

Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired

Fiscal Year 2016

Report

To the

Legislature

As required by
Minnesota Statutes,
section 125A.63

COMMISSIONER:

Brenda Cassellius, Ed. D.

**Students who are Blind or Visually
Impaired**

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Cost of Report Preparation

The total cost for the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to prepare this report was approximately \$10,000. Costs included hiring Management Analysis & Development to analyze MDE data and MDE staff time to draft narrative language. Incidental costs included paper, copying and other office supplies.

Estimated costs are provided in accordance with Minnesota Statutes 2011, section 3.197, which requires that the cost of preparing the report must be provided at the beginning of a report to the Legislature.

Legislative Charge

The primary purpose of this report is to:

- identify and report the aggregate, data-based education outcomes for children with the primary disability classification of blind or visually impaired, consistent with the commissioner's child count reporting practices, the commissioner's state and local outcome data reporting system by district and region, and the school performance report cards under section 120B.36, subdivision 1; and
- describe the implementation of a data-based plan for improving the education outcomes of blind or visually impaired children that is premised on evidence-based best practices, and provide a cost estimate for the ongoing implementation of the plan.

Introduction

Students served in the categorical area of blind or visually impaired (BVI) are counted in two ways. One is the unduplicated child count, which records the students with a single primary categorical area in special education on December 1 of each calendar year. According to the MDE 2015 Unduplicated Child Count (ages 0–21), Minnesota has 467 students who are BVI and 83 students who are deafblind.

The second is the American Printing House (APH) Federal Quota Census, which is collected in January of each year, and records those students, regardless of other categorical identification, who are blind. The APH 2015 Federal Quota Census (age preschool 21) indicates that Minnesota has 1,074 legally blind students.

Teachers of the blind or visually impaired (TBVI) and certified orientation and mobility specialists (COMS) serve students who are blind, deafblind, low vision, and students who are special education eligible under a different category and have a specific visual need. The population of students with visual impairments is very diverse. These students:

- May be totally blind or have varying degrees of low vision
- Range from birth to 21 years of age
- May have been born with a visual impairment or may have acquired a visual impairment at a later time in their life

- May or may not be learners on the same academic level as their sighted age peers
- May have hearing impairments (i.e., deafblindness)
- May have any number of other disabilities (e.g., mild to severe intellectual disability, physical disability, other sensory loss, emotional or behavioral problems, autism, or specific learning disabilities)
- May have impaired vision originating in a part of the structure of the eye or due to neurological causes (e.g., cortical visual impairment)
- May have additional medical needs or considerations
- May be students with a medical condition that will lead to vision loss or blindness

The graph below shows the number of students whose primary eligibility category is visually impaired, the number of students on the 2015 APH Census, the estimated number of students TBVIs serve, and the number of licensed TBVIs and COMS in each region of Minnesota. Because they are not included in the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA)/Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS) test results, students whose primary diagnosis is deafblind are not included in this data.

Region	# Students 2015 MDE Unduplicated Child Count	# Students 2015 APH Federal Quota Count	Estimated # Students on TBVI caseloads (blind, low vision, DB and multiple needs)	# of TBVI	# of COMS
1 & 2	20	48	66	10	3
3	17	41	57	3	1
4	27	46	90	4	1
5 & 7	34	201	252	15	5
6 & 8	62	40	78	3	0
9	21	44	69	4	0
10	73	79	258	15	3
11	213	575	780	49	18
Totals	467	1074	1650	103	31

Demographics

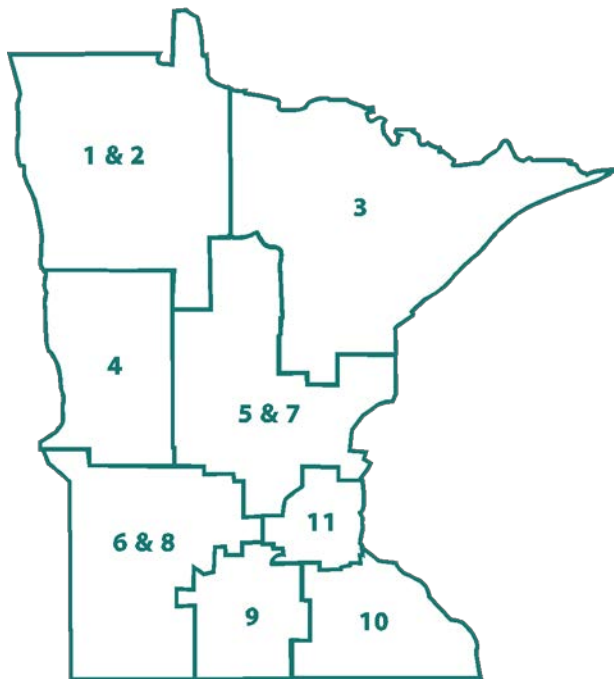


Table 1: Students who are BVI by Region 2015-16

Region	BVI K-12	K-12 Fall Enrollment	Percent BVI	K-12 Child Count Special Education	Percent BVI
Regions 1 and 2	20	28,078	0.07%	4,983	0.40%
Region 3	17	43,807	0.04%	7,398	0.23%
Region 4	27	33,787	0.08%	5,890	0.46%
Region 5	13	25,825	0.05%	4,877	0.27%
Regions 6 and 8	21	45,312	0.05%	7,169	0.29%
Region 7	62	103,332	0.06%	15,943	0.39%
Region 9	21	34,509	0.06%	5,703	0.37%
Region 10	73	75,606	0.10%	11,765	0.62%
Region 11	213	475,214	0.04%	70,014	0.30%
Totals	467	865,470	0.05%	133,742	0.35%

Child Count

As Figure 1 illustrates, the number of students who were BVI currently enrolled in the school system is generally flat, though up slightly since the 2012-2013 school year. For comparison,

Figure 2 shows the number of students who were BVI compared to all students enrolled in special education, which is also generally the same from year to year.

Figure 1: Statewide Blind or Visually Impaired, Ages 0-21, Five Year Trend (2011-12 to 2015-16)

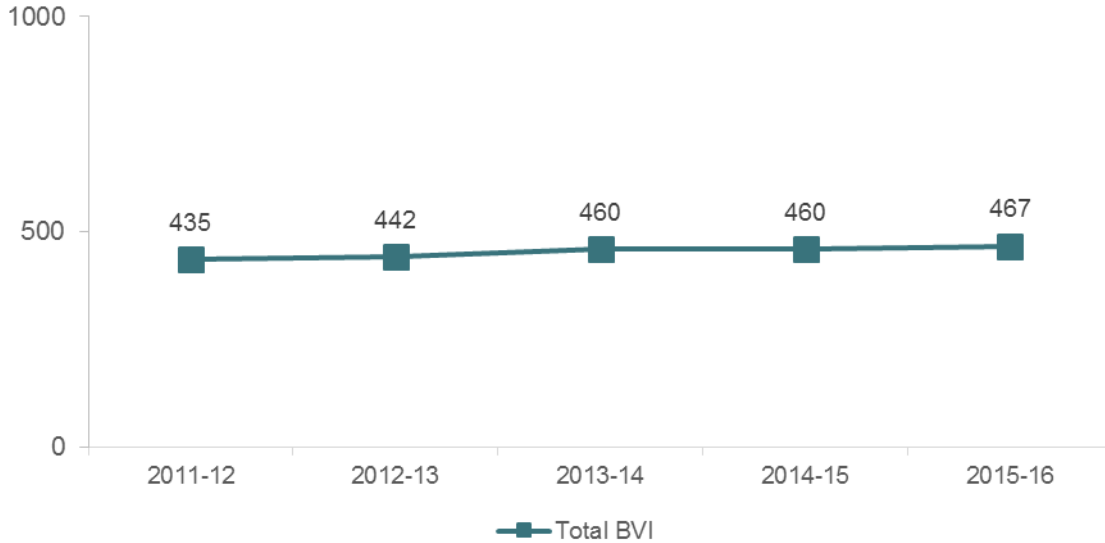
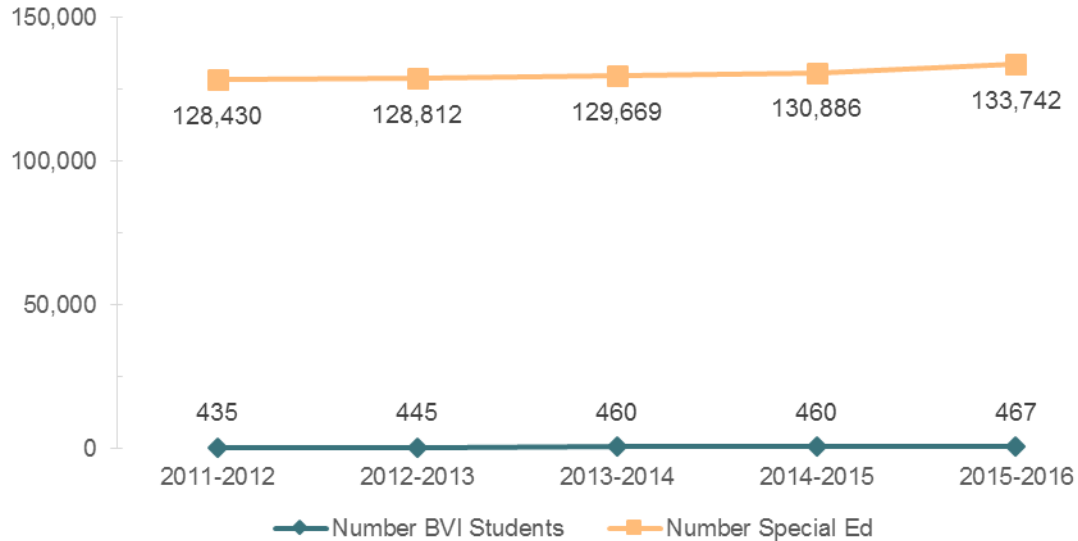


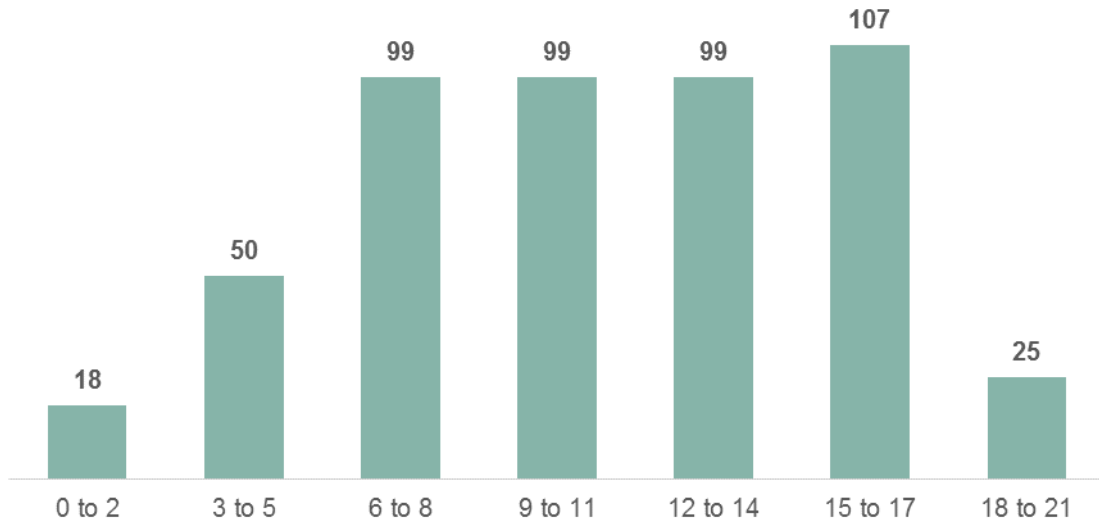
Figure 2: Statewide Special Education and Blind or Visually Impaired, Ages 0-21, Five Year Trend (2011-12 to 2015-16)



Age Distribution

Figure 3 illustrates the age distribution of students who were BVI. The largest concentration of students is school age, which is expected given that is the largest concentration for any student population. There were slightly more students who were BVI in the 15-17 age bracket than in other brackets.

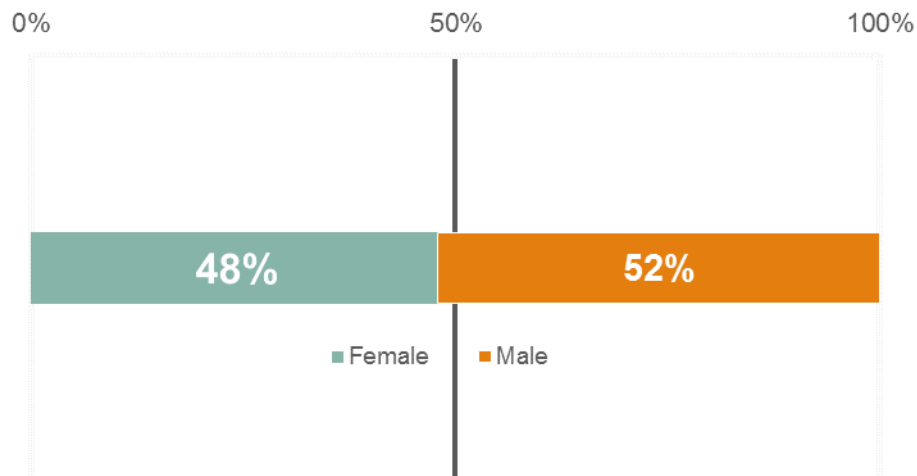
Figure 3: Age Distribution



Gender Distribution

Figure 4 illustrates the gender distribution of blind or visually impaired students. While there were slightly more males than females, the difference is too fine to draw conclusions from the data.

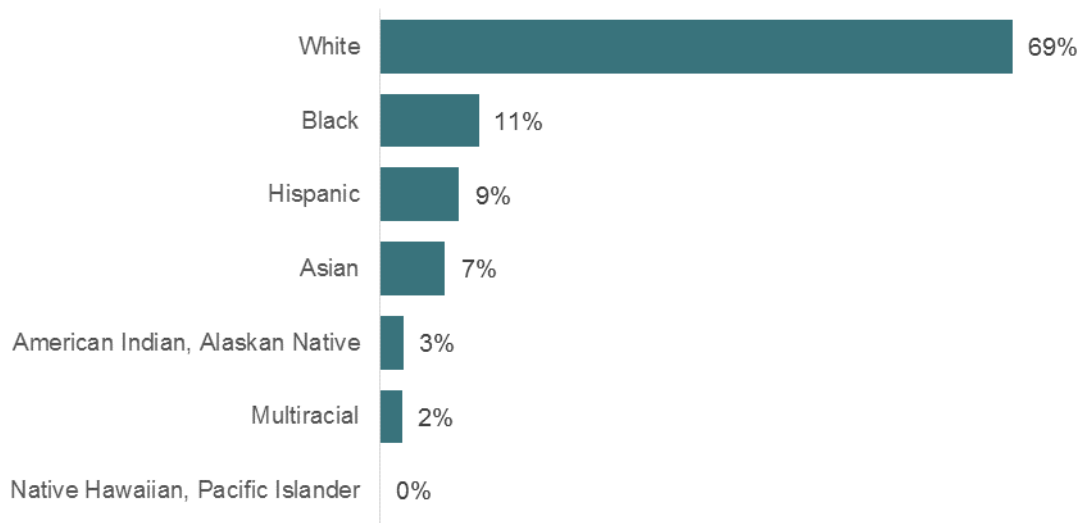
Figure 4: BVI Enrollment by Gender



Racial/Ethnic Distribution

Figure 5 illustrates the racial and ethnic distribution of students who were BVI. More than two-thirds of the students were white. Other major racial and ethnic groups represented were black (11 percent of all students who are BVI), Hispanic (nine percent), and Asian (seven percent). These figures are similar to the racial and ethnic distribution of all students.

