Summer Program Report
Elementary Summer Enrichment: Two-Week Program

Student: Individual Student Report
Dates: July 4-15, 2010
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Program Overview

Students in the Elementary Summer Enrichment program participated in many interesting, real-life activities that encouraged them to apply and practice skills previously learned at school and home. Each class was built around a high-interest theme for students in elementary school, such as “How It’s Made,” “Kids in the Kitchen,” “It’s a Plant’s Life.” Each theme activity embedded skills from the Expanded Core Curriculum for Blind and Visually Impaired Students (ECC). This includes areas 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.

ECC skills can be embedded into activities, both on and off-campus, in many ways. All students participated in various food preparation and restaurant activities, where they were able to practice skills of independent living such as reading menus, preparing meals in the dorm kitchen, loading the dishwasher, helping with clean up, organizing grocery lists, participating in shopping, and making purchases at the store. They also participated in a range of recreational activities, such as swimming, bowling, or eating at restaurants. In the context of these activities, students used math and literacy, technology, self-determination, orientation and mobility, and independent living skills. They participated in functional activities such as following recipes, managing a schedule, keeping up with belongings, using appropriate manners in public, working as a team, and getting along with others.

An invaluable part of the summer program is the opportunity to interact with other students who also have visual impairments. Sharing about the challenges they face at home and school can alleviate feelings of isolation and increase confidence. Students in our summer programs often begin friendships that continue throughout their school years—or longer.
Classroom Description: It’s a Plant’s Life

Students participated in the unit “It’s a Plant’s Life,” highlighting the anatomy of a plant and how these parts work together. This unit helped the students understand the life cycle of plants and the function of their parts for food, clothing, and shelter. Students also sampled a number of fruits and vegetables and made observations about the taste and texture of these samples. They recorded classmates’ preferences, graphed results, and analyzed the data collected.

Exploring seeds at different stages of growth allowed for expanded vocabulary and hands-on experiences to life processes. Students took responsibility for their own plants as they began to sprout by watering them and ensuring that enough sun was available for healthy growth. As a group, students made predictions and observations on two different scientific experiments focusing on plant growth and how they adapt to their environments. Participating in group discussions encouraged sharing, turn taking, and showing respect for differing ideas and opinions.

Instructional components included:

1. Planting
The students gained insight on the life cycle of plants. Each day, we explored a different part of the plant as it pertained to the development and ultimate flowering of plants. Students explored soaked seeds and compared them to dried seeds. They removed seed coats and found the tiny embryos inside during a hands-on lesson. After exploring what happens as a plant grows, students planted seeds of their own to tend. Each child planted grass because it grows quickly, as well as various flower and vegetable seeds that take longer to observe and measure growth.

2. Taste Testing – Veggie Exposure
As a group, students tasted different parts of plants. Each taste test included familiar and unfamiliar roots, stems, and leaves. Students were encouraged to try each item, one at a time, and use descriptive words to share opinions and compare and contrast. For each taste test, an activity followed, using the facts and opinions discussed for that plant sample.

3. Welcome Circle
Students participated in a Welcome Circle each morning. We went around the circle and shared what we had enjoyed about the day or night before. Students were encouraged to share something they had learned since our last meeting. After each class member had a turn, we discussed activities planned for the upcoming day and some “fun facts” about the day’s plant part: roots, seeds, stems, flowers, or fruit.

4. Scientific Experiments
Students participated in two scientific experiments structured around our theme. We used a straw to demonstrate the function of a stem. A stem acts like a straw by soaking up water and nutrients from the soil and roots. Analogies like these were effective in helping the class understand that, in ways, we are similar to plants. One experiment asked students to hypothesize what would happen if white flowers were left in a container of colored water. The students made predictions about whether or not the flowers would change color, how long it would take, and which flowers would soak up more color than others. During the days that followed, students took time to observe the flowers. Students explored tactile graphics depicting the proportion of colored petals.

We also experimented with ivy boxes and sunlight. Each box had a maze created inside. A hole was cut at one end of the box and an ivy plant was placed at the other end. After placing the ivy at one
end, the lid was replaced on the box, allowing sunlight only to enter through the hole at the other end of the box. This experiment demonstrated that the ivy plant grows towards the sunlight as most plants depend on sunlight for growth. The students checked on the boxes each day and measured how far through the maze the ivy was growing to reach sunlight.

5. Leaf Collecting
Students collected leaves of various sizes, shapes, and colors on one field trip. They worked in pairs to describe and compare and contrast the leaves they found. Students added these leaves as souvenirs to scrapbooks.

6. Field Trips
Students toured the Natural Gardener, a locally owned garden with a wide range of plants and trees. The garden is a sensory rich, hands-on experience with fountains, wind chimes, birds, and tactile objects. Rosina, our tour guide, made sure that everyone had a good time with lots of hands-on discovery. Students learned how organically grown food is tended, sold, and ends up on our table.

Our trip to the bowling alley emphasized the importance of making time for recreation and leisure. Students practiced self-determination as they advocated for their needs with adaptive equipment to assist in their success at bowling. They had three options for adaptation: bumpers to ensure the ball would stay in the lane, a guide rail to trail as the bowler approached the lane, or an accelerator ramp to slide the ball down in front of the lane. The combination of bumpers and one of the other two choices proved to be a great success. Field trips were very rewarding as new environments gave students the chance to navigate unfamiliar settings, interact with others in the community, and learn to travel with a group of peers.

