Summer Program Report
Practical Academic Secondary Enrichment
Career Connections

Students:
Dates: June 23 – July 4, 2013
Teacher:
Teaching Assistant:

PROGRAM OVERVIEW
All individuals learn best when they have the opportunity to practice and apply what they are learning in real life situations. Because students with visual impairments may be less able to pick up information and related concepts that sighted children see as they casually go through their day, they have an even greater need for real life learning experiences.

Students in the Practical Academic Summer Enrichment (PASE) program also benefit from learning and practicing skills in comfortable, enjoyable contexts that support their unique learning needs. Therefore, a primary goal of this program is to ensure that learning takes place within enjoyable activities.

Summer learning at TSBVI focuses on skills related to the Expanded Core Curriculum for Blind and Visually Impaired Students (ECC): compensatory academic skills, orientation and mobility, career education, assistive technology, visual efficiency skills, independent living, recreation and leisure, social interaction, and self determination skills. Functional applications of these skill areas include activities such as practicing academic skills like math (making a budget) and literacy (writing a thank you letter), recreational and domestic activities (community outings including travel skills, physical activities, meal planning, cooking, grocery shopping); communication (using appropriate language in various contexts, giving and following directions); planning, organizing, sequencing (planning and giving a party). Specific activities provided for individual students are described below.

DESCRIPTION OF CLASS: Career Connections
During the Career Connections summer program, students participated in a wide variety of discussions and activities designed to raise awareness and increase knowledge about issues related to work and transitioning to adult life, as well as to build skills that will be valued by future employers. Programming included the following:
Travis Association for the Blind/Austin Lighthouse
Our group toured the main facility for this organization, which provides employment for approximately 200 blind and visually impaired individuals in the Austin area. Employees of this organization assemble products used by the federal and state government and many other large institutions and companies. The Lighthouse produces and packages military belts and helmets, 3-ring binders, hygiene supplies and more. The Lighthouse also provides work and technology training and is an information resource for individuals with visual impairments.

Department of Assistive and Rehabilitation Services (DARS)
A DARS Transition Counselor presented information about the services provided by this agency’s Division for Blind Services (DBS), including what support they can provide to find and train for jobs.

Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center (CCRC)
Students visited the site of the DARS training program for young adults and newly blinded older adults, adjacent to our campus. Criss Cole provides intensive O&M, compensatory skill, adaptive device, and independent living skills training for those who need short-term assistance to achieve the ability to live independently.

Chase Bank
The students traveled to a nearby branch of a major bank to obtain information about the benefits and realities of opening, maintaining, and using checking and savings accounts and ATM or debit cards.

Car Wash/Lemonade Stand
Our class planned to hold a car wash on the TSBVI campus, but was unable to continue after finding that the City of Austin stage 2 water restrictions recently enacted prohibit them. We participated in an alternate activity instead: making and selling lemonade. For both projects we discussed how to budget for this event, how to determine a price for services, advertising, and how to divide up responsibilities. Jobs included communicating with customers, performing a service, and receiving payment.

MetroRail and Capital Metro Travel
Students explored transportation options available to individuals living in urban areas such as Austin. They also discussed the need to plan for transportation when applying for a job and being aware of local commuter options.

Restaurants, Retail and Grocery Stores
Students had the opportunity to go to several local stores and restaurants. We worked on budgeting, functional literacy skills such as making shopping lists, and how to be a good self-advocate while out in the community.

Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Social Workers
Our knowledgeable social work staff discussed issues relating to adult life, such as guardianship, living arrangements, assistance from governmental and non-profit organizations, and work.

Work Awareness
Students discussed what jobs exist in each student’s own home town, what jobs typically make up favorite and familiar places of business, and how contacts can be developed by knowing
what jobs are held by family, friends, acquaintances and other community members. Additional lessons addressed vocational vocabulary, characteristics of a good worker, reasons to work, and how to responsibly use money earned while working.

Self-Awareness
Topics in this category included learning to describe individual visual impairment and needed adaptations; personal interests; and vocational interests and preferences, such as physical environment, pace, and type of activity during jobs.