Figure 5: Racial/Ethnic Distribution of BVI Students in Minnesota

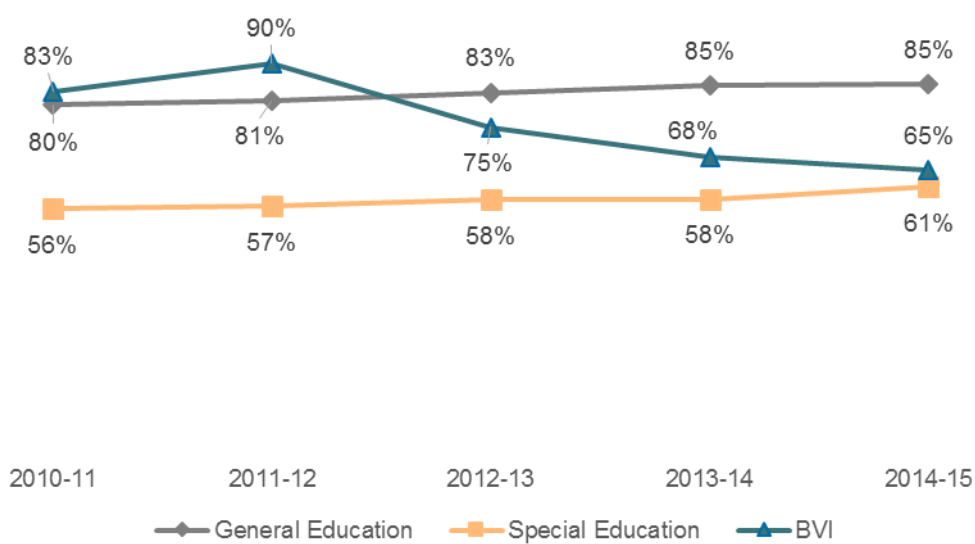


Graduation Assessment Requirements

As Figure 6 shows, the graduation rate continues to decline for students who were BVI relative to other students in special education and students in general education. Students who are BVI often stay in the school system longer than four years, so the four-year graduation rate is not a comprehensive count of students who are BVI and graduate high school. For example, in the 2014-15 school year, the four-year graduation rate was 65 percent, but the six-year graduation rate was over 85 percent, similar to students in general education.

Readers should note when interpreting the data that the number of students who were BVI at any grade level is very low. Low numbers tend to be exaggerated in percentages, so if one student who is blind or visually impaired does not graduate, that results in a more pronounced change in percentage than if one student in special education does not graduate.

Figure 6: Graduation State Trends (four-year graduation rate)



Post-school outcomes

There were too few students who were BVI to report post-school outcomes from 2009 to 2015 by year. Combined, 80 percent of students for whom data is available pursued higher education, while the other 20 percent of students who were BVI were not engaged in higher education or employment. For students in special education, these figures averaged 29 percent in higher education and 19 percent not engaged.¹

¹ The remaining students previously in special education were engaged in competitive employment or other education/employment.

State Data

Data Sources

This report includes data from multiple databases and data sources. Data sources include:

- Minnesota Child Count Trend Data
- Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS)
- Three Year Assessment Trend Data
- Early Childhood Outcome Survey Form Data
- Minnesota Post-School Outcome Survey Results

Throughout this report, results were only reported on population groups greater than ten to protect individual privacy. Nearly all school districts and a few regions had fewer than ten students who were BVI, so no results were reported for those areas.

Data Challenges

There are several testing challenges that students who are BVI encounter:

- Existing adaptive online tests are not accessible to students who are blind. (They received with a hard copy test in braille.)
- Students who are BVI often spend twice as much amount of time testing as their peers.
- There have been issues with the tactile graphics provided in the test material, which put into question whether or not the student is being assessed for their math skills or their tactile graphics skills. (The existing tests do not always provide good data regarding learned skills).
- Many students who are BVI may be given the MTAS in error—data indicates that the appropriateness of the test provided may not be correct.

State Assessment Trends

This section provides information on statewide trends for both the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) and the Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS) tests. Once again, readers should use caution in interpreting small numbers, particularly for MTAS tests, which is generally administered to 15 or fewer students who are BVI each year.

In math, fewer students were proficient in 2015 than in previous years, though differences are slight (see Figure 7 for MCA results and Figure 8 for MTAS results). Reading scores (see Figure 9 for MCA results and Figure 10 for MTAS results) reflected the same trend. In both instances, MCA testing results are overall more consistent with previous years.

Math

Figure 7: Blind or Visually Impaired State Math Trends, MCA Testing

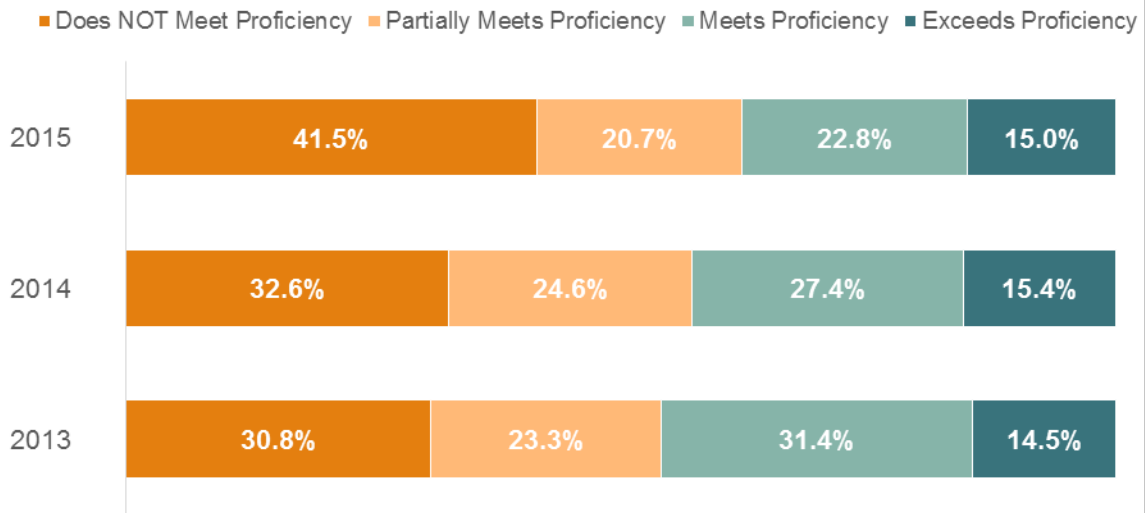
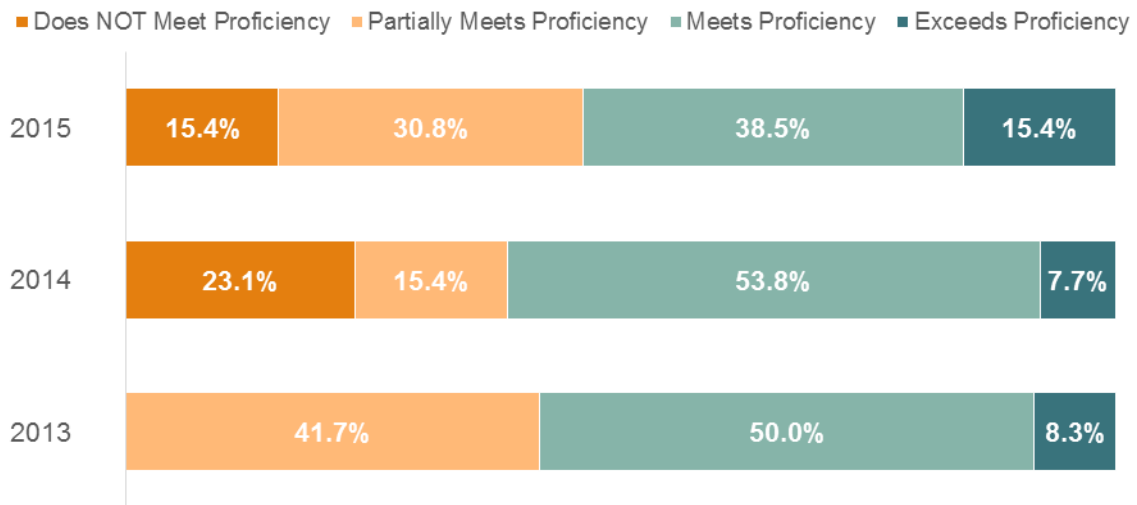


Figure 8: Blind or Visually Impaired State Math Trends, MTAS Testing



Reading

Figure 9: Blind or Visually Impaired State Reading Trends, MCA Testing

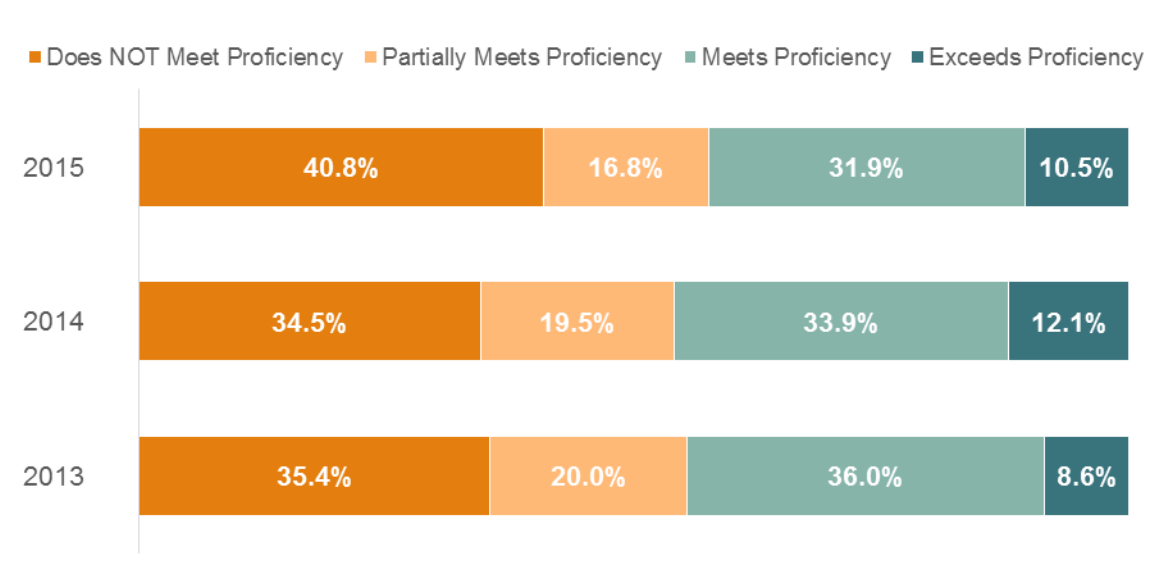
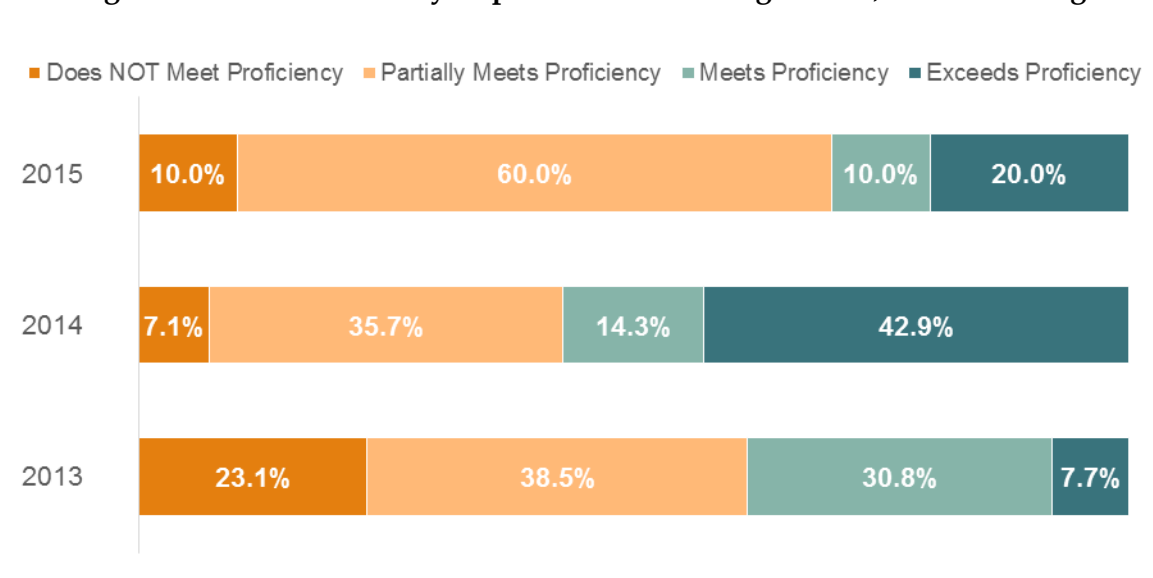


Figure 10: Blind or Visually Impaired State Reading Trends, MTAS Testing

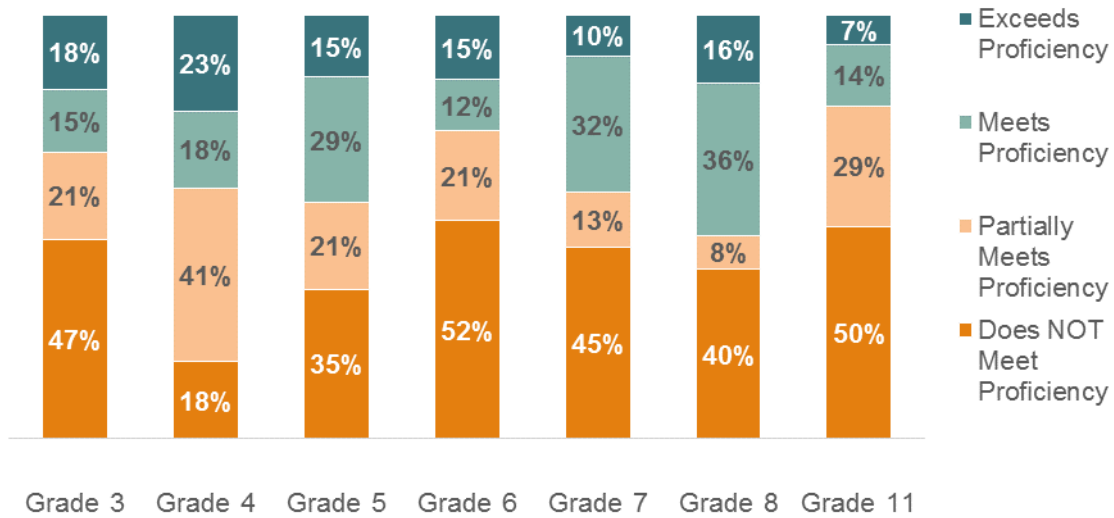


State Proficiency by Grade

Figures 11 and 12 show student proficiency in math and reading, respectively, by grade MCA testing results for students who are BVI. Students were generally more proficient in reading than in math.

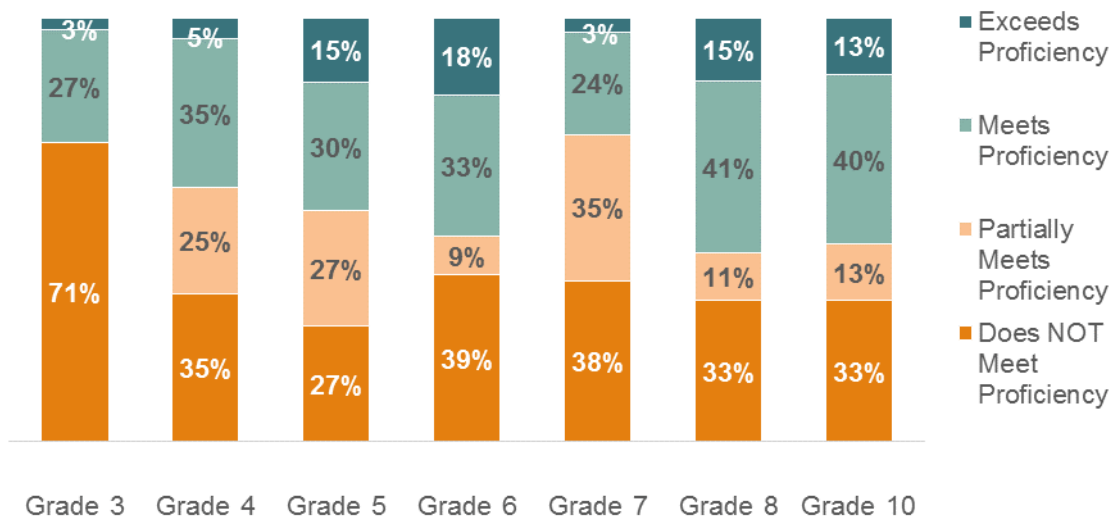
Math

Figure 11: State Math by Grade, MCA Testing



Reading

Figure 12: State Reading by Grade, MCA Testing



State Proficiency by Student Category

The charts below illustrate student proficiency for all students, students in special education, and students who were BVI that completed either the MCA or MTAS tests. Figures 13 and 14 display proficiency results for math in MCA and MTAS, respectively. Figures 15 and 16 show the same results for reading proficiency.

