

What is the Expanded Core Curriculum?

If your child is blind or visually impaired, your school district must incorporate these **nine** elements into your child's curriculum and these elements must be outlined in your child's IEP:

Compensatory or Functional Skills

Compensatory skills are the skills blind students need to learn in order to access the curriculum. This could include learning spatial awareness, study skills, Braille, large print, or tactile symbols. Learning communication modes falls under this category, such as sign language, a calendar system, or recorded devices.

Functional skills are the skills children with multiple disabilities need to learn in order to function (play, learn, take care of themselves) at the highest level possible.

Orientation and Mobility Skills

This area of the curriculum must be taught by a certified O&M instructor. Blind students need to learn how to move about in their environment safely and independently. They also need to learn about their body and how it moves in space.

Social Skills

This is one area that is often over looked on an IEP and that parents have to fight for. Children learn social behavior most often by watching other people interact. Blind children don't have that same opportunity and may not learn social behavior without direct instruction.

Independent Living Skills

Also referred to as Daily Living Skills, this refers to all the little things you do every day to take care of yourself, such as dressing, brushing your teeth, combing your hair, or toileting. Other skills that fall under this category may be learning to prepare your own meals or manage your money. How this appears on

your child's IEP of course depends on his or her level of ability, but think of Daily Living Skills as the skills your child needs to live as independent a life as possible.

Recreation and Leisure Skills

Many team games and sports played in Physical Education classes are easily adapted for blind and visually impaired children, but blind kids may need extra instruction in learning how to participate in these games and choosing physical or other recreational activities that appeal to them.

Career Education

This does not necessarily mean preparing a child to enter the work force, so much as it refers to teaching a child about what work *is*. Does your child know what sort of behavior would be expected of them in an office or in a factory? Does your child know what a mechanic does, or a cook? If they haven't had first-hand experience with vocational training, they will be at a great disadvantage when they are searching for employment.

Use of Assistive Technology

The amazing world of technological gadgets available to blind students is always expanding and if your child is to stay competitive and up-to-date they are going to need constant instruction in the equipment that is most suitable for them.

Sensory Efficiency Skills

This area involves learning how to use what ever limited vision your child has, or learning to use other senses, such as hearing or smell. Children with low vision need instruction in how and when to use the vision they have, children with low hearing need to learn how to use hearing aides, and all children with sensory impairments need to learn how to use their other senses to fill in the gaps.

Self-Determination

This is probably more important than you may first think and can also apply to rather young children. Children with disabilities are often taught to be taken care of rather than take care of themselves. Your child will need to learn when it is appropriate to ask for help, how to set long term goals for themselves, and when to tell someone if they are uncomfortable.