

BLIND AND LOW VISION

EDUCATION NETWORK NZ (BLENNZ)

CURRICULUM



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# Foreword

Tēnā koutou katoa

I am delighted to introduce the BLENNZ Curriculum it has been complied in consultation with a wide range of people from across the BLENNZ network and with the assistance of critical friends who are all motivated to ensure the very best learning and teaching opportunities for BLENNZ learners across New Zealand.

In the past we have attempted to explain the Expanded Core Curriculum, the skills learners who are blind, deafblind and low vision require to effectively access learning and teaching. Many have felt that we were talking in parallel to Te Whāriki and the NZ Curriculum and it was challenging for whānau, teachers and therapists to make the connections that were needed. For learners to have access to learning in their respective learning environments it is critical that everyone has an understanding of the Expanded Core Curriculum and how it links to the learning that each child of young person is involved in.

Following the Ministry of Educations review of the NZ Curriculum, BLENNZ has had the opportunity to document a curriculum that speaks directly to the needs of BLENNZ learners while making a connection between the curriculums of both the early childhood and classroom settings.

This document follows the format of the NZ Curriculum document you will not find the detail but a framework to use as a starting point. The curriculum document starts by clearly stating the vision, mission, values and beliefs of BLENNZ. BLENNZ learners are diverse in age (ranging from a few weeks old up to 21 years of age), interests and strengths. All learners have the right and the ability to learn and develop. Teachers will draw from the curriculum the elements they require as they personalise an individual plan for each child or young person they are working with.



Karen Stobbs

**Principal**

# Introduction

The BLENNZ Curriculum provides the basis for consistent specialised programme delivery through the Expanded Core Curriculum for ākonga who are blind, deafblind or have low vision, some of whom have additional needs. It sits alongside Te Whāriki He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa Early Childhood Curriculum and The New Zealand Curriculum. The BLENNZ curriculum’s starting point is the ākonga and the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they bring to their learning.

This curriculum recognises learning begins with parents and whānau and that early childhood and school programmes play a significant role in extending learning. Whānau engagement is central to ākonga success, throughout their educational journey.

This curriculum is founded on the following aspirations for ākonga to be:

* confident
* competent
* connected
* communicators
* actively involved
* secure in their sense of belonging
* lifelong learners
* valued contributors to society

BLENNZ will provide inclusive education services to ākonga from birth to 21 years who are blind, deafblind or have low vision, some of whom have additional needs.

Individualised learning is provided in collaboration with ākonga, parents, whānau and the wider team, laying the foundations for successful future learning.

# Context

The guiding beliefs and values of BLENNZ reflect the principles embedded in the following documents:

* Tiriti o Waitangi
* Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1
* Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 3 and 24
* New Zealand Disability Strategy
* Ministry of Education Statement of Intent
* The National Plan for the Education of Learners who are Blind and Vision Impaired in Aotearoa/New Zealand
* Te Whāriki
* New Zealand Curriculum

# BLENNZ Vision

# Equity through access; opening doors so all may learn

# BLENNZ Mission

Our mission is to provide a quality education for ākonga who are blind, deafblind, or have low vision, in partnership with parents, whānau and community, so that they reach their potential for growth, independence, participation and success within their communities.

# Beliefs

The following beliefs underpin the BLENNZ approach to inclusive teaching and learning:

* Parents and whānau are the prime educators in their child’s learning
* Māori have the right to educational success as Māori
* Education is focused on the learner within the context of whānau, community and culture
* Learning occurs through active engagement in meaningful environments
* Learners have unique needs requiring specialist learning and teaching approaches
* Learners have the right to equitable access to education
* Learners have a right to belong and to realise their potential as participating and contributing members of society
* Team collaboration promotes positive outcomes for learners.

# Values

**Curriculum**

Te Whāriki and the New Zealand Curriculum express a number of values which have widespread support across BLENNZ:

Excellence Innovation, inquiry & curiosity Diversity

Equity Community & participation Ecological sustainability

Integrity Respect of themselves, others & human rights

**Organisational Culture**

As a community BLENNZ has identified core values which guide our organisation:

Integrity Respect Trust Honesty

Transparency Fairness Empathy Manaakitanga

Arohatanga Awhinatanga Kotahitanga

Our shared BLENNZ values and beliefs interweave to guide our community of learning and teaching, promoting the development of qualities that lead to engaged, confident, connected, lifelong learners. Qualities such as:

Can do attitude Self-starters Resourceful Resilient

Contributing Curious Reflective Explorer

Problem-Solvers Connected Confident Belonging

Actively Involved Making choices Confident communicators

# The BLENNZ Learner

BLENNZ learners are children and young people who are blind, deafblind, or have low vision.

BLENNZ learners are a diverse group. BLENNZ ākonga range in age from birth to 21 years, and each are either are blind, deafblind, or have low vision, some of whom have additional special needs, including physical, cognitive and/or developmental needs.

Learners’ vision may be affected by damage to the front or the back of the eye or the neurological pathways from the eye to the brain. Field loss (*what can be seen in the periphery*) may also be involved. The condition may be stable, deteriorating or improving. It may have been present at birth or develop later as the result of an hereditary condition, disease or accident.

Enrolment with BLENNZ may commence from birth and continue until the end of compulsory schooling or until the end of the year the learner turns 21 years.

### Blind

Internationally, the most widely accepted acuity for legal blindness is 6/60 or less. Touch and hearing may be the primary mode of accessing information. However some learners who are legally blind may also use vision to support access to information and to assist orientation and mobility.

### Deafblind

Learners who are deafblind have a combination of vision and hearing loss and may be described as having a dual sensory loss. The degree of loss in either vision or hearing will vary from person to person. This combination may result in significant communication, developmental and/or educational needs. Learners who are deafblind may access learning through visual, tactual and auditory sensory channels.

