.

Sensory Efficiency Skills
From echolocation for those who were primarily non-visual travelers to monocular telescopes and magnifiers for those with residual vision, all students were challenged to connect with their environments—and they experienced many, many environments. Each student had their own balance of how they used cues, clues, and landmarks to get where they wanted to go. For some it was listening to the cash registers at the front of the store or using monocular telescopes to find an aisle number for locating potato chips. At other times students had to listen to announcements from public address systems on public transportation or use one of their sensory systems to orient with the position of the sun in the morning to maintain their direction of travel.

Self-Determination
Knowing what they wanted and getting it was a major component of this class, and though many students found that it took quite a bit of doing to get what they wanted, they all learned that they indeed could reach their destination. From planning to execution, learning self-sufficiency and interdependence, resourcefulness and tenacity, students found strategies and tools to achieve their aims. As the class progressed, the students’ confidence grew in areas that they were unsure of. They also developed a healthy respect for what it takes to get a task done when you do it yourself rather than rely on others.

INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS
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