Math

Figure 13: State Math by Student Category, MCA Testing

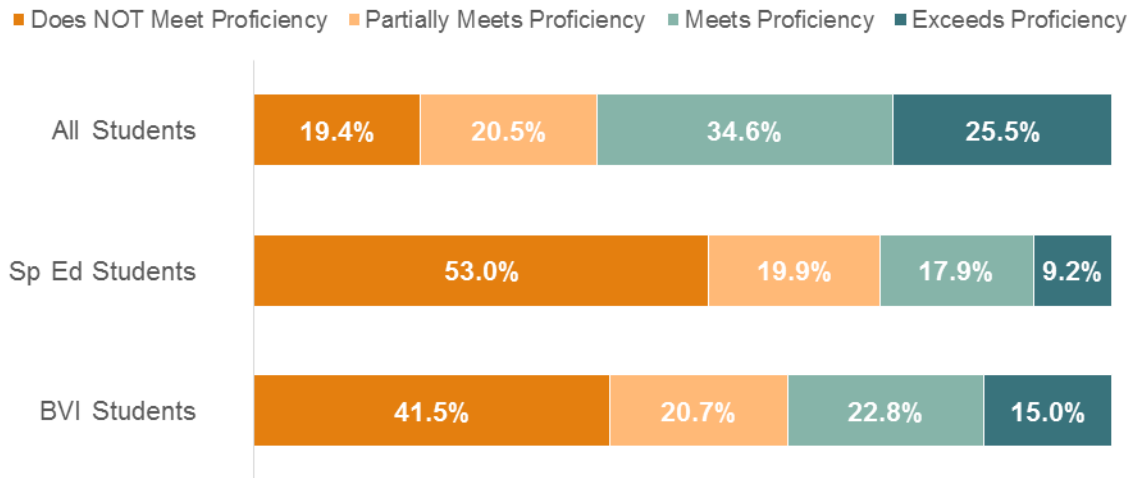
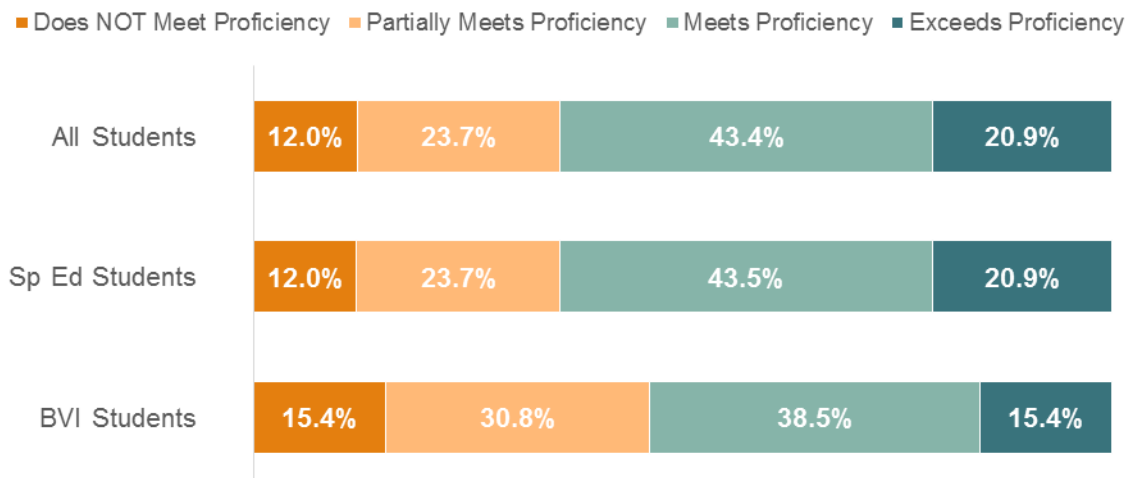


Figure 14: State Math by Student Category, MTAS Testing



The results are more consistent by type of test than by subject. Students who were BVI and were assessed by MCA testing for math or reading generally scored higher than their peers in special education but not as high as all students. MTAS testing results showed students who were BVI scored lower than other students. Those students were also less proficient in reading than in math.

Reading

Figure 15: State Reading by Student Category, MCA Testing

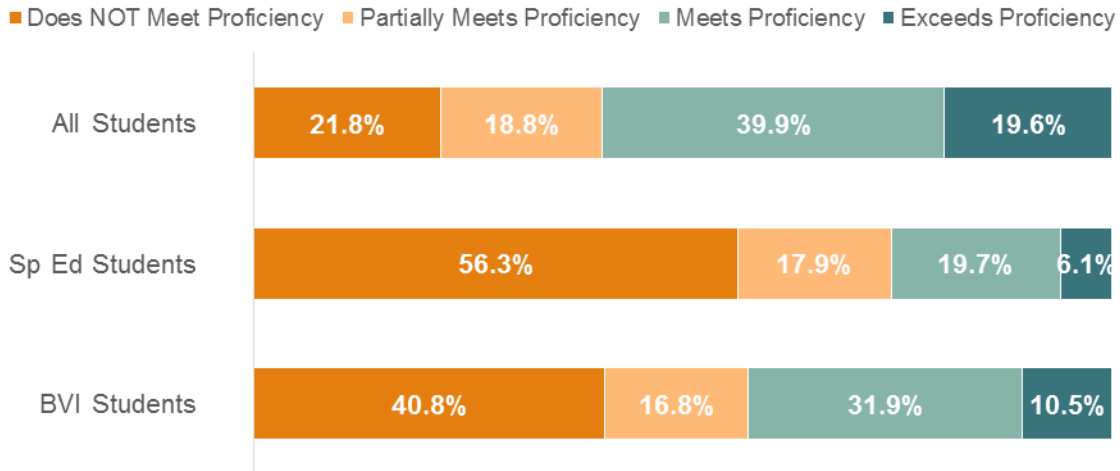
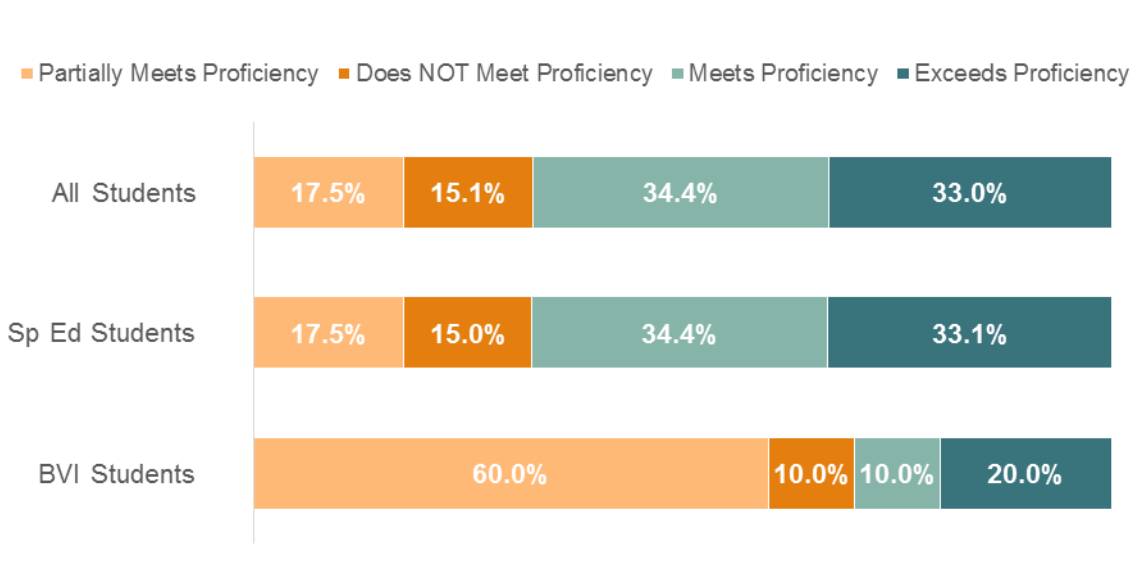


Figure 16: State Reading by Student Category, MTAS Testing



Regional Data

The following charts and tables illustrate information about students who were BVI by region. All information is based on MCA testing. Too few students who were BVI took the MTAS assessment in any one region to report results.

Regions 1 & 2

In Regions 1 & 2, more students who were BVI were male, but the total number of students enrolled has stayed constant since 2010 (see Figure 17 and Table 2).

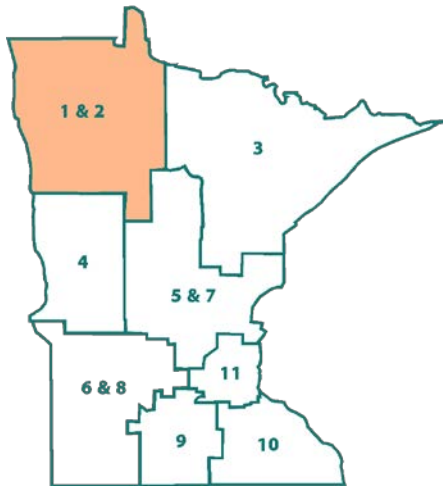


Figure 17: Regions 1 & 2 Enrollment by Gender

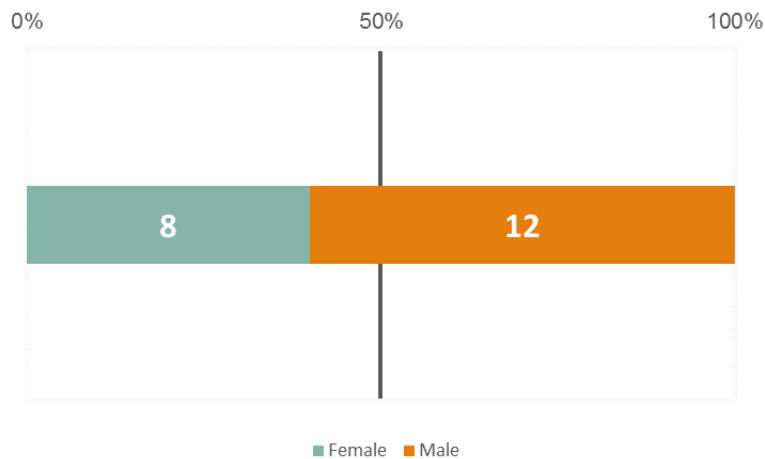


Table 2: Number Enrolled in Regions 1 & 2 by Year 2010-11 through 2014-15

Year	Number Enrolled
2010-2011	19
2011-2012	20
2012-2013	20
2013-2014	21
2014-2015	20

The results are similar to statewide testing in that there were proportionally more students who were BVI who were proficient in math and reading than those in special education as a whole but proportionally fewer than all students. As Figure 18 illustrates, however, none of students who were BVI exceeded proficiency in math. Nearly the same proportion of students who were BVI exceeded proficiency in reading as the proportion of all students (see Figure 19).

Figure 18: Region 1 & 2 Math by Student Category, MCA Testing

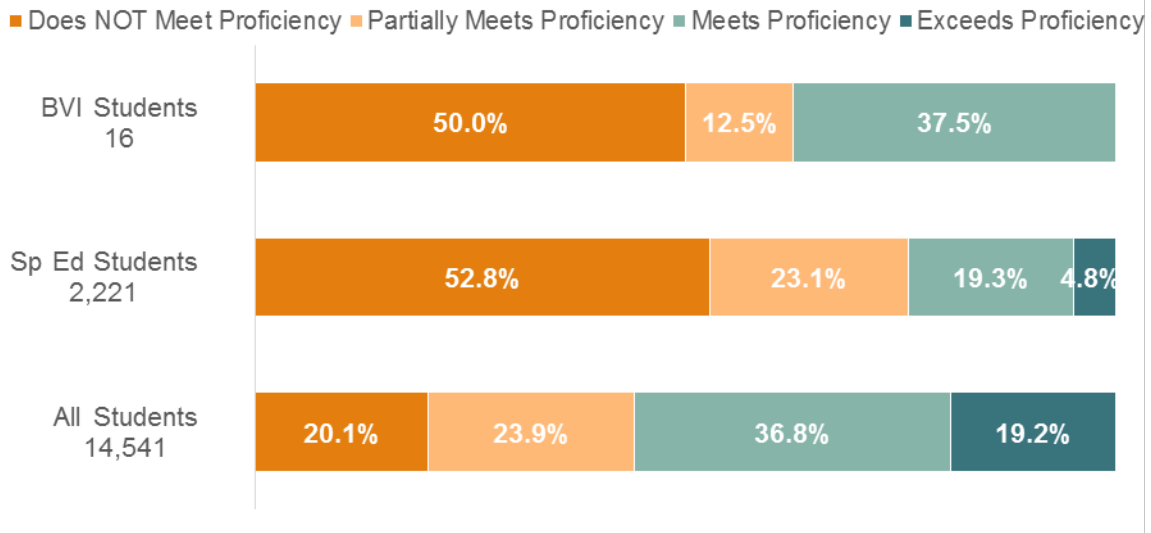
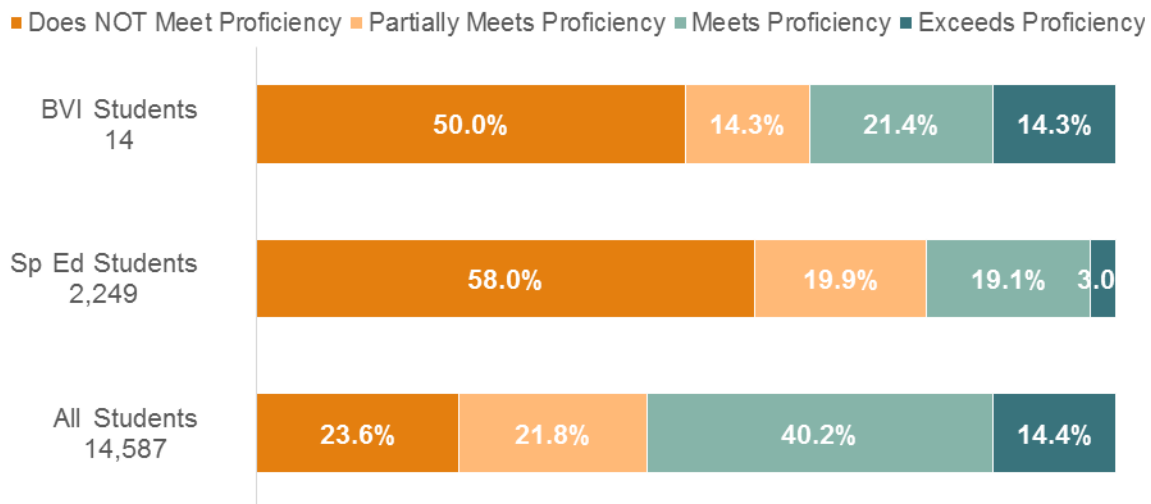


Figure 19: Region 1 & 2 Reading by Student Category, MCA Testing



Region 3

As Figure 20 illustrates, half of the students who were BVI in Region 3 were female, while the other half were male. The number of students who were BVI in 2014-2015 was down slightly from recent years (see Table 3).

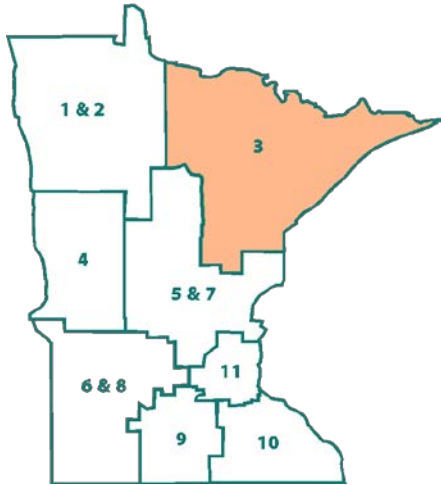


Figure 20: Region 3 Enrollment by Gender

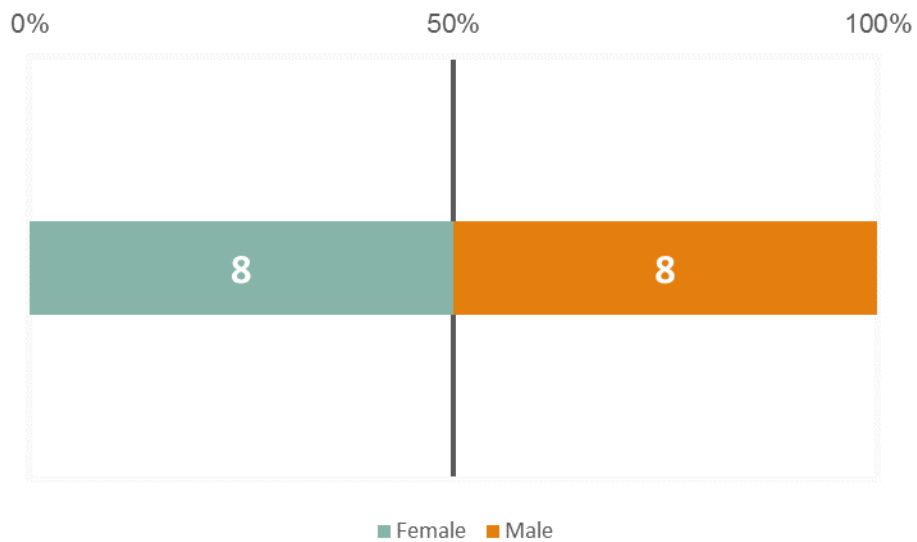


Table 3: Number Enrolled in Region 3 by Year 2010-11 through 2014-15

Year	Number Enrolled
2010-2011	19
2011-2012	17
2012-2013	20
2013-2014	19
2014-2015	16

Test results are similar in Region 3 to those in Regions 1 & 2 and the state overall. Students who were BVI were found to be more proficient in math and reading than students in special education, but less proficient than the student body as a whole. No students who were BVI exceeded proficiency in reading, while nine percent exceeded proficiency in math. For reference, see Figures 21 and 22.