### Low Vision

BLENNZ learners with low vision have visual acuities measuring between 6/18 – 6/60 after corrective lenses are in place.The impact of low vision will vary from learner to learner. Each learner will require an individual approach to facilitate access to information. Factors such as size, clarity, clutter and contrast, at near and distance may need to be reviewed and modified for accessibility.

# Expanded Core Curriculum

The Expanded Core Curriculum comprises the specific body of knowledge and skills (not inherently addressed within the regular curricula) that learners who are blind, deafblind or have low vision need to develop. Qualified professionals such as Resource Teachers Vision (RTVs) and Developmental orientation and Mobility (DOM) specialists, teach the Expanded Core Curriculum and see that it is appropriately included in the Individual Education Plan of learners who are blind, deafblind or have low vision.

The term Expanded Core Curriculum has been adopted internationally. Many organisations and publications recognise it, including the National Agenda USA: Goal 8, Australasian Blindness Forum: *Statement of Principles of Education for Children with Vision Impairments*, Australasian Heads of Educational Services Forum, International Council for the Education of People who are Vision Impaired (ICEVI): Resolution at the 10th World Conference, Sao Paulo, August, 1997, Royal Institute for the Blind UK: Kevin Connell on Inclusive Learning and the Additional Curriculum in Post – 16 Education for Visually impaired People.

Excerpt from *Stepping Stones Guidelines to the Expanded Core Curriculum* (p6: 1.1.2 )

The Expanded Core Curriculum covers the following aspects of teaching and learning for learners who are blind, deafblind and low vision:

* communication
* sensory efficiency
* physical abilities
* orientation and mobility
* social skills
* life skills
* assistive technology
* career and future planning

The BLENNZ Expanded Core Curriculum is embedded within the key competencies of the New Zealand Curriculum and strands and principles of Te Whāriki.

# Learning Pathways

## Strands and Principles, Key Competencies, in the BLENNZ Context

The BLENNZ teaching and learning community involves ākonga, their whānau and respective Individual Plan teams from birth through to the end of compulsory education. In considering the key competencies and to support smooth transitions from birth through to tertiary, BLENNZ follows the flow of the curricula as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| TE WHĀRIKI | THE NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM | TERTIARY |
| Exploration | Thinking | Thinking |
| Communication | Using Language Symbols and Texts | Using Tools Interactively |
| Well-Being | Managing Self | Acting Autonomously |
| Contribution | Relating to Others | Operating in Social Groups |
| Belonging | Participating and Contributing |

Excerpt from *NZ Curriculum* Document 2007

The strands and goals of Te Whāriki arise from the principles. Each strand embodies an area of learning and development that is woven into a daily programme of the early childhood setting and has its own associated goals for learning. There are 5 strands:

### STRAND 1 – WELL-BEING – MANA ATUA

The health and well-being of the ākonga are protected and nurtured.

**Goals**

*Children experience an environment where:*

* *their health is promoted*
* *their emotional well-being is nurtured*
* *they are kept safe from harm.*

All children have a right to health, to protection from harm and anxiety, and to harmony, consistency, affection, firmness, warmth, and sensitivity. Young children experience transitions from home to service, from service to service, and from service to school. They need as much consistency and continuity of experience as possible in order to develop confidence and trust to explore and to establish a secure foundation of remembered and anticipated people, places, things, and experiences.

Adults working with children should have a knowledge of Māori definitions of health and well-being and an understanding of what these concepts mean in practice. Adults should acknowledge spiritual dimensions and have a concern for how the past, present, and future influence children’s self-esteem and are prime importance to Māori and Tagata Pasifika families.

Excerpt from *Te Wh*ā*riki, page 46*

When the health and wellbeing of the child is promoted and nurtured, the BLENNZ ākonga may:

* have confidence in and control of their bodies
* develop self-help and self-care skills
* develop strategies for self-protection, physically and emotionally
* give things a go

### STRAND 2 – BELONGING – MANA WHENUA

Children and their families feel a sense of belonging.

**Goals**

*Children and their families experience an environment where:*

* *connecting links with the family and the wider world are affirmed and extended*
* *they know that they have a place*
* *they feel comfortable with the routines, customs, and regular events*
* *they know the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour.*

The early childhood education setting should be like a caring home: a secure and safe place where each member is entitled to respect and to the best of care. The feeling of belonging, in the widest sense, contributes to inner well-being, security, and identity. Children need to know that they are accepted for who they are. They should know that what they do can make a difference and that they can explore and try out new activities. They should also recognise that the early childhood education setting includes their whānau and is part of their wider world. The early childhood setting will establish a programme that has meaning and purpose, just as activities and events at home do.

The families of all children should feel that they belong and are able to participate in the early childhood education programme and in decision making. Māori and Tagata Pasifika children will be more likely to feel at home if they regularly see Māori and Pacific Islands adults in the early childhood education setting. Liaison with local tangata whenua and a respect for papatūānuku should be promoted.

Excerpt from *Te Wh*ā*riki, page 54*

When links with the wider world are affirmed and extended, BLENNZ ākonga may:

* show interest and pleasure in discovering an unfamiliar wider world
* participate in the activities of their local community and their BLENNZ community
* learn through active participation in real experiences
* generalise skills and experiences across settings.

### STRAND 3 – CONTRIBUTION – MANA TANGATA

Opportunities for learning are equitable and each child’s contribution is valued.

**Goals**

*Children experience an environment where:*

* *there are equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity, or background*
* *they are affirmed as individuals*
* *they are encouraged to learn with and alongside others.*

Children’s development occurs through active participation in activities. Collaboration with adults and with other children plays a central role in this development.

