



SPEVI

South Pacific Educators
in Vision Impairment

Australia

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2017 CONFERENCE

BRISBANE 8TH - 12TH JANUARY



The Use of Optical Low Vision Aids in Australian Schools.

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Today's presentation will cover:

- Information about the study.
- Summerised information from identified trends in qualitative data from the field study.
- Discussion of results



About the Study.

- Conducted as part of the 2014 IOOF Premier's Teachers Scholarship.
- Took place over a 5-week period and observed optical low vision aid use in New South Wales, New Zealand, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland.
- Qualitative data collection: Professional interview, vision recourse center visits and classroom observations.



Qualitative Data and Observation

- Qualitative responses from standardised questions were collected from professionals in the fields of print and web accessibility, orthoptists, access technology consultants, alternate format producers, educational consultants, and STV's.
- Observed over 70 professionals supporting students with low vision and collected 30 extended-interview responses.



Identified Trends in Qualitative Data.

- The consistency of all responses were overwhelming, with only one or two participants delivering slightly different responses to any of the set interview questions.



When are optical low vision aids used?

- When asked to respond to a previous study that indicated that only one third of students that were recommended LV aids were using them at school, all participants agreed this would represent low vision aid use in their respective states, some indicating that it LV aid use could be less than in the identified study.



Common events for optical low vision aid use.

- Early childhood and stage one learning events.
- As a secondary line of defense when technology problems occur.
- When students identified a strong preference for low vision aid use.
- During community based O&M events.
- During post school and work experience events.



Recommendation and provision of optical low vision aids.

- Interdisciplinary Assessments viewed as most successful model for functional vision assessment and for recommending and providing OLVA.
- Most common OLVA observed in classrooms for near viewing tasks were stand magnifiers.
- Most common OLVA observed in classrooms for distance viewing tasks was the monocular.



Specialised technology versus consumer technology for access.

- Generic device use and the changing role of the Optical Low Vision Aid.
- When questioned whether it was a fundamental part of the Expanded Core Curriculum to teach proficient optical low vision aid use, all participants agreed it was.
- A Toolbox approach.



Checklists and instructional materials used to teach OLVA use.

- Support Teachers working in states with Resource Centre's were more likely to use streamlined resources and curriculums when designing their programs for low vision aid instruction.
- Instructional programs based on:
 - “Foundations of Low Vision” (Corn & Erin), or
 - “Looking to Learn: Promoting literacy for students with low vision” (D’Andrea & Farrenkopt).



Successful OLVA use and the importance of Early Intervention

- Imperative to successful low vision aid use later in life.
- Programs should use play-based.
- “[OLVA’s] a fantastic tool for promoting functional vision programs in early intervention settings, learning to “look”, concepts and and language surrounding magnification”.



OLVA's and their connection to large print provision

- Hard-copy print “capped” and further magnified with a low vision aid, electronic magnification or should be produced in digital formats.



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The benefits of successful OLVA use

- Great for accessing incidental print, enabling independence and the ability to interact with standard text.
- Low cost adjustment.
- The "fallback" plan.
- A tool for promoting functional vision.
- Skills needed for OLVA use are important and transfer to other devices.
- Great way to introduce low vision device use



The barriers to successful optical low vision aid use

- Reluctant to seem different to sighted peers.
- Insufficient time in class to ensure proper use and teach successful OLVA use.
- Students choosing different technology to access print.
- Insufficient in-service to classroom teacher
- Recommended OLVA damaged and lost.
- Student not identifying times OLVA use could support access to print.



Discussion of Results

- Many barriers and benefits to OLVA use were consistent regardless of state support guidelines.
- The role that optical low vision aids play in the lives of students with low vision has changed, but that optical and non optical low vision aids should not be reviewed as redundant technologies.
- OLVA as part of an accessibility toolbox and an additional line of defense against inaccessible- and especially- incidental print
- Important to teach our young people to be flexible, adaptable and to move between many different devices and tools to access print.



Discussion of Results Continued.

- Bishops (1986) study: “an accepting and flexible classroom teacher was determined to be the most important factor influencing successful outcomes for students with low vision”.
- **Empowering and educating classroom teachers is key to student success.**



Multimedia Resource.

- “Adjusting Print for Students with Low Vision: A Classroom Teachers Guide”.
- **Objectives:**
- To have an engaging resource to that illustrates some methods for print adjustment for CT's.
- To promote the use of Access Technology in classrooms.
- To build capacity with CT and make CT's enthusiastic about access technology and accessible document design.
- To promote the role of the STV.



Recommendations.

- Identified regular release times for classroom teachers to receive ongoing advice from STV's and prepare accessible documents for students with low vision.
- Professional Leaders in Braille, Low Vision, Access Technology or AT consultants appointed NSW Department of Education.
- Formalised and recognised online training modules/ face to face professional development for classroom teachers and SLSO's supporting students with vision impairment, available to CT's and SLSO's in regional areas.



Recommendations Continued.

- Multidisciplinary Functional Vision and Access Technology Assessments for students with low vision, which include trialing low vision aids and instructional support for students, their parents and classroom teachers.
- Access to standardized FVA materials and current FVA training for specialist teachers of students with vision impairment.
- A Statewide Vision Resource Centre for New South Wales, with provision of access technology available for borrowing/trialling.
- Short Immersion courses for students with vision impairment, focusing on the Extended Core Curriculum.



For Further Information.

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