Figure 21: Region 3 Math by Student Category, MCA Testing

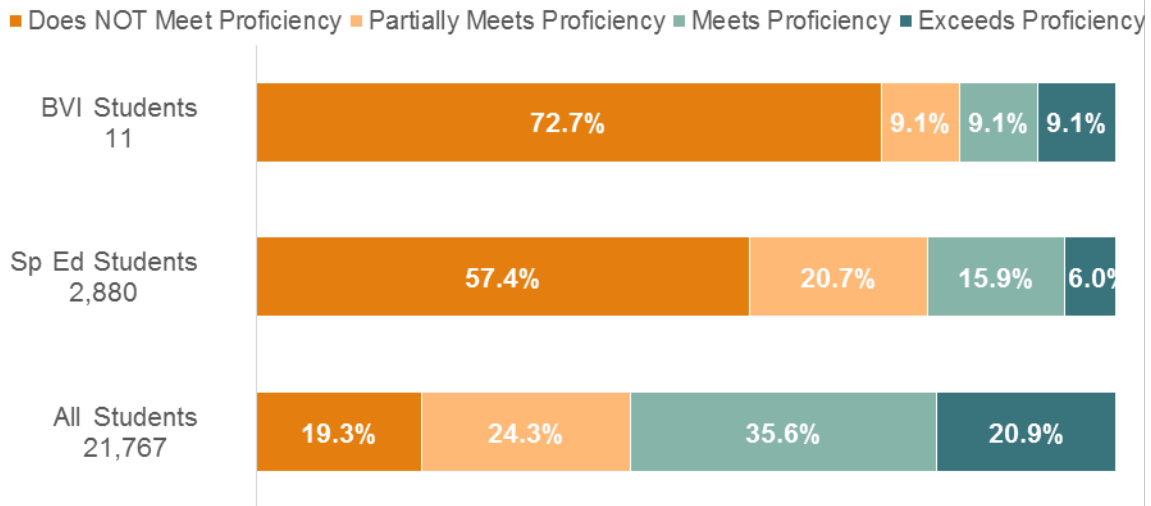
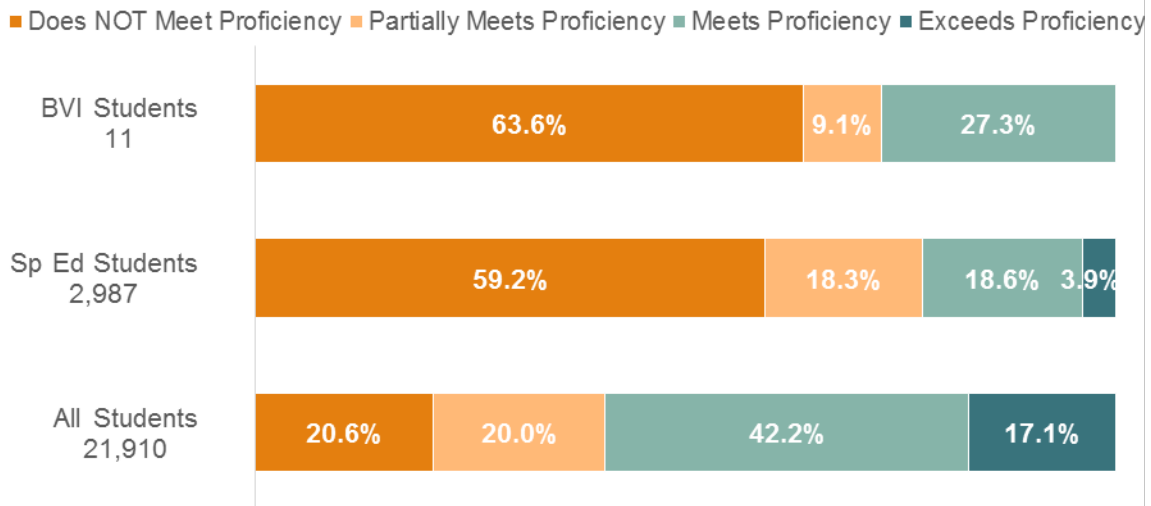


Figure 22: Region 3 Reading by Student Category, MCA Testing



Region 4

In Region 4, two-thirds of students who were BVI were female, according to Figure 23. Enrollment of students who were BVI was higher than in recent years (see Table 4), but there were still too few students tested in Region 4 to report test results.

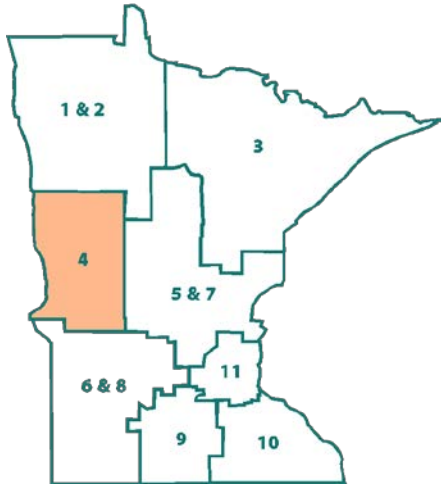


Figure 23: Region 4 BVI Enrollment by Gender

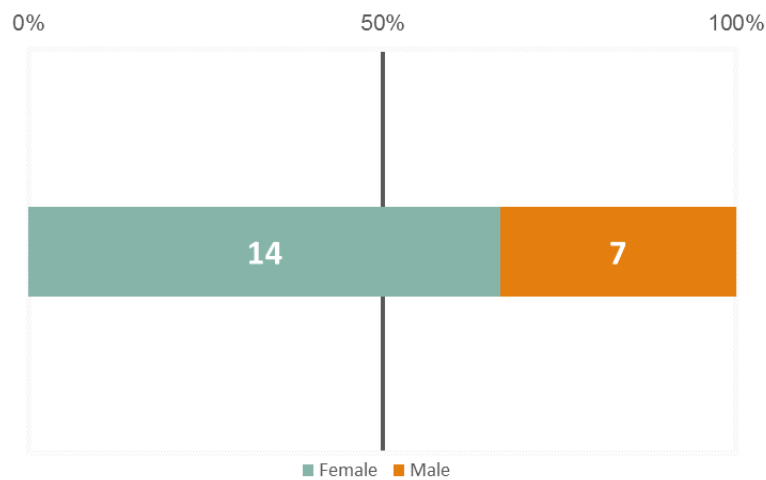


Table 4: Number Enrolled in Region 4 by Year 2010-11 through 2014-15

Year	Number Enrolled
2010-2011	15
2011-2012	19
2012-2013	17
2013-2014	19
2014-2015	21

Region 5

In Region 5, the majority of students were male, according to Figure 24. Enrollment of students who were BVI was higher than in recent years (see Table 5), but because not all students who were BVI took the MCA or MTAS, there were still too few students tested in Region 5 to report test results.

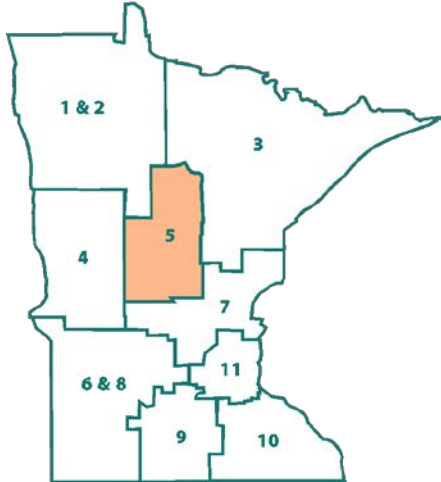


Figure 24: Region 5 BVI Enrollment by Gender

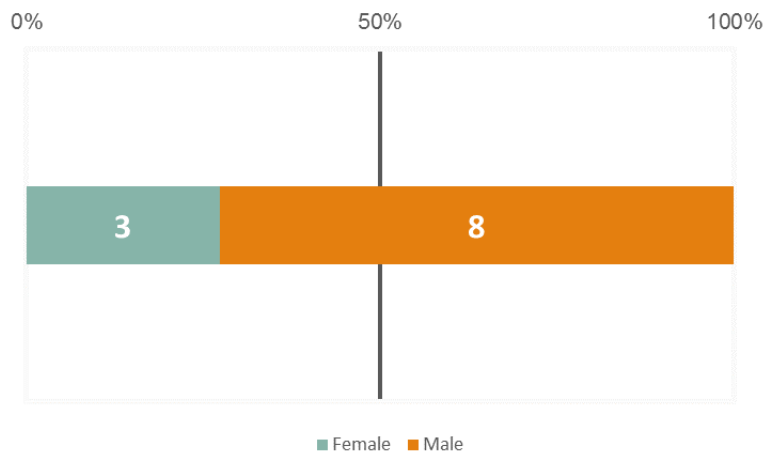


Table 5: Number Enrolled in Region 5 by Year 2010-11 through 2014-15

Year	Number Enrolled
2010-2011	6
2011-2012	9
2012-2013	9
2013-2014	14
2014-2015	11

Regions 6 & 8

In Regions 6 & 8, most of the students who were BVI impaired were female, as shown in Figure 25. Enrollment of students who were BVI was constant relative to recent years (see Table 6). because not all students who were BVI took the MCA or MTAS, there were too few students tested in Regions 6 & 8 to report test results.

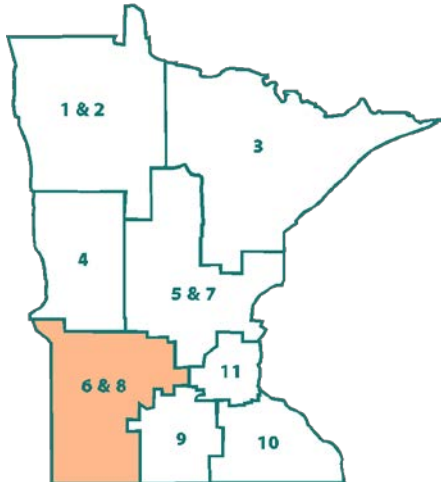


Figure 25: Regions 6 & 8 BVI Enrollment by Gender

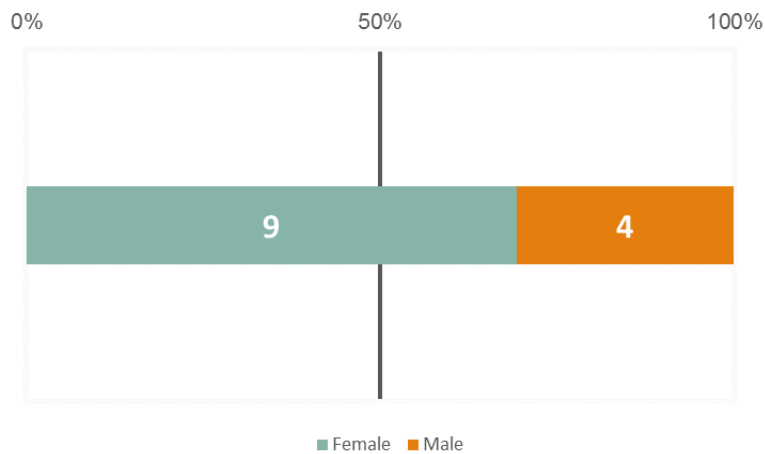


Table 6: Number Enrolled in Regions 6 & 8 by Year 2010-11 through 2014-15

Year	Number Enrolled
2010-2011	12
2011-2012	16
2012-2013	13
2013-2014	14
2014-2015	13

Region 7

As Figure 26 illustrates, there were fewer males than females in Region 7 who were BVI, but enrollment has been relatively constant (see Table 7).

Students in Region 7 who were BVI tested similarly to those statewide. According to Figures 27 and 28, they were more proficient in both math and reading than students in special education but less proficient than all students as a whole.

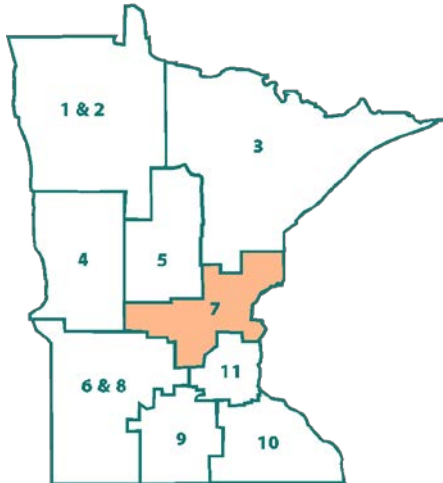


Figure 26: Region 7 BVI Enrollment by Gender

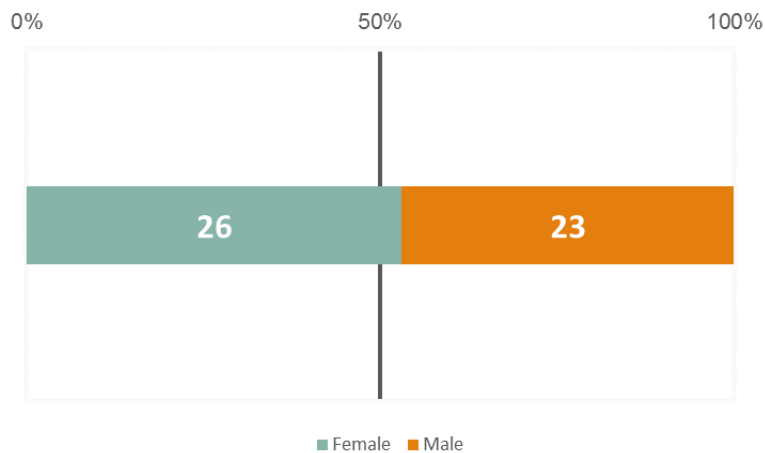


Table 7: Number Enrolled in Region 7 by Year 2010-11 through 2014-15

Year	Number Enrolled
2010-2011	40
2011-2012	48
2012-2013	46
2013-2014	49
2014-2015	49

