Active Learning Implementation

Developed by Kate Hurst,
Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired
in collaboration with Patty Obrutz, MS, OT,
Penrickton Center for Blind Children

This powerpoint covers the following topics:
Participants will be able to:
1. Share basic information about Active Learning with someone else
2. Identify the role of play in learning

It will take approximately 45-60 minutes to present.
As you introduce the session, encourage participants to go to the Active Learning Space website on their phone, tablet or computer. The url is www.activelearningspace.org

Cortical Visual Impairment or CVI is very common in children with multiple and significant disabilities and many of the strategies related to CVI make it confusing when trying to implement an Active Learning approach.

This session will focus on issues related to students with CVI who need an Active Learning approach and offer guidelines and resources to help educators.

This presentation utilizes content on Active Learning Space, a collaborative website developed by Penrickton Center for Blind Children, Perkins School for the Blind and Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired.
What You Will Learn

When you have completed this section you should be able to:

Suggest specific strategies for addressing the unique needs of a learner with cortical visual impairment.
Section 6
Cortical Visual Impairment & Active Learning
Cortical Visual Impairment & Active Learning

What is Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI)?

Many children with significant multiple disabilities also have cortical visual impairment (CVI).

CVI occurs when the brain does not or cannot accurately process the information it receives from the eyes.

There are a variety of causes including prematurity, seizure disorder, brain-bleed, and cerebral palsy just to name a few.

CVI is one type of visual impairment that often responds dramatically to intervention, especially early in the child’s life.
Cortical Visual Impairment & Active Learning

Some of behaviors that might indicate CVI is present include:
• Trouble recognizing faces, interpreting drawings
• Depth perception issues
• Distinguishing between background and foreground
• Ability to see better when told in advance what to look for
• May see a specific color
• May see better when the target object is moving
• May have sensitivity to light or may fixate on light
• May have better peripheral vision than central vision
• May see things better when presented in a specific field of vision

According to the American Foundation for the Blind, some of the behaviors that might indicate CVI is present include:

• Trouble recognizing faces, interpreting drawings
• Depth perception issues
• Distinguishing between background and foreground
• Ability to see better when told in advance what to look for
• May see a specific color
• May see better when the target object is moving
• May have sensitivity to light or may fixate on light
• May have better peripheral vision than central vision
• May see things better when presented in a specific field of vision
Many children with significant multiple disabilities also have cortical visual impairment (CVI) and thus the question often arises about how to adapt Active Learning materials and an Active Learning approach for these learners.

It is important to remember that **not all sensory areas are addressed during a single activity** and, thus, vision may be the emphasis during one activity, and fine motor skills may be the main focus in a different activity.

This means that, for example, if a child with CVI is in a **Little Room**, this environment might be overwhelming from a visual perspective, but the emphasis during that particular activity might be on reaching and grasping, comparing objects, and crossing midline. During another activity, the emphasis might be on vision, and during that time the use of modifications such as a black background, spotlighting, minimizing visual clutter, and using familiar high contrast materials in a child's preferred color might be the best approach.

The team should discuss which priorities to focus on during specific tasks and activities to decide how best to arrange the environment at a given time.

Ask participants to find and review these pages briefly.
Your teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) should complete a functional vision evaluation (FVE).

It is also beneficial if CVI is present or suspected to complete an evaluation using Dr. Christine Roman-Lantzy’s CVI Range.

This will help guide you in selecting materials to use in any Active Learning environment or activity.
Cortical Visual Impairment & Active Learning

Remember these basics:

• **We’re not always working on vision goals.** In all Active Learning environments. Be clear about your goals in each environment. If haptic-tactile skills or gross movements are the focus, vision becomes less important in the design of the activity or environment.

• **Know where the child is on the CVI Range.** This helps you to determine things like the appropriate number and spacing of visual targets, what distance is optimal, preferred visual field, preferred color, etc.

• Many children with CVI are **drawn to lights.** Just staring at a string of lights has little to teach the child. Be cautious about using lights randomly in Active Learning environments unless the learner can interact with them in some meaningful way.

• **Competing sensory input** occurs in most Active Learning environments. Many individuals with CVI have difficulty using vision in these environments.

• **Learners should be allowed ample time** to plan and execute a response because of latency problems associated with CVI.
Cortical Visual Impairment & Active Learning

Each learner with CVI is unique and has vision that changes throughout the day and over time.
That student may need to explore objects and become familiar with them tactually before learning them visually.
Your educational team needs the skills and support of a teacher of students with visual impairments to be able to appropriately adapt materials and environments.

- Each learner with CVI is unique and has vision that changes throughout the day and over time.
- That student may need to explore objects and become familiar with them tactually before learning them visually.
- Your educational team needs the skills and support of a teacher of students with visual impairments to be able to appropriately adapt materials and environments.
You can learn more about Dr. Nielsen’s thoughts on using Active Learning with students who are CVI in the article originally published in 1994 in Denmark. A great deal more has been learned about CVI and helping students to resolve part or all of their vision systems.

A great resource, beside your teacher of students with visual impairments is Diane Sheline and her website Strategy To See.

Have your group review this article which is included in the Handout Supplements and visit the Strategy to see website (especially DIY Projects), then spend about 5 minutes discussing them.
Credits

This content was developed by Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired Outreach Program and may not be used without their express permission.

This content is based on the Active Learning Space website, collaboratively developed by Penrickton Center for Blind, Perkins School for the Blind and Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Special contributions of content and images of Active Learning instruction comes from Narbethong State Special School in Australia.

All content is based on the original work of Dr. Lilli Nielsen of Denmark. Our thanks to her family and the staff at Byhaveskolen, Svendborg, Denmark for making her work available to educators world-wide.

Our special thanks to the children, parents, and educators who contributed photos illustrating the Active Learning approach at school and at home.

"This project is supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the U.S. Department of Education."