The programme should recognise, acknowledge, and build on each child’s special strengths and allow each to make a contribution or to “make his or her mark” acknowledging that each child has the right to active and equitable participation in the community. Making a contribution includes developing satisfying relationships with adults and peers. The early development of social confidence has long-term effects, and adults in early childhood education settings play a significant role in helping children to initiate and maintain relationships with peers. Through interactions with others, children learn to take another’s point of view, to empathise with others, to ask for help, to see themselves as a help for others, and to discuss or explain their ideas to adults or to other children.

There should be a commitment to, and opportunities for, a Māori contribution to the programme. Adults working in the early childhood education setting should recognise the significance of whakapapa, understand and respect the process of working as a whānau, and demonstrate respect for Māori elders. They should also respect the process of working as āiga and showing respect for Tagata Pasifika elders.

Excerpt from *Te Wh*ā*riki, page 64*

When learning opportunities are equitable and their contribution is valued, BLENNZ ākonga may:

* form and maintain positive relationships
* be aware of their own unique strengths and confident that these are recognised and valued
* use their strengths and interests to acquire and expand skills
* collaborate with adults and other children.

### STRAND 4 – COMMUNICATION – MANA REO

The languages and symbols of their own and other cultures are promoted and protected.

**Goals**

*Children experience an environment where:*

* *they develop non-verbal communication skills for a range of purposes*
* *they develop verbal communication skills for a range of purposes*
* *they experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures*
* *they discover and develop different ways to be creative and expressive.*

Language is a vital part of communication. In early childhood, one of the major cultural tasks for children is to develop competence in and understanding of language. Language does not consist only of words, sentences, and stories: it includes the language of images, art, dance, drama, mathematics, movement, rhythm, and music. During these early years, children are learning to communicate their experience in many ways, and they are also learning to interpret the ways in which others communicate and represent experience. They are developing increasing competence in symbolic, abstract, imaginative, and creative thinking. Language grows and develops in meaningful contexts when children have a need to know and a reason to communicate. Adults should understand and encourage both verbal and non-verbal communication styles.

There should be a commitment to the recognition of Māori language – stories, symbols, arts, and crafts – in the programme.

Excerpt from *Te Wh*ā*riki, page 72*

When the languages and symbols of their own and other cultures are promoted and protected, a BLENNZ ākonga may:

* have receptive communication
* learn that they can communicate
* use communication for a range of purposes, including building relationships
* build familiarity with the tools that enable them to access literacy and numeracy
* discover ways to be creative and expressive.

### STRAND 5 – EXPLORATION – MANA AOTŪROA

The child learns through active exploration of the environment.

**Goals**

*Children experience an environment where:*

* *their play is valued as meaningful learning and the importance of spontaneous play is recognised*
* *they gain confidence in and control of their bodies*
* *they learn strategies for active exploration, thinking and reasoning*
* *they develop working theories for making sense of the natural, social, physical, and material worlds.*

All aspects of the environment – the natural, social, physical, and material worlds – are part of the context of learning. This strand incorporates some of the strategies which enable infants, toddlers, and young children to explore, learn from, and make sense of the world. Implicit in the concept of the child as explorer is the importance of respect for the environment. Children learn through play – by doing, by asking questions, by interacting with others, by setting up theories or ideas about how things work and trying them out, and by the purposeful use of resources. They also learn by making links with their previous experiences. The attitudes and expectations that are formed at an early age will continue to influence a child’s learning throughout life. In early childhood education, as in later learning and development, exploration will be guided, supported, and challenged by adults and other children.

There should be recognition of Māori ways of knowing and making sense of the world and of respecting and appreciating the natural environment.

Excerpt from *Te Wh*ā*riki, page 82*

Through real experiences with people, places and objects in the environment, BLENNZ ākonga may:

* explore
* use sensory skills for active exploration
* integrate sensory information
* gain confidence in and control of their bodies
* be motivated to move in space
* interpret and make sense of the natural, social, physical and material worlds through active exploration
* be confident to choose, compare and experiment
* consolidate experiences through repetition
* persevere at activities and tasks.

# Key Competencies

The New Zealand Curriculum identifies five key competencies:

* thinking
* using language symbols and texts
* managing self
* relating to others
* participating and contributing.

People use these competencies to live, learn, work, and contribute as active members of their communities. More complex than skills, the competencies draw also on knowledge, attitudes, and values in ways that lead to action. They are not separate or stand-alone. They are the key to learning in every learning area.

The development of the competencies is both an end in itself (a goal) and the means by which other ends are achieved. Successful learners make use of the competencies in combination with all the other resources available to them. These include personal goals, other people, community knowledge and values, cultural tools (language, symbols, and texts), and the knowledge and skills found in different learning areas. As they develop the competencies, successful learners are also motivated to use them, recognising when and how to do so and why.

Opportunities to develop the competencies occur in social contexts. People adopt and adapt practices that they see used and valued by those closest to them, and they make these practices part of their own identity and expertise.

The competencies continue to develop over time, shaped by interactions with people, places, ideas, and things. Students need to be challenged and supported to develop them in contexts that are increasingly wide-ranging and complex.

Excerpt from *NZ Curriculum (2007), pg 12*

# Managing Self

### Working towards independence / interdependence

This competency is associated with self-motivation, a “can-do” attitude, and with students seeing themselves as capable learners. It is integral to self-assessment.

Students who manage themselves are enterprising, resourceful, reliable, and resilient. They establish personal goals, make plans, manage projects, and set high standards. They have strategies for meeting challenges. They know when to lead, when to follow, and when and how to act independently.