Figure 27: Region 7 Math by Student Category, MCA Testing

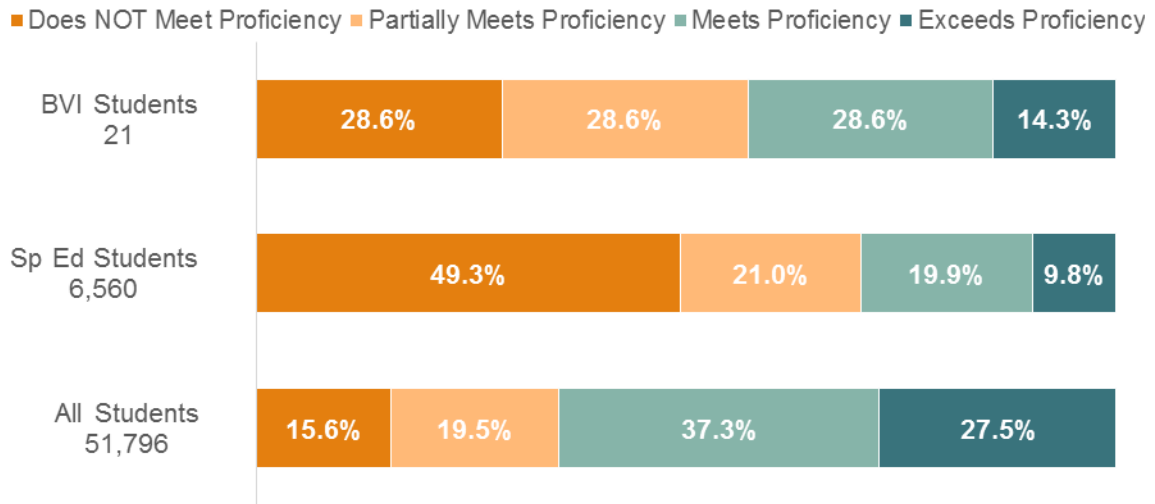
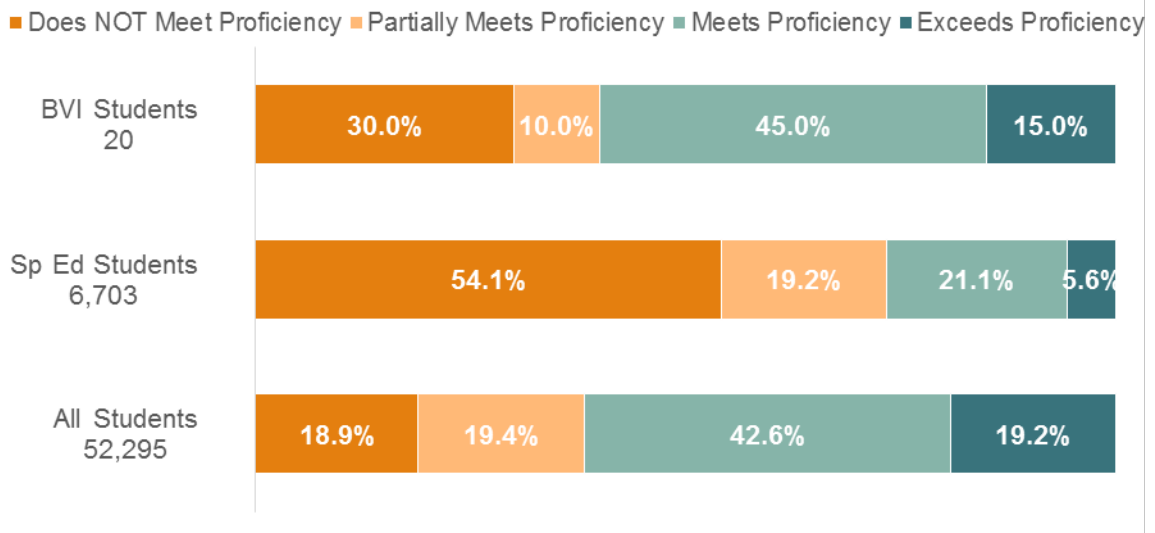


Figure 28: Region 7 Reading by Student Category, MCA Testing



Region 9

As Figure 29 illustrates, there were slightly more females than males in Region 9 who were BVI. Overall enrollment has remained constant (see Table 8).

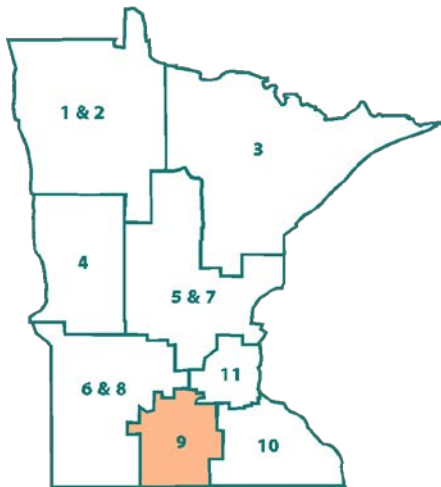


Figure 29: Region 9 BVI Enrollment by Gender

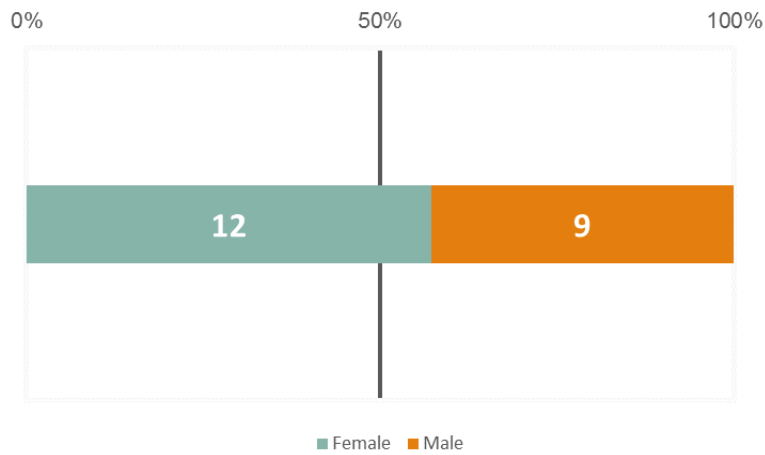
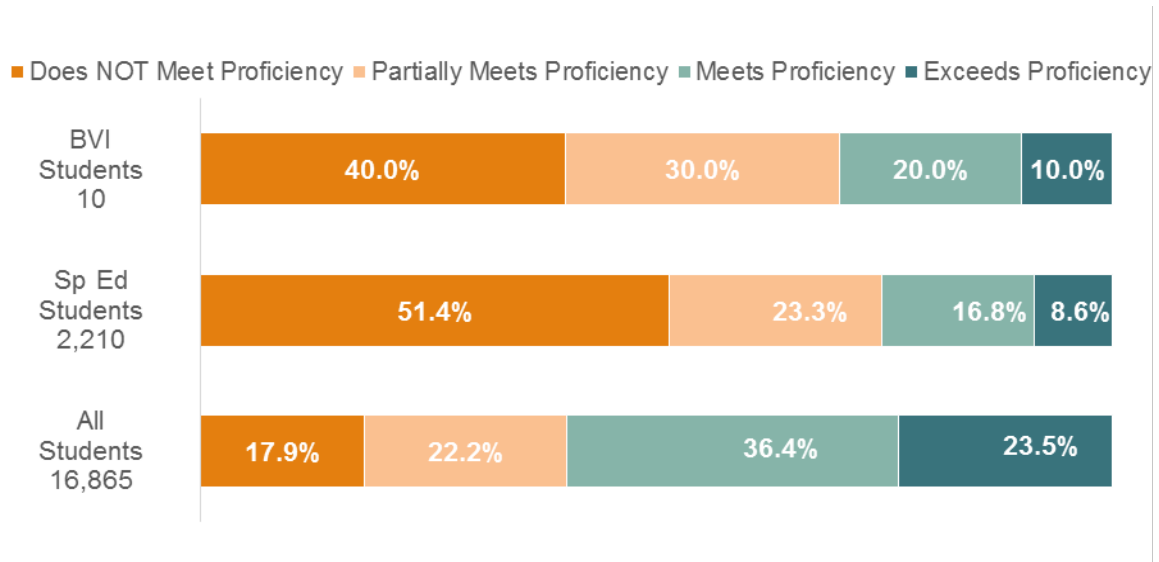


Table 8: Number Enrolled in Region 9 by Year 2010-11 through 2014-15

Year	Number Enrolled
2010-2011	22
2011-2012	22
2012-2013	21
2013-2014	22
2014-2015	21

A higher proportion of students in Region 9 who were BVI met or exceeded proficiency in math than those in special education, though this figure was lower than the results for all students (see Figure 30). Too few students took the reading assessment to report results.

Figure 30: Region 9 Math by Student Category, MCA Testing



Region 10

The number of males and females tested in Region 10 was nearly the same, with slightly more males than females (see Figure 31). As shown in Table 9, the number of students enrolled who were BVI has steadily climbed from 41 in 2010 to 60 in 2015.

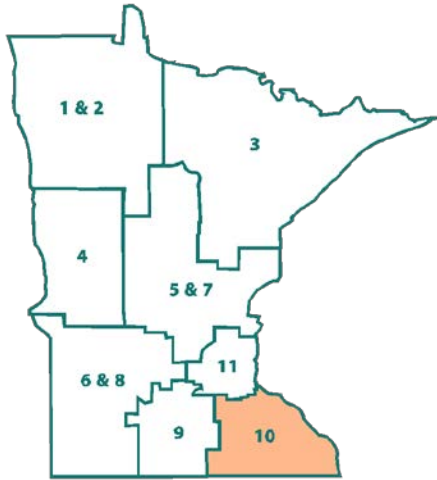


Figure 31: Region 10 BVI Enrollment by Gender

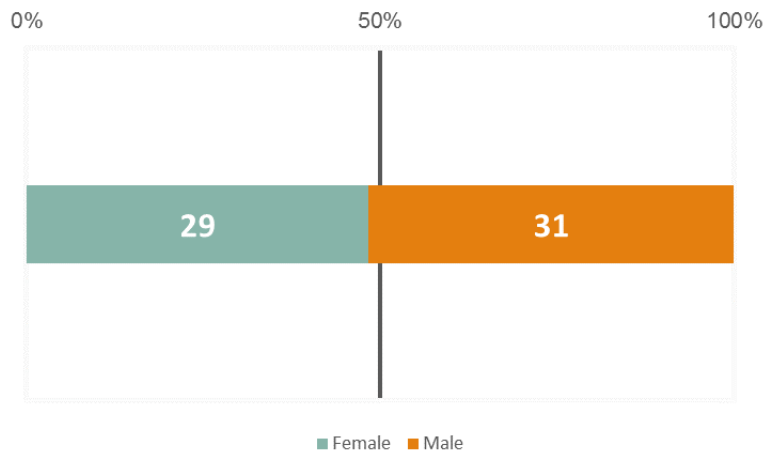


Table 9: Number Enrolled in Region 10 by Year 2010-11 through 2014-15

Year	Number Enrolled
2010-2011	41
2011-2012	47
2012-2013	50
2013-2014	56
2014-2015	60

Students who were BVI in Region 10 were less proficient in math and reading than all students, and at about the same proficiency as other students in special education (see Figures 32 and 33). There were no students who were BVI impaired that exceeded proficiency in reading, and few, relative to other categories, did so in math.

Figure 32: Region 10 Math by Student Category, MCA Testing

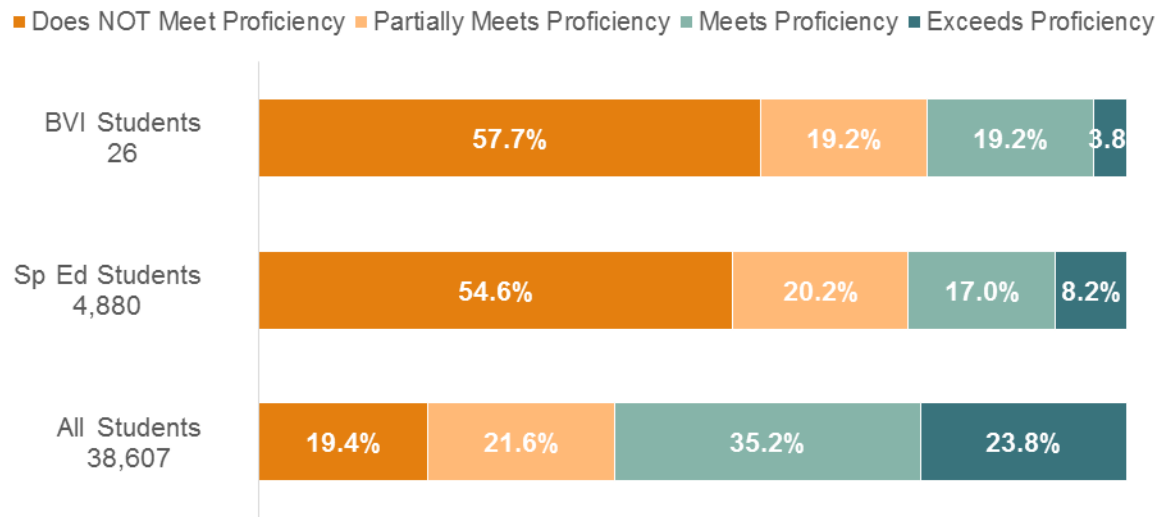
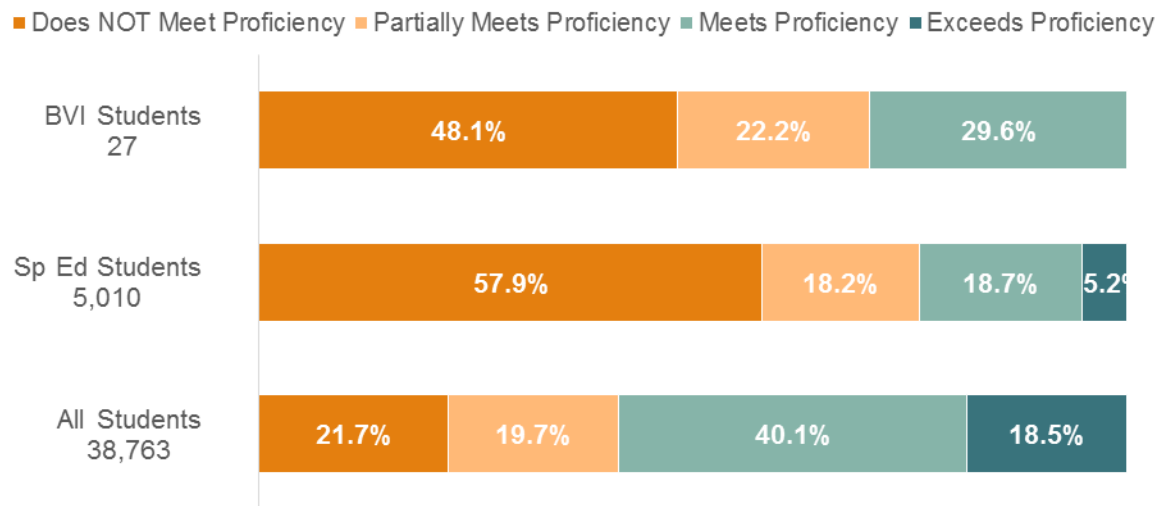


Figure 33: Region 10 Reading by Student Category, MCA Testing



Region 11

In Region 11, there were slightly more males who were BVI than females (see Figure 34). Enrollment of students who were BVI has increased slightly in recent years (see Table 10).

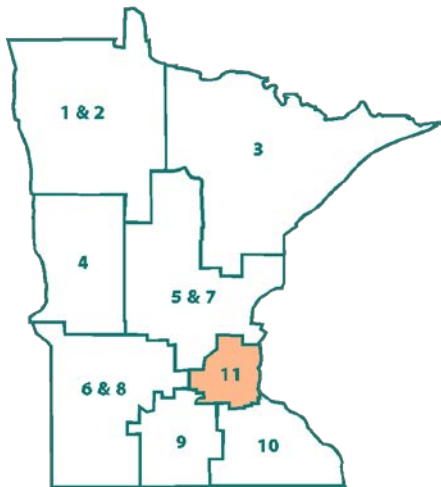


Figure 34: Region 11 BVI Enrollment by Gender

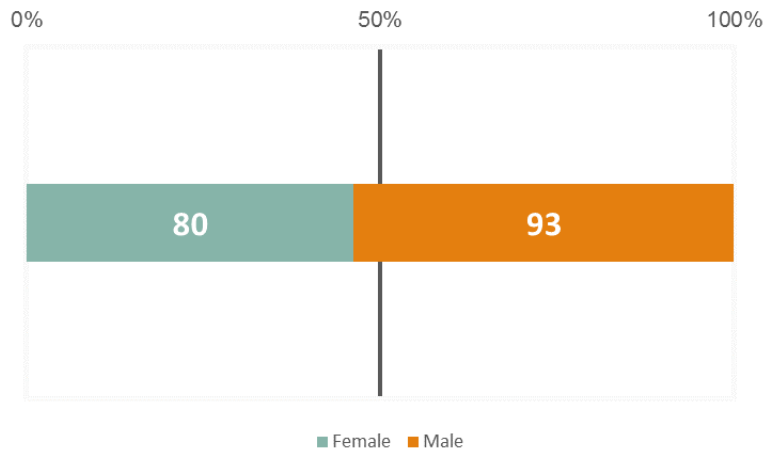


Table 10: Number Enrolled in Region 11 by Year 2010-11 through 2014-15

Year	Number Enrolled
2010-2011	158
2011-2012	149
2012-2013	157
2013-2014	163
2014-2015	173

While trends in Region 11 mirrored those statewide and in many other regions, there were more students in each category who were proficient and exceeded proficiency in math but fewer in reading (see Figures 35 and 36).

