The psychosocial experience of varying everyday activities of high school students who are visually impaired

Glenda Jessup, Anita Bundy, Alex Broom, Nicola Hancock

SPEVI Conference, January 2015.
High school differs to primary school

› Big pond, small fish
› Changing classes, locations, teachers, classmates
› Time pressure & academic expectations increase
› Puberty
› Peer relationships take precedence
› Parental advocacy needs to be less obvious
› Student has to take on more responsibility.
The Study

High school students who are visually impaired (with or without additional disabilities) and who attend a mainstream high school.

Look at their daily social experiences to explore what influences perceptions of inclusion/social isolation.
Data Collection

Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM)
• An 18 item questionnaire that indicates the extent to which students feel like an accepted, respected, and valued member of their school community (Goodenow, 1993).

Everyday Experiences Survey (ESM survey)
• An in-the-moment survey asked randomly every 2 hours, 7 times a day for 7 days.
• 18 questions on activities and social interactions.

Follow-up Semi-structured Interview(s)
• Guided by the PSSM and survey responses
• Further explored school and inclusion experiences
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eye condition</th>
<th>iDevice used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albinism, nystagmus</td>
<td>iPod touch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albinism, nystagmus</td>
<td>iPod touch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optic nerve hypoplasia</td>
<td>iPad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optic nerve tumour</td>
<td>iPod touch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pituitary related vision loss (additional disabilities)</td>
<td>iPod touch + voiceover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stargardt’s macular dystrophy</td>
<td>iPod touch + zoom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macular dystrophy</td>
<td>iPad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retinal detachment</td>
<td>Own iPhone – voiceover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underdeveloped retinas, nystagmus</td>
<td>iPod touch + voiceover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retinopathy of Prematurity (additional disabilities)</td>
<td>iPod touch + voiceover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describes functional vision - not diagnosis (B2)</td>
<td>iPad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describes functional vision - not diagnosis (B3 with glasses)</td>
<td>Own iPad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Psychological Sense of School Membership

› Scores for all 18 items averaged to create a single score for each student.

› Sample means & standard deviations for all 18 items.

Social Experiences Survey

› Z-scores created for internal dimensions of experience (e.g. loneliness, fitting in, acceptance, enjoyment) for each student.

› These z-scores were aggregated and averaged to create single variables for each student across the various external dimensions of experience (e.g. where, with whom, what).

Interviews

› Interviews were transcribed. Everyday Experiences survey guided initial coding. Constant comparative analysis facilitated emergence of additional codes and themes.
Psychological Sense of School Membership

Relatively high overall PSSM scores – most students have a positive sense of belonging and membership at school.

Low scoring items indicate they
- Feel different to most other students
- Are not included in lots of activities
- Have difficulty being accepted

High scoring items indicate
- Have a teacher or other adult at school to talk to
- People knowing I can do good work
Where were you?

› 12 students, 7 days, 401 self-reports (7,201 data points!)
What were you doing in class?

› 71 self-reports

- Work: 54
- Nothing: 12
- TV/DVD: 1
Fitting in, acceptance, loneliness, enjoyment.
Out of school vs at school (ESM data)

› Fit in significantly less at school than out of school.
› Feel significantly less accepted at school.
› Not significantly more lonely at school (some feel less lonely at school, others are never lonely).
› School is not significantly less enjoyable than elsewhere.
Students whose experience of school is most positive:
- Are pursuing vocational or sporting, rather than academic goals
- Don’t necessarily find school enjoyable
- Are fluent users of inclusive technologies
- Are satisfied with the support they receive from students and teachers.
- Have never had trouble making friends

Students whose experience of school is least positive:
- have difficulties keeping up, or trying to do well, in class
- have had difficulty making friends
- have no real friends with whom to interact at recess
- feel they need more support or have been unhappy with their support
Interview data

- Vision
- Support
- Teachers
- Using
- Initiative
- Teachers
- Inclusion
- Exclusion
- Favourite
- subjects
- Friends
- Technology
- Sickness
High school seems a tenuous balance of favourable and unfavourable circumstances, often beyond the young person’s control.

Being included is about “being noticed” and not being ignored.

Enjoyment in class is subject specific.
Interview data: Vision Support Teachers

› Assistance was welcomed by the students

› Acted as a reference point/consultant

› Provided wise advice

› Braille help/teaching

› Ability to influence the system
Interview data: Actions that exclude

› Missing out while others are learning
  - Not having timely **ACCESS** to lesson content
  - Being told to **catch up later**
  - **Doing nothing** while classmates watch movies or PowerPoint
  - Chalk & talk, when the **talk is too fast** & you can’t read the board
  - **Lose auditory concentration** and you miss out

› Compromised Autonomy
  - Not being allowed to “make mistakes”
  - Naysaying - “you wouldn’t be able to/ shouldn’t do this”
Inclusive high schools can still be socially challenging in terms of fitting in and acceptance.

Full access and participation in class is vital to inclusion.
References


› PIEL Survey app: http://pielsurvey.org/

Acknowledgements

› This research was supported by the Helga Pettit FHS Postgraduate Study Award and the Australian Postgraduate Award.

› Thank you Vision Australia for help with development of the PIEL Survey app.