Excerpt from *NZ Curriculum* Document 2007

When managing self a BLENNZ learner may be manage:

* their personal care
* behaviour
* activities of daily living
* movement in the environment
* self-advocacy
* use of technology and equipment
* organisational skills.

BLENNZ learners will:

* be learning in an environment where their  health and wellbeing is protected and nurtured
* develop a ***can do attitude.*** When barriers are present they will draw on their resourcefulness and self-motivation demonstrating the resilience that is needed to achieve and grow
* be surrounded by those who have a belief in their ability to succeed

|  |
| --- |
| **CAN DO ATTITUDE** |
| **SELF STARTERS** | Living Skills: Personal careActivities of daily livingDevelopmental Orientation & MobilityUse of technology / equipmentSocial Skills:BehaviourLearning**Self-advocacy** | **RESOURCEFUL** |
| **RESILIENT** |

# Relating to Others

## Working towards effective interaction

Relating to others is about interacting effectively with a diverse range of people in a variety of contexts. This competency includes the ability to listen actively, recognise different points of view, negotiate and share ideas.

Students who relate well to others are open to new learning and able to take different roles in different situations. They are aware of how their words and actions affect others.  They know when it is appropriate to compete and when it is appropriate to co-operate.

Excerpt from *NZ Curriculum* Document 2007

When BLENNZ learners are relating to others they may be:

* aware of and interested in others
* expressing feelings and needs
* listening to others and following conversation norms
* expressing and sharing their ideas with others
* gaining an understanding of others points of view
* open and co-operative
* working effectively together with others
* coming up with new approaches, ideas and ways of thinking.

|  |
| --- |
| **OPEN** |
| **CONTRIBUTING** | Communication Modes listening skills receiving and expressing language (verbal/nonverbal) Social Skills: interactionbehaviourself-esteemself-confidenceself-advocacy |  **AWARE** |
| **APPROPRIATE** |

# Participating and Contributing

# Participating and Contributing

## Working towards active involvement

This competency is about being actively involved in communities. Communities include family, whānau, and school and those based, for example, on a common interest or culture. They may be drawn together for purposes such as learning, work, celebration, or recreation. They may be local, national, or global. This competency includes a capacity to contribute appropriately as a group member, to make connections with others, and to create opportunities for others in the group.

Students who participate and contribute in communities have a sense of belonging and the confidence to participate within new contexts. They understand the importance of balancing rights, roles, and responsibilities and of contributing to the quality and sustainability of social, cultural, physical, and economic environments.

Excerpt from *NZ Curriculum* Document 2007

When BLENNZ learners are participating and contributing they are being actively involved and are making connections with others within a range of communities.

 BLENNZ learners will:

* build trust in themselves, develop their confidence and develop a sense of identity as people who belong and actively contribute to many different communities both inside and outside of school
* do this when learning is in authentic and relevant contexts which enable the growth of knowledge that is meaningful.  They will help choose and shape contexts of learning when their interests and decision making are supported
* actively use their knowledge for purposes that have meaning and value for them and the wider community.

|  |
| --- |
| **CONNECTED** |
| **CONFIDENT**  | **Family/Whānau****Class / school / centre****Community****National****Global** | **ACTIVELY****INVOLVED** |
| **BELONGING** |

#

# Using Language, Symbols and Texts

## Working towards using multiple literacies

Using language, symbols, and texts is about working with and making meaning of the codes in which knowledge is expressed. Languages and symbols are systems for representing and communicating information, experiences, and ideas. People use languages and symbols to produce texts of all kinds: written, oral/aural, and visual; informative and imaginative; informal and formal; mathematical, scientific, and technological.

Students who are competent users of language, symbols, and texts can interpret and use words, number, images, movement, metaphor, and technologies in a range of contexts. They recognise how choices of language, symbol, or text affect people’s understanding and the ways in which they respond to communications. They confidently use ICT (including, where appropriate, assistive technologies) to access and provide information and to communicate with others.

Excerpt from *NZ Curriculum* Document 2007

 When BLENNZ learners are using language, symbols and texts they may be:

* making meaning of the world around them
* communicating through language - non verbally or verbally
* using symbols or text which may be visual and/or tactual
* expressing their needs, opinions and thoughts through:
* direct interaction (face to face) or
* the confident use of ICT and their associated assistive technology *and*
* making appropriate choices about how to most effectively access and share information.

|  |
| --- |
| **MAKING MEANING** |
| **MAKING****CHOICES** | **Concept development****Communication modes:*** **Communicating through modes i.e. touch, gesture, sign / voice**
* **Accessing & using print symbols**
* **Accessing & using tactile symbols**

**Technology*** **ICT &**
* **Assistive Technology**

**Social Skills****Self-advocacy** | **COMMUNICATING****CONFIDENTLY** |
| **ACCESSING & PROVIDING INFORMATION** |

# Thinking

## Working toward flexible problem solving

Thinking is about using creative, critical, and metacognitive processes to make sense of information, experiences, and ideas. These processes can be applied to purposes such as developing understanding, making decisions, shaping actions, or constructing knowledge. Intellectual curiosity is at the heart of this competency.

Students who are competent thinkers and problem-solvers actively seek, use, and create knowledge. They reflect on their own learning, draw on personal knowledge and intuitions, ask questions, and challenge the basis of assumptions and perceptions.

Excerpt from *NZ Curriculum* Document 2007

When 'critically thinking' a BLENNZ learner may:

* seek information through their own or others’ resources
* use this knowledge to plan, compare and reflect on the gathered information
* evaluate to create new knowledge.

