Summer Program Report

Academic Secondary Enrichment
Taste of Independence

Student:
Dates: June 21, 2010-July 1, 2010
Teacher: Kodie Nagy, Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments
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Overview of Academic Secondary Enrichment Program
The Academic Secondary Enrichment (ASE) classes are designed for middle and high school academic students. These students work hard in school to learn core curriculum subjects such as math and science in classrooms with their sighted peers. In TSBVI summer programs, they have the opportunity to practice these academic skills within meaningful, high-interest activities, while also learning and practicing skills related to the Expanded Core Curriculum for Blind and Visually Impaired Students (ECC). The ECC includes skills such as compensatory academic skills (e.g., Braille and tactile graphics), orientation and mobility, career education, assistive technology, visual efficiency skills, independent living, recreation and leisure, social interaction, 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 using public transportation, food shopping and preparation, managing and organizing one’s living area, getting places on time, planning and evaluating a project, keeping up with belongings, using technology for various purposes including research, and applying math and literacy skills within meaningful activities (e.g., making a budget, and creating and using lists and other plans). 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 that were taught during the summer of 2010 were: Adaptive Tools and Technology for Accessible Mathematics, Camp Fine Arts, Chemistry, Chorus, Getting There (mobility and travel in the community), Individual Sports (physical education for SBOE credit), Middle School Enrichment, Radio Station Management, Recreational Sports, Problem Busters (an exploration of engineering and “thinking out of the box”), Restaurant Management, Rock Band, Taste of Independence, and Writers’ Workshop.
Description of Class: Taste of Independence
This program provided students with a variety of activities and experiences that individuals encounter in everyday living. The goal for the two week program was to immerse students in the Expanded Core Curriculum and intensely focus on the numerous skills needed for individuals with a visual impairment to be successful and, ultimately, independent. Students were introduced to house and clothing management strategies, organizational skills, social skills, self-advocacy, and problem solving skills. They also explored community recreation and public transportation options. Students had the opportunity to put their new knowledge to use throughout the week on numerous community outings to both practical and recreational destinations. At the beginning of the week students participated in a fun, fast paced “game show” activity that helped assess their current knowledge of independent living skills and encouraged social interaction.

Social Skills/Self-Advocacy
Students participated in a daily Teen Talk class where a variety of social skills and teen issues were discussed. Specifically, the topics of problem solving, self-advocacy, and self-determination were addressed. Students were also encouraged to role-play common social exchanges they may encounter in public places (e.g. soliciting assistance at the grocery store, speaking to employees at a restaurant, communicating information to a bus driver, communicating on the telephone, etc.). Students had multiple opportunities to put their practiced skills to use within the community and around campus.

Field Trips/Orientation and Mobility
Students participated in several community explorations throughout the weeks and were able to experience both the convenience and challenges of using public transportation (Austin’s Capital Metro System). On Tuesday the class created a grocery list and was taken via TSBVI driver to a nearby grocery store to get items for breakfast and lunch. They were encouraged to use a personal shopper (an employee of the store, rather than school staff) in order to be as independent as possible within the store. On Tuesday and Wednesday of the first week, students explored and researched a variety of transportation options available to them. On Wednesday afternoon, we walked to a nearby bakery to tour the kitchen and learn about the various job tasks and skills needed for that career. Thursday was our first experience with the Austin city bus for our exploration of a nearby Chase Bank. Before leaving, students discussed and role-played procedures for safe bus travel and gained skills in arranging and planning bus trips by using the phone and Internet. Students also participated in a class discussion on basic money management strategies and banking vocabulary they were likely to hear on our tour of the bank. On Friday of the first week, students participated in a scavenger hunt at a local mall and were able to practice their social skills by soliciting information from employees. They also practiced mobility techniques by negotiating escalators and unfamiliar spaces. The final Thursday provided the opportunity to explore strategies for safe pedestrian travel on our trip to a nearby restaurant for lunch. Students practiced proper cane and orientation techniques for crossing intersections and traveling unfamiliar sidewalks within the community.

Community Interaction
Students successfully asked for assistance and made purchases in the community. They were responsible for handling their own money as well as money they were given to purchase groceries and meals. Students were given many opportunities to practice interacting with the public in a supported setting.
Independent Living Skills/Organization
Students were provided strategies and techniques to help them perform daily living activities with as little assistance as possible. They were encouraged to store and organize their personal belongings in such a way as to simplify retrieval and to show respect for the personal space of others sharing their rooms. On the dorms, students participated in household management and cooking programs designed to increase their knowledge of meal planning and preparation. They practiced social skills and interpersonal interactions within the community, and were exposed to basic money management concepts and budgeting skills.

Cooking
Students were responsible for planning a morning breakfast meal that they could make for their own consumption. With support and verbal assistance, they had hands-on experience using various types of common cooking equipment and were exposed to basic safety procedures for working in the kitchen. They also helped to set and clear the table, as well as clean dishes and store them properly. During our second week, students participated in “cooking wars: girls vs. boys” where teams of students researched recipes and cooked an entire meal for the whole group. Each team used both the stovetop and oven for their meals.

Recreation/Leisure activities
Students were encouraged to explore a variety of recreational and leisure options available to them. Combining their personal preferences with the experience of novel activities, students were able to expand their repertoire of leisure choices.

Individual Student Comments
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