

Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI)

Cortical Visual Impairment is a condition that indicates that the visual systems of the brain do not consistently understand or interpret what the eye sees.

Characteristics of CVI:

- Short visual attention span
- Visual functioning is highly variable
- Expect fluctuation in vision due to fatigue, stress, illness
- Familiar items and people part of daily routine are "seen" easier
- Many students with CVI may be able to use their peripheral vision more effectively than their central vision
- Colour vision is usually preserved in children with CVI, especially yellows, oranges and/or reds
- Vision may be better when either the target or the student is moving
- Most students with CVI have problems differentiating between foreground and background information
- Spatial confusion is common
- Students with CVI appear to have difficulty seeing objects or pictures placed close together (crowding effect), but can identify the objects when they are spaced further apart
- Students with CVI can be compared to sighted individuals who are looking at an incomplete drawing
- Some student are very sensitive to bright lights

Presentation of Materials:

- Tell the student what they are seeing; **verbal** and **tactile cueing** can help provide perceptual organization and develop concepts to complete the picture
- Present visual materials in a **simple, consistent and predictable format**; avoid "visual overloading"
- Keep work area free of clutter
- Utilizing persons, objects and events that are intrinsically important and rewarding to the student will provide motivation to associate information with an experience and will provide a basis of understanding
- Provide **contrast** between object and background, e.g. white object on black background
- Use bright **colours**
- Natural **lighting** diffuses light and enhances contrast
- Position the student with their back to the window and natural light coming from behind them onto the object
- Avoid glare caused by reflective surfaces
- Present materials at eye level
- **Size:** If the visual display is too large the student may only see fragmented parts of the whole
- Present objects at close viewing distance, e.g. 12-18 inches
- Provide additional processing time
- **Highlight** the area you want to focus on
- **Seating** and/or **positioning** of the student is very important so that they can benefit from what residual sight they have.

Information compiled by Margot White, Vision Resource Teacher, S.D. #43, Coquitlam and The Canadian National Institute for the Blind.