Figure 35: Region 11 Math by Student Category, MCA Testing

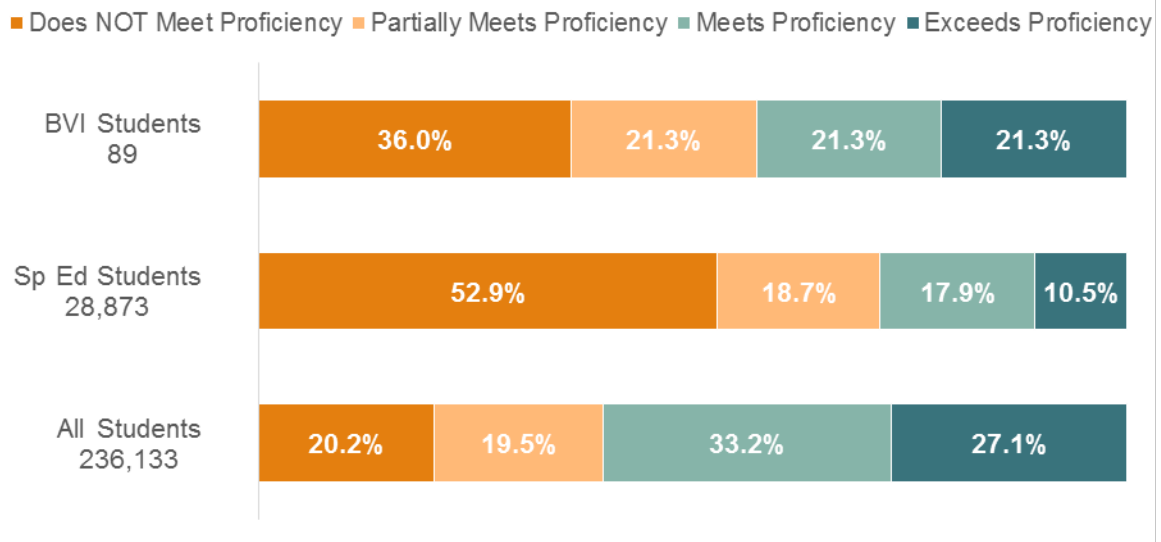
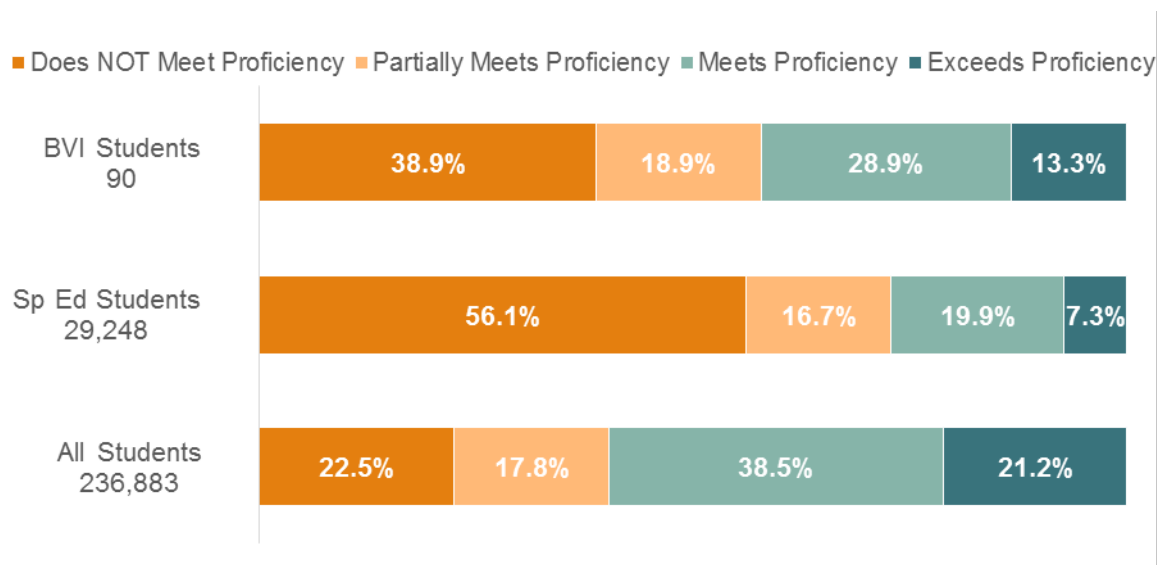


Figure 36: Region 11 Reading by Student Category, MCA Testing



Minneapolis Public School District

Minneapolis is the only school district in Minnesota that met the reporting threshold of ten students tested. Overall, as illustrated in Figure 37, students who were BVI were more proficient in math than other students in special education and were nearly as proficient as all students. Fewer students who were BVI were proficient in reading than in math (see Figure 38).

Figure 37: Minneapolis Public School District Math by Student Category, MCA Testing

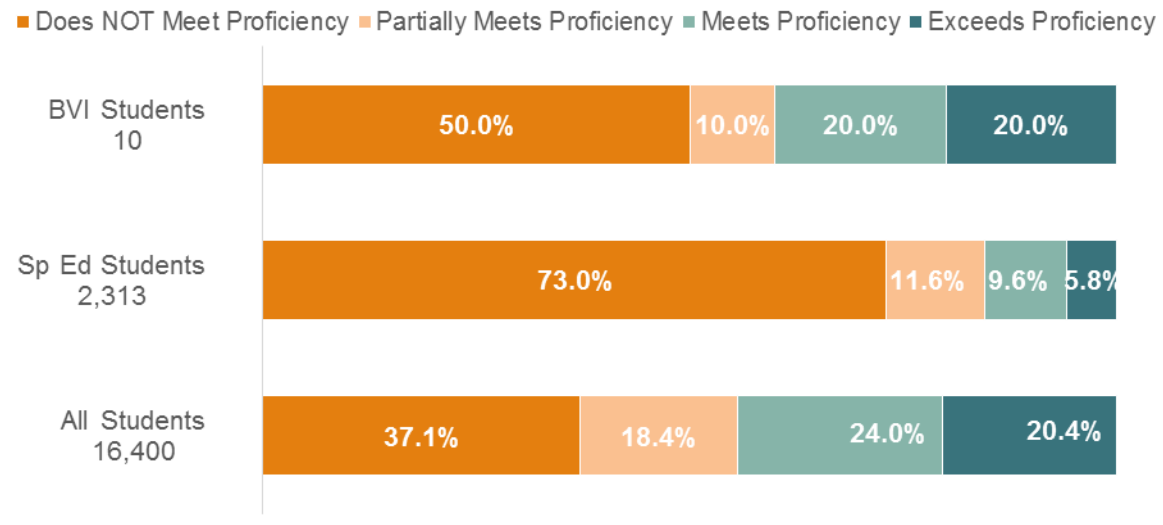
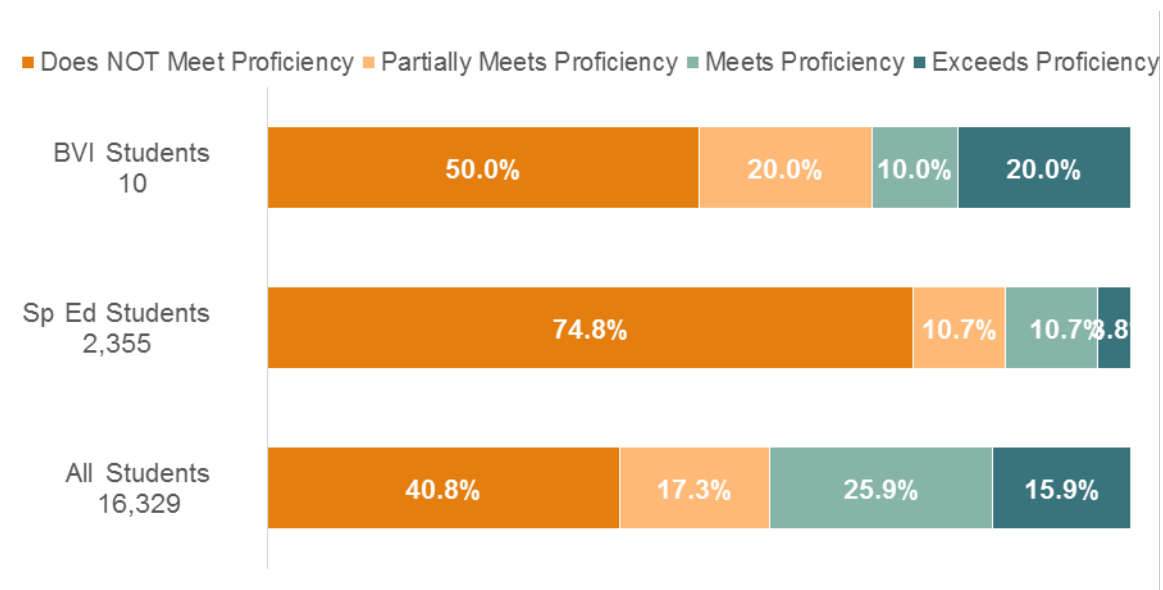


Figure 38: Minneapolis Public School District Reading by Student Category, MCA Testing



Primary Needs

Lack of qualified teachers for students who are blind/visually impaired and certified orientation and mobility specialists

Federal and state laws mandate appropriately licensed teachers of students who are blind or visually impaired (TBVI) and certified orientation and mobility specialists (COMS) in the educational programs of students with visual impairments, including those with deafblindness and other additional disabilities:

- Teachers of students with visual impairments must be available to students with visual impairments, including deafblindness (34 CFR § 300.321).
- TBVIs should attend each Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting unless they meet the exception conditions regarding attendance described in 34 CFR § 300.321(e)(1), or regarding excusal in 34 CFR § 300.321(e)(2).
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results be a member of the IEP team (34 CFR § 300.321).
- All special education and related service personnel shall be certified, endorsed, or licensed in the area(s) of assignments (34 CFR § 300.321).

There is a shortage of TBVIs and COMS in the state of Minnesota, which may impact the outcomes of students with BVI. For example, best educational practice in teaching braille would be for the TBVI to expose the student to braille on a daily basis within the context of the language arts curriculum. Because of the current teacher shortage, TBVIs often work directly with a student once or twice a week and paraprofessionals or other IEP team members provide repeated practice of the TBVI-taught skill.

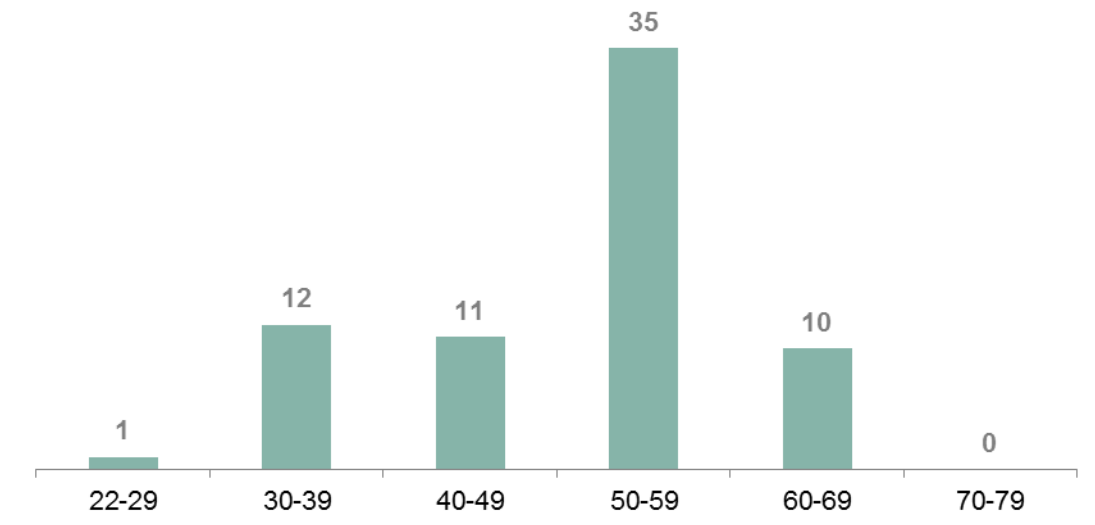
The first priority of TBVIs is to ensure students have access to the academic standards as adopted by the state. TBVIs address student access through the expanded core curriculum (ECC) (see addendum for more ECC information). There is a strong need to increase the number of qualified professionals in Minnesota to meet these unique student needs.

There is a shortage of TBVIs in Minnesota and across the country. Minnesota has a stable number of students who are BVI who need teachers with specialized training to provide free appropriate public education (FAPE). TBVIs in Minnesota have the highest average age of any special education teacher category, indicating there will be increased need to hire TBVIs as teachers older than 50 retire.

Table 11: Average age of teacher by Assignment Area

Assignment Area	Average Age
Blind or Visually Impaired	50.36
Physical Disability	49.33
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	45.79
Developmental Cognitive Disabilities Mild-Moderate	45.78
Speech or Language Impairments	45.77
Traumatic Brain Injury	45.60
Developmental Cognitive Disabilities Severe-Profound	45.04
Specific Learning Disabilities	44.98
Developmental Adaptive Physical Education	44.68
School Psychologists	44.25
Emotional or Behavioral Disorders	43.95
Early Childhood Special Education	43.88
Other Health Disabilities	42.78
Autism	41.67
Aural.Oral	38.95
Deaf/Blind	38.56

Figure 39: Number of TBVI by Age Group



There is currently no Minnesota Institution of Higher Education (IHE) offering a Minnesota Board of Teaching (BOT) approved program leading to licensure in Special Education: Blind or Visually Impaired (BVI). The BVI teacher license has specific standards important to Minnesota stakeholders. Therefore, teachers coming from out of state for BVI licensure need to meet additional standards and there are no Minnesota IHEs that offer coursework to address the standards.

TBVI has been a U.S. Department of Education designated shortage area in Minnesota every year since 2011.²

Special education directors and regional low incidence facilitators express concern over the lack of candidates to hire to serve children who are BVI. They also express frustration over the lack of access to geographic or online availability of IHEs offering programs leading to Minnesota teacher licensure in BVI.

Inaccessible educational material

Our current education system is not designed for all learners. Many district-level and teacher-created assessments, curriculums, and learning materials are not accessible to all students. With the growth of digital learning platforms and web-based technology comes a new set of challenges for students who use screen readers, magnification programs, or switches to access material. Accessibility concerns cross disability categories and should be addressed using accessibility standards and universal design for learning (UDL) principles.

Recommendations

Create a Minnesota Institute of Higher Education (IHE) offering a BVI licensure and Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Certification program

Minnesota has a specific teaching license for Special Education: Blind or Visually Impaired (BVI) (MN Statute 8710.5100). This license includes standards important to provide FAPE to Minnesota children who are BVI. School districts are required to have a TBVI on the evaluation or individual education program (IEP) team of a child identified as being BVI.

A Minnesota IHE offering BVI licensure and O&M Certification program would:

- Address the shortage of Minnesota TBVIs to meet the needs of students who are BVI in the state.
- Provide needed current, evidence-based practices to teachers across the state through ongoing professional development. For example, in January there was a change in the official braille code (from English Braille American Edition: EBAE to Unified English Braille: UEB). A BVI IHE program would be able to help support TBVIs with technical support and professional development for this major initiative.
- Build capacity to link research to practice and practice to research.

² United States Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education Teacher Shortage Areas Nationwide Listing: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oep/pol/tsa.html>

Estimated Cost: The estimated cost of establishing a Minnesota-based IHE program for BVI and O&M Certification would be \$250,000 per year for the first three years.

Support Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Implementing UDL statewide would require a fundamental change in how education is provided in Minnesota. Systemic changes within MDE, districts, and individual classrooms would need to occur in order to meet the educational needs of all students. UDL frameworks provide for multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement for student learning which can improve accessibility across disability categories, ensuring that all students have access to curricular materials and FAPE.

In order to implement UDL, there would need to be a fundamental shift in teacher preparation courses and instructional design. General education coursework should incorporate the basics of providing services to all students, including those who qualify for services under IDEA. Inclusion of UDL principles in Minnesota IHE education coursework would be a good place for this fundamental shift to begin.

Estimated Cost: The cost of a paradigm shift to include UDL principles is undetermined at this time. However, recommendations for the inclusion of UDL principles in IHE programs are contained in the ["Higher Education Opportunity Act" PL 110-315](#). Minnesota should begin by pursuing federal grant funding provided by this legislation.