Job Seeking
Students learned more about how to discover work opportunities; express interest or apply for jobs, including knowing personal information and developing resumes and ability statements; participate in interviews; and seek assistance from contacts and agencies such as The Department of Assistive and Rehabilitation Services (DARS) and the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS). Mock interviews helped students develop more understanding of their own areas of strength and need.

SPECIFIC EXPANDED CORE CURRICULUM AREAS ADDRESSED

Career Education
Students learned more about teamwork, social skills on the job, personal- and time-management while working, and problem solving. Students explored skills that can be applied to many vocational environments while they participated in jobs such as picking up and delivering items and organizing and manipulating materials. The program also addressed how to obtain needed adaptations and how to communicate with colleagues and supervisors.

Independent Living Skills
While at TSBVI, Students were expected to take significant responsibility for personal hygiene, cooking, and cleaning, among other ILS areas.

Social Skills
Staff encouraged students to interact with classmates and other students on campus during safe, structured activities. Social skills instruction took place during daily activities and interactions, and ranged from social communication to empathy and cooperation. Skills were taught through discussion about the reasons certain social skills were necessary, modeling language, and reminders as necessary to use appropriate social skills.

Self Determination
Students learned about the importance of self-advocacy in developing successful and satisfying vocational and personal futures. Self-advocacy skills include being aware of personal preferences, strengths and needs, making choices for yourself and identifying goals for the future, communicating this information to those whose permission or help you might need, being convincing, and persisting with your message. Staff modeled appropriate language and used role-play to help students practice these skills.

Recreation and Leisure
Students explored various options for activities available during breaks from work, such as playing musical instruments and conversing with staff and peers. Additional opportunities occurred during time with residential staff in the evening.
INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS

OTHER CLASSES, GROUPS, AND SERVICES

Yoga
Students with visual impairments often have difficulty finding recreation and leisure activities that they enjoy and in which they can participate. This Yoga class incorporated both exercise and relaxation techniques to relieve stress, release excess energy, and ultimately improve mental focus and physical health. Relaxation techniques help individuals bring some balance into their busy lives and assert some control while releasing stress. Yoga is a fun activity that is highly accessible and available to all people because all it requires is a mat, knowledge of a few physical movements (postures), and knowing how to breathe deeply. Participating in these postures helps students become more aware of their body and how it moves through space. This can be both challenging and rewarding for students, whether visually impaired or not. Yoga is an amazing way to develop strength, flexibility, better posture, knowledge of how to safely move through space, and self-confidence.

This summer, we explored a variety of yoga techniques in order to introduce ways that yoga can be used for both exercise and relaxation. These techniques included guided deep breathing, movement paired with music, held postures for stretching and flexibility, and guided relaxation techniques. Yoga concepts that were covered included the importance of good posture, balance, body awareness in space, and communication. The students were encouraged to do the positions slowly and gently and always listen to their body and not stretch too far. The class started with deep, slow breathing paired with warm-up activities that encouraged good posture while stretching, and slowly moving their body through postures. By the end of the program the students were encouraged to choose a posture and teach it to their classmates. This activity focused on communication, assertiveness, memory, self-determination, and ultimately leadership.

Skills infused from the Expanded Core Curriculum included:

- Sensory Efficiency Skills
- Orientation & Mobility
- Recreation and Leisure Skills
- Social Interaction Skills
- Self-Determination
- Compensatory Skills
- Independent Living Skills

Music
During the PASE music class, students were given many opportunities to explore the world of music. Class activities incorporated instrument exploration, singing, movement, listening, music appreciation, making choices, and creating music and dance with a group. Instruments explored during several different activities included drums, percussion instruments, and microphone beat boxing. Several audio recordings were also made.

In addition to exploring a variety of musical instruments and techniques, students were able to perform on a small classroom stage, using a microphone while singing along to familiar songs, and creating unique songs. Movement activities included dancing with a partner, solo dancing, interpretive movement, and movement/dancing with a parachute, hoops and juggling props.
Students chose a variety of songs and listened to many new genres of music during the music appreciation and choice-making activities.