When 'creatively thinking' a BLENNZ learner may:

* seek new ideas and new perspectives through a variety of approaches
* actively explore their thoughts in order to generate change
* be a curious “doer” who reflects on the rich experiences abounding in the environment.

|  |
| --- |
| **CURIOUS**  |
| **REFLECTIVE** | **Think critically and creatively****Seek knowledge****Use knowledge****Create knowledge****Challenge ideas****Actively explore****Take responsible risks****Compare, reflect and evaluate****Generate change** | **EXPLORERS** |
| **PROBLEM-SOLVERS** |

Over the coming years BLENNZ will work to make explicit our strategies that enable teachers and learners to develop creative, critical and metacognitive thinking. BLENNZ staff will work to support learners’ needs and curriculum access across their range of educational settings, incorporating conceptual approaches to thinking within each setting.

# Learning and Teaching in the Expanded Core Curriculum

Learners who are blind, deafblind or have low vision require a curriculum that is responsive to their unique learning needs.

This section explores key areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum:

* communication
* sensory efficiency
* physical abilities
* orientation and mobility
* social skills
* life skills
* assistive technology
* career and future planning.

# Communication

## What is communication about?

Communication is interaction between people enabling them to relate to others and to participate and contribute in their whānau and community. Effective communication is dependent on expressive and receptive modes with a mutual understanding between participants.

## Why is it important?

Communication is one of the ways we receive information about our environment and the means by which we interact with or respond to our environment. For all learners to be connected, included, heard and respected they need to express themselves in a variety of ways, through language, behaviours, creative expression, gesture, movement, voice, touch, hands, or facial expression. Communication encompasses social skills and concept development.

## What are the components of communication?

Communication may be verbal and non-verbal and may include:

* oral language/vocalisation
* written language
* braille, large print
* sign language
* manual alphabet
* body signs
* body language
* physical indicators such as:
* breathing
* gesture
* facial expression
* object communication (tangible symbols/tactile communication)
* picture / tactile communication (Picture Exchange Communication - PECs; Tactile
* Exchange Communication - TECs)
* symbolic representation
* augmentative devices/systems
* electronic devices/systems.

### Learning and teaching:

BLENNZ learners will:

* engage in an appropriate literacy programme.
* be in an environment that effectively supports their individual learning.
* be able to express themselves effectively in a range of contexts, verbally or nonverbally as listed above.
* have access to appropriate technology and/or resources to support the development of their communication skills.

BLENNZ teachers will have the knowledge and skills to:

* assess and identify the most appropriate learning media for the learners’ specific needs
* teach literacy through tactual modes including braille
* support the literacy development of ākonga who have low vision
* facilitate the creation of the learning environment to best support individual learning
* support the assessment and provision of the appropriate technology and/or resources to support the development of communication skills.

# Sensory Efficiency Skills

## What Is Sensory Efficiency?

Sensory efficiency is

• Using multisensory integration:

* to complete a task as effectively and efficiently as possible using vision, hearing, gustatory, olfactory, tactual, movement (proprioceptive and vestibular)
* for concept development, learning, and accessing the environment.

It includes learning how to use optical devices, hearing aids, and augmentative communication devices. Learning how to integrate all remaining senses to counter the impact of any missing or impaired sense is integral to sensory efficiency. Sensory efficiency skills are valuable life-long tools. All learners who are low vision, blind, or deafblind need to learn how to use their auditory, tactual, and/or visual senses to maximize their access to the environment.

## Why are Sensory Efficiency Skills important?

Learners who are low vision, blind, or deafblind need to develop sensory efficiency skills to maximise:

* effective and efficient access to the environment
* use of auditory and tactual information in order to make sense of the world and access learning
* the use of any vision capability through meaningful activities
* efficient use of able senses to provide increased access to the environment as well as increased independence and development of identified skills.

## What are the components of Sensory Efficiency?

Instruction and skills in:

* use of optical, hearing, and augmentative communication devices e.g. using a range of devices such as a monocular telescope to identify distant information for learners who are low vision
* using the sense of touch to learn about a wide variety of objects and materials for learners who are blind. These tactile skills are necessary to develop concepts which are prerequisites to using braille and tactile graphics
* integration of all senses to compensate for the impact of any missing or impaired sense e.g. tactual, gustatory, olfactory, hearing, to identify one’s personal possessions, or to identify familiar people without visual cues.

## Learning and Teaching:

BLENNZ learners will:

* use their most appropriate mode for learning relevant to the context
* acquire sensory skills to access a range of stimulating and relevant learning environments
* problem solve potential challenges in accessing information.

BLENNZ teachers will have knowledge and skills to:

* assess learners using a range of processes and tools, such as:
* functional vision observation and assessment
* tactual observation and assessment
* Learning Media Assessment
* assess and identify the most appropriate learning medium for the learner’s specific needs and to support learning in this medium
* support sensory skill development across a range of environments
* assess and develop learning environments to meet learner need
* foster the development of learner advocacy to manage their learning environment.

# Physical Abilities

## What are physical abilities about?

Physical abilities refer to how a person moves their body, or parts of their body, in space. Being able to practice and develop quality movements from a young age, such as with reflex integration, trunk stability and early limb strength, assists in developing more refined physical abilities (such as appropriate posture gait and balance). This in turn provides ease of movement, and confidence in the use of body strength, endurance, flexibility, balance and coordination. This enables learners to gain increasing motor and manipulative control and gain confidence in the use of their bodies, across all environments.

## Why are they important?

Physical abilities, including the physical, mental and emotional, social, and spiritual aspects of hauora are important for the health and wellbeing of people of all ages. Movement can be enjoyable, contribute to self-confidence and improve health and fitness. Poor physical abilities can result in increased energy to use movement, and stressors and strains are more likely.