Educational Best Practices

Quality Evaluations

For children who are BVI, evaluations to document the present level of academic and functional performance for the development of the individualized education program (IEP) are required by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (34 CFR § 300.320 (a)(1)).

The expanded core curriculum areas address educational needs that result from the visual impairment which enable the student "to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum"; and (B) "other educational needs that result from the child's disability" as required by IDEA (34 CFR § 300.324). The presence of a visual impairment requires that these skills be thoroughly evaluated and systematically taught by teachers with specialized expertise. Without specialized instruction, children with vision loss may not be aware of the activities of their peers or acquire other critical information about their surroundings (NASDSE, 1999, p. 70). Evaluations of all areas of the expanded core curriculum are used to determine individual student programs.

Specialized instruction to meet individualized needs

Once the eligibility of a student with a visual impairment is established, the following unique skills related to the expanded core curriculum should be considered, based upon evaluation results, as the individualized family service plans (IFSP)/IEP is being developed:

- Compensatory skills that permit access to the general curriculum (such as braille and concept development, Nemeth Code, communication skills, and study skills)

- Orientation and mobility skills
- Social interaction skills
- Career education and planning
- Assistive technology, including optical devices
- Independent living skills
- Recreation and leisure skills
- Self-determination
- Sensory efficiency, including visual, tactual, and auditory skills

The IEP process should address the unique strengths and needs of the student, provide for FAPE in the most appropriate environment, and contain individualized goals that address state-level standards that lead to improved student outcomes. Appropriate time for IEP team member collaboration and instruction of the ECC in natural environments is crucial to student success. Due to the unique learning challenges of students who have no or low vision, instruction may need to take place outside the normal school day and in various locations (school, home, and community).

Conclusion

Students who are BVI in Minnesota require qualified teachers and accessible materials. The number of students who are BVI has remained stable for several years, while the number of qualified TBVIs and COMS continues to decrease and will be severely impacted in the next two to three years as more than a third of the BVI professionals in the state retire. A Minnesota program for BVI and O&M certification would increase the number of professionals and provide a platform for continued professional development and much needed BVI-specific research.

A systemic change in the delivery of accessible educational materials and implementation of UDL principles, which include multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement for student learning, is necessary to improve outcomes for all students. For an overall guideline of quality educational programs for students with visual impairments, refer to the ECC addendum included with this report.

Acronyms List

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Reference</u>
BVI	Blind or Visually Impaired
COMS	Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists
EBAE	English Braille American Edition
ECC	Expanded Core Curriculum
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Program
IFSP	Individualized Family Services Plan
IHE	Institute of Higher Education
MCA	Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment
MTAS	Minnesota Test of Academic Skills
O & M	Orientation and Mobility
SPED	Special Education
TBVI	Teachers of students who are Blind or Visually Impaired
UDL	Universal Design and Learning
UEB	Unified English Braille

Guidelines for Educating Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired in Minnesota

Acknowledgements: Special thanks go to the Members of the Texas Education of Blind and Visually Impaired Students Advisory Committee as the original authors of the framework for this document, used with permission by Chrissy Cowan and Cyral Miller, from the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The 2015-2016 Minnesota Advisory Committee for the Blind/Visually Impaired reviewed and edited this resource for use in Minnesota: Barb Lhotka, Bradley Johnson, Charlene Guggisberg, John Davis, Melissa Martin, Michelle Dornan-Vickery, Pauline Bangma, Robin Durand, Sheila Koenig, and Kristin Oien.

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Appendix A. Minnesota Department of Education Initiatives and Collaborative Agency Involvement that Address Expanded Core Curriculum Needs

I. Need for this Document

“All children get necessary support for healthy development and lifelong learning.” This is the mission of the Special Education Division at MDE. Students with visual impairments have unique learning needs that must be addressed to access the general education curriculum. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' September 2010 Current Population Survey indicate

that the unemployment rate for people who reported blindness or serious difficulty seeing and were currently looking for work was 13.1 percent. A significant 75 percent of the same population were identified as "not in the labor force" and were not considered in the employment rate analysis. Thus, educators face a substantial challenge in providing educational services that will lead to successful post-school outcomes.

II. Purpose of this Document

The primary purpose of this document is to provide decision makers with a set of guidelines by which they can determine the quality of programs serving students with visual impairments. In analyzing a program's current components, this document offers decision makers the opportunity for program adjustment or improvement. The guidelines are highlighted in each section, along with an explanation of the components found in a high-quality program. At the end of this document are current laws, rules, and regulations in the state of Minnesota that impact the education of students with visual impairments.

III. List of Guidelines:

1. Eligibility is determined by an individualized family service plan (IFSP) or an individualized education program (IEP) team decision based upon a medical report, a functional vision evaluation, and if appropriate, a learning media assessment.
2. Qualified Minnesota-licensed teachers of students who are blind or visually impaired and certified orientation and mobility specialists provide expertise specific to visual impairments.
3. Evaluations of all areas of the expanded core curriculum are used to determine individual student programs.
4. Appropriate instructional time, accommodations, and modifications are provided to meet all identified areas in individual student programs.
5. Minnesota-licensed teachers of students with visual impairments perform required evaluations and instruction.
6. Certified orientation and mobility specialists perform required evaluations and instruction in orientation and mobility.
7. Written job descriptions identify comprehensive roles of paraeducators supporting instruction of students with visual impairments, including deafblindness.
8. Families are active members of the educational team.
9. Vision professionals are members of the instructional team for all children from birth to two years old with visual impairments and services identified in the IFSP must be available.
10. A continuum of services and placement options are available based on individual student needs.
11. For each student, specialized instruction times, which are carried out by Minnesota-licensed teachers of students who are blind or visually impaired (TBVI) and certified orientation and mobility specialists (COMS), are supported by appropriate evaluation in all areas of the expanded core curriculum (ECC).
12. Written caseload guidelines are used to evaluate caseloads of Minnesota-licensed teachers of students with visual impairments and certified orientation and mobility specialists.

IV. The Population of Students with Visual Impairments in Minnesota

The population of students with visual impairments is very diverse. These students:

- May be totally blind or have varying degrees of low vision
- Range from birth to 21 years of age
- May have been born with a visual impairment or may have acquired a visual impairment at a later time in their life
- May or may not be learners on the academic level of their sighted-age peers
- May have hearing impairments (deafblindness)
- May have any number of other disabilities, such as mild to severe intellectual disability, physical disability, other sensory loss, emotional or behavioral problems, autism and/or specific learning disabilities
- May have impaired vision originating in a part of the structure of the eye or due to neurological causes (such as cortical visual impairment)
- May have additional medical needs and considerations

Students served in the categorical area of blind or visually impaired (BVI) are counted in two ways:

- The unduplicated child count records the students with a single primary categorical area in special education on December 1 of each calendar year.
- The American Printing House (APH) Federal Quota Census collected data in January of each year, and records those students, regardless of other categorical identification, who are blind.

The table below shows the number of students whose primary eligibility category is visually impaired, the number of students on the 2015 APH Census, the estimated number of students TBVIs serve, and the number of licensed TBVIs and COMS in each region of Minnesota. Because they are not included in the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA)/Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS) test results, students whose primary diagnosis is deafblind are not included in this data.

The number of Minnesota-licensed TBVIs includes those teachers who are on variances and special permissions. These teachers may be currently in university programs or intending to enroll in a university program.

Region	# Students 2015 MDE Unduplicated Child Count	# Students 2015 APH Federal Quota Count	Estimated # Students on TBVI caseloads (blind, low vision, deafblind, and multiple needs)	# of TBVI	# of COMS
1 & 2	20	48	66	10	3

Region	# Students 2015 MDE Unduplicated Child Count	# Students 2015 APH Federal Quota Count	Estimated # Students on TBVI caseloads (blind, low vision, deafblind, and multiple needs)	# of TBVI	# of COMS
3	17	41	57	3	1
4	27	46	90	4	1
5 & 7	34	201	252	15	5
6 & 8	62	40	78	3	0
9	21	44	69	4	0
10	73	79	258	15	3
11	213	575	780	49	18
Totals:	467	1074	1650	103	31

V. Determining Eligibility for Students with Visual Impairments

Guideline/Standard #1

Eligibility is determined by an IFSP or an IEP team. It is based upon a medical report and a functional vision assessment. A learning media assessment (LMA) and an evaluation of orientation and mobility skills are also recommended to determine the unique needs of students who are blind or visually impaired.

In order for a student to be eligible for services as a student with a visual impairment in Minnesota, they must meet the following criteria:

Minnesota Rules, part 3525.1345 VISUALLY IMPAIRED.

Subpart 1.

Definition. "Visually impaired" means a medically verified visual impairment accompanied by limitations in sight that interfere with acquiring information or interaction with the environment to the extent that special education instruction and related services may be needed.

Subp. 2. Criteria.

A pupil is eligible as having a visual disability and in need of special education when the pupil meets one of the criteria in item A and one of the criteria in item B:

A. medical documentation of a diagnosed visual impairment by a licensed eye specialist establishing one or more of the following conditions:

(1) visual acuity of 20/60 or less in the better eye with the best conventional correction;

(a) estimation of acuity is acceptable for difficult-to-test pupils; and

(b) for pupils not yet enrolled in kindergarten, measured acuity must be significantly deviant from what is developmentally age-appropriate;

(2) visual field of 20 degrees or less, or bilateral scotomas; or

(3) a congenital or degenerating eye condition including, for example, progressive cataract, glaucoma, or retinitis pigmentosa; and

B. functional evaluation of visual abilities conducted by a licensed teacher of the visually impaired that determines that the pupil:

(1) has limited ability in visually accessing program-appropriate educational media and materials including, for example, textbooks, photocopies, ditto copies, chalkboards, computers, or environmental signs, without modification;

(2) has limited ability to visually access the full range of program-appropriate educational materials and media without accommodating actions including, for example, changes in posture, body movement, focal distance, or squinting;

(3) demonstrates variable visual ability due to environmental factors including, for example, contrast, weather, color, or movement, that cannot be controlled; or

(4) experiences reduced or variable visual ability due to visual fatigue or factors common to the eye condition.

Statutory Authority: Minnesota Statutes [14.389](#); [120.17](#); L 1999 c 123 s 19

History: 16 SR 1543; L 1998 c 397 art 11 s 3; [24 SR 1799](#)

Posted: October 12, 2007

VI. Qualified Personnel

Guideline/Standard #2

Appropriately certified personnel are an integral part of the educational team for every student with a visual impairment. These specially trained individuals include Minnesota-licensed TBVIs and COMS. Students with deafblindness may require trained interveners, while students who read braille may need braille transcribers included on their instructional team.

In addition to the general education core curriculum that all students receive, students with visual impairments (starting at birth) also need an ECC to meet needs directly related to their visual impairment. The first priority of TBVIs is to ensure students have access to the academic standards, as adopted by the state. TBVIs address student access through the ECC.

These expanded curriculum areas include instruction in:

- A. Compensatory skills that permit access to the general curriculum (such as braille and concept development, Nemeth Code, communication skills, and study skills)
- B. Orientation and mobility skills

- C. Social interaction skills
- D. Career education and planning
- E. Assistive technology including optical devices
- F. Independent living skills
- G. Recreation and leisure skills
- H. Self-determination
- I. Sensory efficiency (including visual, tactual and auditory skills)

Making appropriate decisions about the development and implementation of programs and services for students with visual impairments requires a clear understanding of their unique learning needs. Administrators must have knowledge about specialized personnel, materials, equipment, and educational settings to ensure appropriate individualized education program planning for these students with unique needs. It is also important for parents and caregivers to know the features of a quality program, so they can advocate for appropriate services to meet the needs of their child.

VII. Defining the Expanded Core Curriculum

Guideline/Standard #3:

Once the eligibility of a student with a visual impairment is established, the following unique skills related to the ECC should be considered, based upon evaluation results, in the IFSP/IEP development.

For children who are BVI, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (34 CFR § 300.320 (a)(1)) requires evaluations to document the present level of academic and functional performance for the development of the IEP.

The ECC areas include educational needs that result from the visual impairment to enable the student "to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum"; and "other educational needs that result from the child's disability" as required by IDEA (34 CFR § 300.324). The presence of a visual impairment requires that teachers with specialized expertise thoroughly evaluate and systematically teach the skills listed below. Without specialized instruction, children with vision loss may not be aware of the activities of their peers or acquire other critical information about their surroundings (NASDSE, 1999, p. 70).

A. Compensatory Skills needed to access the general curriculum, including:

- Access to literacy and mathematics through braille (including UEB and Nemeth Codes) and/or print, handwriting skills, and auditory skills. Students have a variety of needs and utilize a combination of tools to access literacy and mathematics.
- Communication needs that will vary depending on degree of functional vision, effects of additional disabilities (including deafblindness), and the task to be done. Communication systems include unique low- to high-tech levels of access.
- Specialized tactile and hands-on instruction in concept development, sequential experiences, and abstract images and theories that may be significantly impacted when visual observation is limited.

A child with little or no vision may have fragmented understanding of the world without systematic tactile exploration and clear verbal explanations for concepts that are not visual or too large or delicate to touch. Fragmented concepts can impede social, academic, and vocational development.

B. Orientation and Mobility (O&M): Safe and efficient travel through the environment is a critical component in the education of students with visual impairments. O&M evaluation and instruction should begin in infancy with basic spatial concepts, purposeful and exploratory movement, and progress through more independent age-appropriate motor and travel skills in increasingly complex environments. Vision provides the primary motivation for infants to begin to move their bodies: to raise their heads to see people, to reach toward objects, to move through the environment, and to begin to play. Significant delays and differences in meeting motor milestones can impact overall development. A child who is blind needs to know how classrooms or other environments are arranged in order to independently move with confidence. Systematic orientation to a space may be needed before the placement and function of furniture and objects are understood. As the student gets older they need more advanced age-appropriate travel skills such as street crossings, bus travel, and community experiences. Students with multiple impairments benefit from O&M instruction that facilitates purposeful movement and increases independence to the greatest degree possible.

C. Social Interaction Skills: Visual impairments can socially isolate students, impede typical social interactions, or limit social skill development. Students with visual impairments may not be able to see facial expressions and subtle body language to participate in conversations and activities. They may not recognize the voice of a person who speaks to them or even realize that they are being addressed. An additional disability, such as autism, can amplify social challenges for a child with visual impairment. Social skills that sighted children can observe and imitate may need to be taught to a child with a visual impairment.

D. Career Education and Planning: Students with visual impairments need to be taught about the variety of work and career options that are available since they cannot casually observe people in different job roles. They need opportunities to explore their strengths and interests in a systematic, well-planned manner. This training may include the acquisition of specialized skills and equipment to compete in the job market. Students must be prepared for a wide range of vocational choices and the adaptations, including technological devices, which make them attainable. It is important to have opportunities to job shadow for concrete experience of different career choices and to learn about other persons with visual impairments who have successful vocational outcomes.

E. Assistive Technology, Including Optical Devices: Technology (including assistive technology devices and assistive technology services) permits students with visual impairments to access the general curriculum, increase literacy options, and enhance communication. There are a variety of high- and low-tech assistive technology tools designed specifically for students with visual impairments who require specialized instruction. These devices include, but are not limited to, electronic braille notetakers, colored transparencies, tactile symbols, calendar systems, video magnifiers, screen reader software, screen enlarging software, and hand-held optical devices.

F. Independent Living Skills: Personal hygiene, dressing, food preparation, money management, housekeeping, and organization skills are critical skills for successful transition from school to independent living. Young children begin learning basic skills in independent living from visual observation and imitation. Most students with visual impairments, however, will need specific instruction and adaptations to standard equipment, such as modifications to read oven markings and to cook independently and safely. Depending on the level of vision, cognition, and other individual characteristics of a student, adaptations may range from minor highlighting to tactile clues for matching clothing. Students can learn to apply makeup and perform other grooming activities with magnifying lenses, specially marked containers, and highlighted dials on electric shavers. General education settings typically do not evaluate or

teach these skills in a sequential and systematic basis. Family members may require assistance and guidance to implement the proper adaptations that will permit independent practice and mastery of new skills within the home.

G. Recreation and Leisure skills: Students who are blind or have visual impairments need to be exposed to and taught recreation and leisure activities that they can enjoy as children and throughout their lives. Recreation skills requiring physical activity enable students to learn about and practice a healthier lifestyle. They are often not aware of the options or the possible adaptations that would allow them to participate in these activities. Such skills include both individual and organized group activities for students at all ages and levels.

