

Virtual Teacher of the Visually Impaired

Background

Using the Web to Deliver TVI Services

A Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) specializes in understanding the impact of a student's vision loss and in teaching the student alternative approaches to interact with the educational environment in order to optimize learning. The Foundation for Blind Children (FBC) has developed a method that uses the Internet to enhance the TVI services offered to students who are blind or visually impaired. This service uses a collection of hardware and software that allows for robust interaction between an off-site TVI and a student, making the experience as much like having a TVI in the room with a student as is technically possible. This service is being called Virtual TVI.

Virtual TVI

Using a collection of technologies, the Virtual TVI can conduct lessons, adapt materials and work with a student to resolve technical problems. The Virtual TVI system makes a teacher of the visually impaired available to a visually impaired student at any time he or she needs help with school assignments, rather than waiting for the next scheduled teacher visit.. Additionally, the Virtual TVI can assist classroom teachers who may have questions regarding the teaching of a student who is blind or visually impaired or who may want help adapting materials. The Virtual TVI works alongside the student's assigned TVI. In this way, the Virtual TVI system supplements the essential services offered by a student's assigned TVI.

Braille on Demand

Students and teachers who are participating in the Virtual TVI project have access to a service known as Braille on Demand. Braille on Demand gives the student and classroom teacher control over getting short documents converted to braille with a short turnaround time, again, without having to wait for the next scheduled visit by the teacher of the visually impaired.

If the document is not already in an electronic form, the student can scan the document. The document is then sent to the braille transcribers at the FBC. The transcribers create an electronic braille copy of the file and then return this file to the student so that the student can emboss the file using the embosser at his or her school.

What are the other benefits to the student?

- The student learns independence by proactively arranging to meet with the Web Teacher and by facilitating the conversion of his materials to braille.
- The student gains self-confidence by learning she can get her school work completed and turned in at the same time as her peers.
- The student learns to use technology at a higher level and can better socialize with his peers.

How does this benefit classroom teachers?

Braille on Demand puts the classroom teacher in direct contact with those who can transcribe print to braille, giving her greater control and quicker turnaround.

Virtual TVI gives him another resource in educating students in his classroom who are visually impaired

About the program:

The Virtual TVI system was implemented via a pilot program in 2008 and 2009 using grant funding. Beginning in 2010, the Virtual TVI and Braille on Demand systems have begun accepting students. For more information, please contact:

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