At an early age, the development of refined physical abilities can be hindered by a lack of visual stimuli and the opportunity to imitate the movement of others. Body awareness, posture, sensory integration, motor skills, and mobility can all be hampered (Koenig 441). Lack of mobility can reduce motivation to participate in physical activity, which, in turn, reduces physical fitness (Stuart et al. 2007) and the learner’s health and well-being.

## What are the components of physical abilities?

Our physical abilities are all the factors that influence our refinement of movement i.e. how we move our bodies.

* Body awareness
* Spatial awareness
* Functional abilities
* Postural control / balance
* Locomotors abilities
* Strength and endurance
* Gross and fine motor skills
* Coordination
* Agility
* Endurance

## Expectations for learners

BLENNZ learners will:

* be active across a range of environments throughout their lives, starting from birth
* move confidently according to their own potential
* continue to acquire new skills
* have access to appropriate equipment /or resources to support their physical requirements.

### BLENNZ teachers will have skills and knowledge to:

* understand the development of movement
* understand the respective roles of movement specialists including DOMS, Physiotherapists, Occupational therapists, visiting neurodevelopmental therapists.
* encourage active motor play across a range of movement areas from birth
* identify and support adapted and modified activities:

use of light, sound, colour

goal ball

* be proficient at using descriptive and directional words.

# Developmental Orientation and Mobility

## What is Developmental Orientation and Mobility about?

The emphasis is on learners developing skills to become efficient in movement and an understanding of the environments in which they will travel. Therefore, Developmental Orientation and Mobility (DOM) primarily focuses on optimising purposeful movement (Daly & Moore, 1998).

Orientation is the understanding, or cognitive component, of where you are and what is around you. It encompasses the use of language, concept development and an awareness of self, and involves the use of the senses to establish position in space and relationships with other significant objects in the environment. Mobility is knowing how to move purposefully in the environment. It is the physical part of moving from one place to another.

## Why is it important?

The DOM curriculum covers a number of subject areas to support BLENNZ learners to develop efficient movement skills as well as their self-motivated travel in a range of environments. DOM, being able to move and travel when vision impairment is present, impacts directly on a learner's ability to contribute positively in society and, in doing so, builds self-esteem, promotes the benefits of all physical activity, and enables social connections and friendships. It involves the development of an awareness of self, an understanding of the environment and its landmarks, and is an essential element of all relationships with others.

## What are the components of Developmental Orientation and Mobility?

Orientation skills include:

* concept development and acquiring knowledge
* sensory development
* environmental and community awareness
* formal orientation skills, for example alignment techniques and searching techniques.

Mobility skills include:

* guiding techniques
* self-protective and positional techniques
* use of mobility devices
* cane skills
* travel skills in known and unknown environments.

## Learning and teaching:

BLENNZ learners will:

* develop orientation and mobility skills to access their environments.
* develop problem solving skills to support their Orientation and Mobility
* develop the skills to identify and advocate for their learning needs
* continue to acquire new Orientation and Mobility skills as they gain independence.

BLENNZ teachers will have knowledge and skills to:

* assess learner need
* confidently use Orientation & Mobility techniques to support O&M programmes
* model orientation and mobility techniques to peers, parents, whānau, paraprofessionals and others as appropriate
* undertake an initial assessment of learning environment, particularly at transition times
* work collaboratively with the BLENNZ and BF DOM as appropriate
* implement planned programmes in collaboration with educational team and family/whānau
* promote the development of problem solving and self-advocacy skills.

# Social Skills

## What are social skills about?

A social skill is any skill facilitating interaction and communication with others. Social values and behaviours are created and communicated verbally and nonverbally with family and whānau.

## Why are they important?

Social skills are integral to all aspects of life in a community including the home, education settings, and work and leisure environments. Through the development of social skills, learners may be able to take responsibility for themselves and relate well to others. Social skills provide learners with the means to make and maintain relationships which will enrich their lives.

As some social skills may not be automatically acquired through imitation and modelling these may need to be directly taught

## What are the components of social skills?

The acquisition of social skills begins at birth and continues through life. Skills include:

Behaviours which enable learners to participate in social situations include the acquisition and understanding of:

Social communication

• Body language

• Communication

• Cooperation

Interpersonal relationships

• Interaction with others

• Sustaining relationships

Awareness of self and others

• Self-identity

• Self-advocacy

• Interpreting social situations

• Reciprocal social interaction

## Learning and teaching:

BLENNZ learners will:

* be active social participants in a range of contexts throughout their lives
* engage appropriately in a range of contexts by
	+ receiving and interpreting social information and
	+ being able to express themselves effectively
* have access to peers and age appropriate role models
* develop positive self-esteem and self-identity
* develop the skills of self-advocacy .

BLENNZ teachers will have the knowledge and skills to:

* understand social skills development and they are the foundation of all behaviour
* interpret the communicative intent of behaviour
* understand the impact of vision impairment on social skills development
* understand and recognise the multisensory aspect of receiving and interpreting social information
* work as part of a team to foster the development of social skills starting with the parents and whānau and others depending on context promote positive social inclusion which may include: modelling; facilitating social interaction with peers within the learners community and across BLENNZ promote the development of environments to foster self-esteem, self-identity and self-advocacy.

# Life Skills

## What are life skills?

Life skills comprise all the tasks and functions people perform in order to lead their lives as independently or interdependently as needed. Assessment and teaching of life skills are best carried out within the natural time and place of activities.

## Why are they important?

Competence in life skills increases learners’ sense of self-worth and autonomy, and contributes to independent living, employment and community participation.

What are the components of life skills?