7. Journal Entries
Students made daily entries in their journals about experiences as a member of the class. They followed guidelines for creating pages in a scrapbook. These scrapbooks help students share what they've learned with family and friends at home.

8. Story Time
Students listened to three stories using the plant theme: “The Tiny Seed,” “Daisy Head Maisy,” and “The Popcorn Book.” This active listening time helped guide students in asking questions about the books and applying their new plant knowledge to the story's content.

9. Graphic Organizers
Graphic organizers are visual representations of knowledge, concepts, or ideas. Students are often expected to demonstrate their ability to read and interpret information presented by these pictorial representations. The visual nature of graphic organizers can be extremely challenging for visually impaired students. Students used two types of graphic organizers, the Venn diagram and the bar graph, during activities supporting our theme.

10. Expanded Core Curriculum
Students in the summer program participated in many activities that addressed the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). The ECC is the body of knowledge and skills that are needed by students with visual impairments due to their unique, disability-specific needs.

• Compensatory Skills
  Compensatory or functional academic skills addressed included learning experiences such as concept development and spatial awareness, organizational skills, use of Braille or optical devices to read and write, and listening skills.
• **Visual Efficiency Skills**
  Students with low vision were encouraged to use their functional vision to access information. For example, while exploring plant parts and when on field trips, students used low vision devices as appropriate. This included using monoculars to locate and interpret information in the distance and using magnifiers to explore new objects such as veins on leaves.

• **Assistive Technology**
  Students explored a variety of assistive technology devices including CCTVs, speech output and screen magnification programs to access computers and the Internet, Braille rulers, marker pens, and lined paper.

• **Independent Living Skills**
  This area of the ECC is often referred to as “daily living skills.” These skills are essential for individuals to lead lives as independently as possible. Areas addressed included personal hygiene, eating and dressing skills, time management, and personal organization. Students also cooked breakfast for each other in groups and practiced cleaning up after each meal.

• **Social Interaction Skills**
  Many social skills used by sighted children are learned by visually observing other people interacting in work and social settings. Visually impaired children typically have fewer opportunities to learn these skills incidentally, because they may miss visual information. This summer our students had many opportunities to develop and/or refine their social skills, in order to enhance successful social interactions. Skills addressed included taking turns, being an active listener, accepting differing opinions, compromising, assuming responsibility for actions, and being empathetic to a peer.

• **Orientation and Mobility**
  Students were encouraged to travel as independently as possible, enjoying and learning from the different environments they encountered. They were encouraged to use appropriate cane skills, trailing techniques, sighted guide and/or visual efficiency skills, as appropriate, to navigate the various environments.

• **Self-Determination**
  Students were encouraged to self-advocate for their needs including modifications and accommodations. They talked with their visually impaired peers about having a disability and the challenges it presents. They discussed the importance of being in control of their lives and recognizing their individual abilities and possible limitations.

• **Recreation and Leisure Skills**
  This area was extensively addressed in the residential program. During the instruction day, students did have the opportunity to play a variety of teacher-made educational games that supported the classroom theme. Students enjoyed a trip to the bowling alley!

**Classroom Observations and Strategies**
This section is individualized for each student

**Additional Instructional Activities**
Kid Talk is a small group program that focuses on improving self-esteem, self-awareness, and social skills. Students participated in three Kid Talk sessions. A TSBVI Social Worker and School Psychologist facilitated each group. The class format was informal and provided students with the opportunity to play group games which facilitated the sharing of personal experiences and opinions.

Social skills practiced during the two weeks included:
- Making introductions and greeting others
- Communicating effectively
- Taking turns
- Listening respectfully
- Building friendships
- Empathizing with others
- Identifying commonalities
- Developing patience
- Improving conflict resolution skills

Music

Elementary students participated in various music activities, using music based on their classroom themes. This included exploring instruments, listening to various types of music, learning movements and steps for a variety of dances, and learning theme-related songs. Students had the opportunity to explore different types of drums, percussion equipment, keyboards and pianos, guitars, autoharps, and more. They listened to music from various genres and eras, including pioneer-era folk music, children’s pop and rock music, traditional and contemporary pop dance music, classical music, and American rock music. Students learned steps to dances such as “The Chicken Dance”, “The Cha-Cha Slide”, and “The Cupid Shuffle”. Songs performed at the end-of-program performance included “Landslide”, “I Love Chocolate Milk”, “You’ve Got a Friend in Me”, and “Buffalo Gals”. Each student gave full attention and effort to learning and exploring the music for our program.

Physical Education

Physical Education consisted of a daily 45-minute class during the two-week program. The program included track and field, activities, recreational games, fitness (endurance, balance, flexibility & strength), and movement to music and dance. Students learned about the World Cup Soccer competition. They participated in physical activities and learned health-related information to promote fitness, self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-appreciation within the context of working with peers. Students acquired some proficiency in each of the following areas: skill knowledge, skill acquisition, cooperative peer interactions, responsibility, and safety as it relates to playing, exercising and competing, decision-making, creativity & cooperation, effective communication & socialization.

Orientation and Mobility

Students in this class had the opportunity to travel to a variety of locations both on campus and in the community. They received monitoring by an O&M Specialist during many off-campus trips, to ensure safety and discuss techniques and concepts to improve travel skills. O&M topics addressed included:
• Self advocacy
• Communication skills
• Appropriate public interaction
• Suggestions and tips for orientation
• Suggestions and tips for safe mobility
• Requesting assistance/ accepting assistance
• Making safe decisions
• Use of Capital Metro (Austin public bus system)