* Organisational skills:
	+ Time management
	+ Developing systems
	+ Labelling, marking and storage
	+ Environmental considerations
	+ Use of reference points
* Food and nutrition:
	+ Feeding and eating
	+ Planning, preparing and cooking food
	+ Food safety
	+ Safe use of equipment
* Financial management:
	+ Basic numeracy and measurement
	+ Handling money
	+ Budgeting
	+ Legal responsibilities and rights
* Personal care and safety:
	+ Hygiene
	+ Personal presentation
	+ Shopping for personal items
	+ Awareness of personal health needs
	+ Keeping yourself safe
* Contributing to a household:
	+ Responsibilities within the family, Whanau and group
	+ Responsibilities as an individual
* Living in the community:
	+ Knowledge of community resources
	+ Self-advocacy

## Learning and teaching:

BLENNZ learners will:

* acquire skills that enable them to function at their highest level of independence and interdependence
* effectively use resources and equipment that support their independence
* develop problem solving strategies to support their independence.

BLENNZ teachers will have knowledge and skills to:

* understand the impact of vision loss on the development of life skills
* assess learner need
* confidently use basic techniques to promote the development of life skills
* model techniques to peers, parents, whānau, paraprofessionals and others as appropriate
* work collaboratively with the BLENNZ DOM and BF ILSS as appropriate
* implement planned programmes in collaboration with educational team and family/whānau
* access appropriate resources and equipment
* promote the development of problem solving and self-advocacy skills.

# Assistive Technology

## What is assistive technology?

Assistive Technology is the use of tools, systems or equipment to enable and sustain independence and access to the curriculum. Technology supports learning and responds to all phases of individuals’ needs within prevailing environments and conditions.

Technology may be adapted to improve access to the curriculum depending on the specific needs of the learner.

## Why is it important?

Assistive Technology supports learners:

* by removing barriers to achievement and equipping them to meet individual learning goals
* to accomplish tasks accessible to sighted peers
* to function as active, purposeful participants across environments
* to access e-learning enabling:
	+ communication
	+ connection
	+ generation of knowledge
	+ creativity
* to be fully engaged and participate in learning.

## What are the components of assistive technology?

* full involvement in the trial and selection of assistive technology devices
* familiarisation with equipment
* skill development relevant to prioritised activities or tasks
* generalise use of the equipment across contexts and tasks
* increased independence in use and care of equipment as appropriate.

## Learning and teaching:

BLENNZ learners will:

* use the most appropriate assistive technology to support access and independence
* have the skills to effectively utilise their assistive technology
* problem solve when assistive technology or access to information is a challenge

BLENNZ teachers will have knowledge and skills to:

* match the best technology to suit the learner's needs through quality assessment using the SETT Framework.  (SETT Framework Joy Zabala. joyzabala.com)
	+ Student (current abilities)
	+ Environments (arrangement, support, materials and equipment commonly used by sighted peers)
	+ Tasks (specific tasks which occur that enable progress towards learner goals and which are required for active involvement)
	+ Tools (devices, services and strategies needed for active participation in identified environments)

This is best determined by a learner-centred team approach involving learner, family/whānau, educators and specialists

* develop effective use of equipment to access learning
* review and assess use of technology to ensure continued access to curriculum
* promote strategies that foster a problem solving approach to curriculum access.

# Career and Future Planning

## What is career and future planning?

Career development is a lifelong process of skill acquisition and building through a continuum of learning, development and mastery. This process enables people to be in charge of their own career, with enough focus and direction for stability and enough flexibility and adaptability for change along the way (Phillip S Jarvis. 2003. P7 – from P 5 ‘Career Education and Guidance in NZ schools).

## Why is it important?

Learners who are blind, deafblind or have low vision, need to:

* have the opportunity to investigate opportunities in learning and work, and relate them to themselves
* have the right to belong and to realize their potential as participating and contributing members of society through the world of work
* be aware of the technology and support options available to enable them to participate in the work environment
* develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to engage successfully in a 21st century environment.

## What are the components of career and future planning?

Awareness:

* Self-awareness, skills & values, interests & achievements
* Self-advocacy - overcoming barriers
* Personal goal setting – identifying strengths and skills, subject choices (keeping options open)
* Development and review of career plans.

Exploration:

* Seek guidance with vocational decisions
* Access mentoring - peer & adult mentors
* Undertake information research – skills required for particular courses and jobs, the labour market and job search strategies.

Preparation:

* CV development – application process
* Interview skills
* Life skills for the work environment
* Knowledge of support services & funding
* Awareness of technology options in work and study.

Placement

* Work experience:
	+ Exposure to the world of work
	+ Increased understanding of good work ethics
	+ Opportunity to put skills into practice in a supported environment.

## Learning and teaching:

BLENNZ learners will:

* have a knowledge of the world of learning, work, recreation and community beyond school through e.g.:
	+ work exploration
	+ access to role models
	+ engagement in community based activities
* be engaged in developing their individual plan for transition starting from their early teens, in partnership with their whānau
* have input into decisions about the equipment and training they might require for successful transition to life beyond school
* have knowledge of the range of community support and agencies that are available to them.

BLENNZ teachers will:

* have a working knowledge of the transition process and the range of community support and agencies available for learners
* provide opportunities for learners to develop realistic pathway plans by:
	+ exploring community, career and study options
	+ goal setting
	+ developing individual plans
	+ linking with positive role models
* foster learner self-awareness and self-advocacy
* ensure learners have input into selecting appropriate equipment and training to support successful transition to life beyond school.

# Pedagogy: Knowledge about Learning and Teaching

Students learn best when BLENNZ teachers:

* Work in partnership with learners, family and whānau and the learners teaching team
* Foster an environment where there is an expectation that all blind, deafblind and low vision learners experience learning success
* Participate in professional learning and are recognised as “leading teachers” in learning environments
* Are acknowledged and consulted as professional leaders with significant understanding of blind, deafblind and low vision learning and teaching
* Have direct, hands-on involvement with curriculum design and implementation
* Build a professional learning community that supports, challenges, and reflects on professional practice
* Explore the links between teaching practice and the impact on student learning
* Model innovative practice linked to each student’s learning needs and outcomes
* Understand assessment of learning for improving learner outcomes
* Ensure learning and teaching programmes are informed by ongoing reflection and evaluation processes using learner achievement data
* Assist in the facilitation and creation of supportive e-learning environments that take into account individual, cultural or developmental differences
	+ Work in partnership with whānau to ensure programmes appropriately promote learners’ language, culture and identity
	+ Reflect on their practice.

# Active Learning and Pedagogy

BLENNZ believes that *active learning* is fundamental to the development of the blind, deafblind and low vision learner. Each learner displays unique characteristics from birth, which through everyday interactions progressively differentiate into a unique personality. Learning always occurs in the context of each person’s unique characteristics, abilities, and opportunities.

While each learner is developmentally unique, there are optimal times for educational experiences, procedures or methods, whether adult or child-initiated, that:

* exercise and challenge the learner’s capacities
* encourage and help the learner to develop a unique pattern of interests and talents
* present learning experiences when learners are best able to master, generalize, and retain what they learn and can relate it to previous experiences and future expectations.

Active learning is defined as learning in which the learner, by acting on objects and interacting with people, ideas, and events, constructs new understanding. No one else can have experiences for the learner or construct knowledge for the learner. Learners must do this for themselves.

Active learning is a set of beliefs about how learners learn and how adults support learning. Adults do not tell learners what to learn or how to learn it – instead, they empower learners to take control of their own learning. Adults are not only active and participatory but also observational and reflective; they are conscious participant-observers.

# E-Learning and Pedagogy

Definition of e-learning: Learning and teaching that is facilitated by or supported through the *appropriate* use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

The BLENNZ teacher will prepare learners to make effective use of ICTs as an important part of the learners’ preparation for participation and contribution in society today and into the future. A key skill in this new world will be their ability to participate as effective digital citizens.

Through the choices of technology appropriate to the individual learners’ specific needs the BLENNZ teacher will:

* Assist the making of connections by enabling the learner with vision loss to access new learning environments
* Enable the learner to access and engage the curriculum
* Facilitate shared learning and collaboration within communities
* Assist in the creation of a supportive learning environment that takes into account their individual differences
* Be providing an opportunity for learners to manage and enhance their own learning.

# Assessment

BLENNZ assessment identifies learners’ developmental and curriculum status and needs in order to provide evidence for specialised educational planning, teaching, and learning. It is independent and impartial and involves information collated from on-going anecdotal observations, clinical, diagnostic, and educational evaluations, which is critical for informing whanau, teachers, and the learner’s team, that immediate needs are being met, future needs anticipated, and educational programmes effectively planned.

The purpose of assessment can be summarised into four broad categories:

* Diagnostic assessments which could include assessments specific to learners who are blind or low vision
* Formative assessments which could include observations, checklists, anecdotal and narrative assessments
* Summative assessments which could include running records and standardised testing
* Evaluative assessments which could include learner/teacher conferencing, peer and/or self-assessment.

Tags:

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# Appendices

## Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

## Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 3:

The principles of the present Convention shall be:

Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one’s own choices, and independence of persons:

1. Non-discrimination
2. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
3. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
4. Equality of opportunity
5. Accessibility
6. Equality between men and women
7. Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

## Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 24

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to:

1. The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity
2. The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential
3. Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.

2. In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that:

1. Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability
2. Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live
3. Reasonable accommodation of the individual’s requirements is provided
4. Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education
5. Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

3. States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:

1. Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring
2. Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community
3. Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.

4. In order to help ensure the realization of this right, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.

5. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.

## Principles of the New Zealand Curriculum

The principles set out below embody beliefs about what is important and desirable in school curriculum – nationally and locally. They should underpin all school decision making.

These principles put students at the centre of learning and teaching, asserting that they should experience a curriculum that engages and challenges them, is forward-looking and inclusive, and affirms New Zealand’s unique identity

Although similar, the principles and the values have different functions. The principles relate to how curriculum is formalized in a school; they are particularly relevant to the processes of planning, prioritizing, and review. The values are part of the everyday curriculum – encouraged, modelled, and explored.

All curriculum should be consistent with these eight statements:

##### High expectations

The curriculum supports and empowers all students to learn and achieve personal excellence, regardless of their individual circumstances.

##### Treaty of Waitangi

The curriculum acknowledges the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, and the bicultural foundations of Aotearoa New Zealand. All students have the opportunity to acquire knowledge of te reo Māori me ōna tikanga.

##### Cultural diversity

The curriculum reflects New Zealand’s cultural diversity and values the histories and traditions of all its people.

##### Inclusion

The curriculum is non-sexist, non-racist, and non-discriminatory; it ensures that students’ identities, languages, abilities, and talents are recognized and affirmed and that their learning needs are addressed.

##### Learning to learn

The curriculum encourages all students to reflect on their own learning processes and to learn how to learn.

##### Community engagement

The curriculum has meaning for students, connects with their wider lives, and engages the support of their families, whānau, and communities.

##### Coherence

The curriculum offers all students a broad education that makes links within and across learning areas, provides for coherent transitions, and opens up pathways to further learning.

##### Future focus

The curriculum encourages students to look to the future by exploring such significant future-focused issues as sustainability, citizenship, enterprise, and globalization.

Excerpt <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-documents/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum/Principles> July 2011

# References

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