H. Self-Determination: Self-determination includes personal decision making, self-advocacy, problem solving, and assertiveness. These skills lead to competence, as opposed to learned helplessness, and are important components of positive self-esteem. Generally, people who are blind can overcome low societal expectations with specialized instruction in developing self-determination skills. Students can then meaningfully participate in their educational and transition planning and make positive adult lifestyle, job, and other life choices upon graduation. Students will be responsible for their own accessibility needs once they leave the public education system.

I. Sensory Efficiency (includes visual, tactual, and auditory skills): Students who are blind and students with low vision need systematic instruction to learn efficient use of their senses.

- Instruction in visual efficiency must be individually designed and may include using visual gaze to make choices, tracking car movements when crossing the street, responding to visual cues in the environment, and using optical devices such as magnifiers and telescopes.
- For students who are blind and functionally blind, an increased reliance upon tactual skills is essential to learning. These skills should be considered as part of the IFSP/IEP development. It takes more detailed “hands-on” interaction and repetition to understand a concept tactually, such as relative size, which may be readily captured with a glance.
- Systematic instruction in auditory skills is critical for successful mobility and learning. Students must learn to use their hearing effectively to respond appropriately to social cues, travel safely in schools and across streets, learn from recorded media, and use echolocation for orientation.

VIII. Addressing Curricular Needs of Students with Visual Impairments

Guideline/Standard #4:

Appropriate instructional time, accommodations, and modifications are provided to meet all identified areas in individual student programs.

Since students with visual impairments have unique learning needs, instructional teams should consider creative strategies to meet those needs. General and special education teachers are primarily responsible for instruction in the academic core content, with the support of TBVI and COMS to accommodate or modify instructional design and materials to address the impact of visual impairment.

Instructional time: Instruction in the ECC may require additional time beyond the regular school day and year. It is difficult to find time within the typical school program for addressing all

needed elements of the core and expanded core curricula. Students' unique educational curriculum needs may be addressed in many ways, including:

- A longer school day (which might require flexible instructional work times, alternate transportation and locations);
- Additional years in school;
- Application for high school credit for vision-specific coursework, following state regulations and procedures;
- After-school programs sponsored either by the local education agency (LEA) or community or private agencies;
- Summer programs, either locally in Minnesota or programs offered in other states; and
- Intervention in the child's home or natural environment if appropriate.

Instructional accommodations/modifications: In addition to the specific areas of the ECC, students with visual impairments may need accommodations to access the same assignments as their peers. These accommodations may include extended time, specialized instruction, specialized materials, and environmental adaptations to reach the same levels of performance as sighted students. Individualized instruction for certain skills that may be difficult to learn in a large group setting may be needed for concepts such as map skills, advanced math concepts, and spatial concepts. Specialized equipment and materials, such as a braille, raised line paper, a cane, an abacus, a talking graphing calculator, or specialized software for computers may also be needed. For most students, accommodations should be designed so that success in the general curriculum can be attained without lowering expectations. Some students may also need modifications to the general curriculum to develop an appropriate individual program.

IX. Evaluation and Instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum

Guideline/Standard #3 and #4

A structured evaluation of each of the ECC areas is critical to measuring success and assuring independence. Both the TBVI and/or the COMS have roles in evaluating or ensuring appropriate evaluation of the student's needs in all areas of the ECC. The TBVI should take the lead in evaluation of compensatory skills, while the COMS must perform the O&M evaluations. In other areas of the ECC, collaboration between the two professionals will ensure a comprehensive evaluation.

There are a variety of formal and informal evaluations that can appropriately determine the student's functioning level in these vision-specific topics. Instructional needs in the ECC areas can be addressed using a variety of service delivery models. The TBVI and the COMS are the primary resources for instruction in the ECC, although the family, early childhood special education teachers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, classroom teachers, and other district personnel can also play important roles in providing the needed instruction.

Instruction in the ECC may need to be provided outside of regular school hours. Local school districts should provide for flexibility to meet the special needs of children with visual impairments.

X. Role of Minnesota-Licensed Teachers of Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired

Guideline/Standard #5:

Minnesota-licensed teachers of students who are blind or visually impaired perform required evaluations and instruction. TBVIs are legally mandated team members for all students with visual impairments, including those with deafblindness (CFR 300.321).

The educational needs of these students vary widely, and ongoing professional development is essential. From initial evaluation to instruction to ongoing assessment, the TBVI plays a critical role in helping students, teachers, paraeducators, family members, and related service personnel.

Minnesota-licensed teachers of students who are blind or visually impaired have many roles, including:

Assessment and Evaluation

- Assisting other professionals in developing appropriate evaluation and assessment strategies.
- Conducting the functional vision evaluation and the learning media assessment.
- Interpreting evaluation and assessment results regarding the impact of a visual impairment.
- Evaluating student progress and providing progress notes as per district policy.
- Evaluating areas of the ECC.

Direct Instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum

- Direct instruction in visual efficiency, tactile symbols, braille (including literary and Nemeth Code), assistive technology, auditory skills, social skills, use of near and distance low vision optical devices, and other areas of the ECC.
- Supporting parents of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers as they help their children reach developmental milestones with adapted strategies specific to needs related to the visual impairment (services may be in the home, at an early childhood program, or in the community).
- Providing support to the student to facilitate development of self-esteem, self-determination, and social acceptance.

Supporting Educational Teams

The TBVI must be able to educate, support, and collaborate with family members and other members of the instructional team who work with the student. The TBVI must also be able to convey professional opinions in a diplomatic, collaborative manner in order to ensure that appropriate programming is recommended for the student with a visual impairment. The TBVI's supporting roles include:

- Supporting families in developing infant and early childhood goals and objectives related to their child's visual impairment.

- Supporting transitions from early childhood to preschool, preschool to elementary school, elementary to middle school, middle school to high school, and high school to post-secondary.
- Providing opportunities for families to meet other families and to access training.
- Coordinating services for students with certified orientation and mobility specialists.
- Consulting with parents, teachers, and other professionals in the home, community, and school on providing instruction in the ECC areas.
- Modifying the environment to accommodate specific visual needs.
- Modeling appropriate techniques for providing instruction.
- Providing, creating, and acquiring adapted materials.
- Providing in-service training and collaborative consultation to the educational team.
- Recommending adapted strategies for access to the general curriculum and participation in the school community.
- Ensuring that instruction in necessary skills for transitioning from school to adult life is provided.
- Providing guidance to help the team develop a vision-specific support system for transitioning from school to adult life.
- Building independence and success in home, community, and school environments.
- Researching technology options and connecting with vendors for optical devices and assistive technology solutions for students.

Administrative/Record Keeping Duties

- Maintaining records on all evaluations, IFSPs/IEPs, and progress reports.
- Attending IFSP and IEP meetings.
- Monitoring and recording student progress toward IEP goals/objectives.
- Ordering and providing adapted textbooks and educational material, as appropriate, for each student.
- Ordering adapted materials from the American Printing House for the Blind through the Federal Quota program and from other resources.

Federal and state laws mandate specific involvement of Minnesota-licensed TBVIs in the educational programs of students with visual impairments, including those with deafblindness and other additional disabilities:

- TBVIs must be available to students with visual impairments, including deafblindness (34 CFR § 300.321).

- TBVIs should attend each IEP meeting unless they meet the exception conditions regarding attendance described in 34 CFR § 300.321(e)(1), or regarding excusal in 34 CFR § 300.321(e)(2).
- IDEA requires that an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results be a member of the IEP team (34 CFR § 300.321).
- The district shall ensure that all special education and related service personnel be certified, endorsed, or licensed in the area(s) of assignments (34 CFR § 300.321).

XI. Role of the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS)

Guideline/Standard #6:

COMS perform required evaluations and instruction in orientation and mobility.

Movement, independent or supported, is critical for learning. Orientation and mobility is recognized in IDEA 2004 as a related service, which may be required to assist a child with a visual impairment to benefit from special education. COMS provide services that enable students who are visually impaired to attain systematic orientation to and safe movement within home, school, and community environments, and in addition, support development of social, daily living, and recreation/leisure skills. COMS are critical members of the team for all students with visual impairments who have identified O&M needs (34 CFR § 300.34 (c)(7)). The O&M needs of these students vary widely and ongoing professional development for COMS is essential.

COMS' roles include:

Assessment and Evaluation

- Conducting the functional vision evaluation in conjunction with the TBVI.
- Conducting the orientation and mobility evaluation.
- Evaluating student progress and providing progress notes as per district procedures.

Direct Instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum

- Encouraging purposeful movement, exploration of immediate surroundings, and motor development for infants with visual impairments.
- Teaching spatial and environmental concepts and use of information received by the senses (such as sound, temperature, and vibrations) to establish, maintain, or regain orientation and line of travel (such as using traffic sounds at an intersection to cross the street).
- Facilitating purposeful movement and independence to the greatest degree possible for students with multiple impairments, including through active learning systems for students with severe disabilities.
- Facilitating development of self-esteem, self-determination, social skills, independent living skills, and recreation and leisure.
- Orienting students to unfamiliar environments.

- Instructing in the efficient use of low vision for movement.
- Teaching efficient use of optical devices.
- Teaching use of mobility tools, including the long cane and adaptive mobility devices, for safely negotiating the environment.
- Arranging travel experiences for instruction in the community, including residential and business environments and public transportation systems.

Supporting Educational Teams

- Supporting families of young children in developing gross and fine motor skills, sensory skills, basic concepts, and other developmental milestones.
- Ensuring continuity from early childhood intervention services to school-age programs.
- Ensuring that appropriate vision-specific supports are in place and the necessary skills attained for transitioning from school to adult life.
- Modifying the environment to accommodate specific mobility needs.
- Modeling appropriate O&M techniques for other team members, including family members.
- Providing, creating, and acquiring adapted materials such as tactile maps and mobility devices.
- Providing in-service training and consultation to other team members in home, school, and community settings.
- Recommending orientation and mobility strategies for access to the general curriculum, such as physical education class and participation in school and community extracurricular activities.

Administrative/Record Keeping Duties

- Maintaining records on all evaluations, IFSP/IEPs, and progress reports.
- Attending IFSP and IEP meetings.
- Ordering and providing adapted materials from the American Printing House for the Blind through the Federal Quota program and from other resources.

XII. Roles of Paraeducators for Students with Visual Impairments and Deafblindness

Guideline/Standard #7:

Written job descriptions identify comprehensive roles of paraeducators supporting instruction of students with visual impairments, including deafblindness.

The decision to add a paraeducator to a student's team is made by the IEP team after careful consideration of what modifications are necessary to achieve proposed goals. These staff members need specific and ongoing training in order to effectively support learning. Specific

training on the impact of vision loss is critical for effective instructional support. The roles of paraeducators vary with the specific student or classroom being supported. However, they must support the student with a visual impairment and/or deafblindness with specific direction from the TBVI or COMS. Paraeducators must be trained on the roles of all team members and specific instructional strategies appropriate for students with sensory impairments. (When simply assigned to a student without proper training, paraeducators can act as a barrier between the student and peer involvement or can re-direct instruction away from the teachers. Over-reliance on a paraeducator over time can lead students to develop passivity and create prompt dependence.)

Classroom paraeducators may be hired to provide overall support to the larger class with particular duties for a student with a visual impairment and/or deafblindness. Their role may include assistance for activities of daily living, health and safety, and/or access to the environment. Many programs hire paraeducators to provide assistance with material preparation. Preparation may include copying, highlighting, enlarging, and scanning materials.

In addition, there are two unique categories of support staff for students who are blind and those who are deafblind. For students who read braille, districts may hire braille transcribers, often hired as paraeducators, who are highly trained to provide specialized braille materials using computer software and tactile graphics devices. Interveners are specially trained paraeducators who ensure appropriate access to instruction for students who are deafblind. Training should include information on deafblindness in general and specific communication and learning strategies that are appropriate with individual students. Interveners are necessary, often using highly individually communication systems, for some students with deafblindness who require assistance to connect with what is happening in the environment beyond what they can see or hear.

Paraeducator job functions differ according to role, but duties generally include:

- Assisting vision professionals and school staff to modify instructional materials to include use of braille translation or magnification software.
- Ordering, storing, and distributing large print and braille books under teacher supervision.
- Assisting teacher(s) with individual student activities.
- Reinforcing O&M skills for movement of students between instructional locations or activities.
- Increasing access for students with deafblindness to their immediate environment and implementing a meaningful communication system.

XIII. Role of the Family in the Individualized Family Service Plan/ Individualized Education Program Process for Students with Visual Impairments

Guideline/Standard #8:

Families are active members of the educational team.

Collaboration between educators and families fosters quality education. The purpose of early intervention/special education is to support parents and caregivers in developing competence and confidence to help their child learn and develop. Family members will need suggestions and

support in order to adapt the environment so their child has access to information that other children gain through vision.

Collaboration of all team members, including family members, helps to assure a shared focus on student success. Families bring knowledge of their child but also need information about the unique needs of and services for other student participants on the team with visual impairments. Teachers will need to share information about specific teaching strategies, materials, and activities with family members to ensure consistent approaches and to support and facilitate quality interactions between the family and the child. Knowledge allows families to advocate effectively for their child's needs, so close partnership with the TBVI and COMS is critical.

Families of students with visual impairments have the same rights and responsibilities as families of any student with disabilities. State compliance with IDEA includes the full participation of families in the education of their children, as outlined in multiple sections of the statute, including 34 CFR §300.501(b), §300.306(a)(1), §300.322(c), §300.501(c), §300.327, §300.501(c)(3), and 300.328.

XIV. Service Delivery for Infants with Visual Impairments

Guideline/Standard #9:

Vision professionals are members of the IFSP Team for children with visual impairments from birth to two years old. TBVIs and COMS often provide services in the home setting as well as daycare and other community settings for children under three years old.

The school district is responsible for providing VI services to children who are eligible and reside within district boundaries. The IFSP process will identify needs and priorities of the child and family, which serve as a basis for developing outcomes; these elements will determine the location of services. Services are to be provided in the "natural environment." The family's routines and the child's daily living experiences are relevant factors to consider in determining the natural environment for each child.

XV. Appropriate Educational Placements for Students with Visual Impairments

Guideline/Standard #10:

An array of services and placement options are available based on the student's individual needs.

Children under the age of three are served through Early Childhood in the setting deemed most appropriate to each family situation. The most appropriate setting is the placement supporting the family in achieving desired outcomes for their child, with as little disruption as possible to daily routines and family life.

For school age students (ages 3-22), IDEA guides placement: "Part B regulations require public agencies to make available a continuum of alternative placements, or a range of placement options to meet the needs of students with disabilities for special education and related services. The options on this continuum, which include regular classes, special classes, separate schools, and instruction in hospitals and institutions, must be made available to the extent necessary to implement the IEP of each disabled student" (34 CFR §§ 300.115 and 300.116).

The IEP Team should determine the most appropriate learning environment for each student based on individual educational needs. By law, the IEP Team must consider the least restrictive environment (LRE) for each student. The LRE is typically interpreted as the placement closest to the child's home with an appropriate program to meet assessed needs of the individual child. These needs should include both the core and expanded core subjects for a student with a visual impairment. The law requires the IEP Team to first look at placement in general education with recommended accommodations and/or modifications.

After considering educational needs in both the general curricula and the ECC, the IEP Team must carefully select from the full array of potential settings. Co-teaching, content mastery, itinerant teacher services, resource rooms specific for students with visual impairments, short-term programs or summer programs at the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind (MSAB), self-contained classrooms, and/or placement at schools such as MSAB which have a residential component are all equal options to be considered by the IEP Team. Student needs should drive placement decisions. Any service delivery option may be the most appropriate for an individual student at any given time, and the appropriate placement option may change over time for a particular student (34 CFR § 300.116).

XVI. Determining Service Time from the Teacher of Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired and/or a Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist

Guideline/Standard #11:

Each student is evaluated in all areas of the ECC, which supports decisions about the amount of service time for specialized instruction by both Minnesota-licensed teachers of students with visual impairments and certified orientation and mobility specialists.

The IFSP/IEP team must use appropriate evaluation and/or assessment data to assess the student's needs in both general and expanded core curricula. The team will then use this information to determine the appropriate amount of services the student will receive from a TBVI or COMS. For infants, a plan must be based upon a comprehensive picture of the child, identification of functional goals, and the need for expertise from the TBVI or COMS in strategies for achieving those outcomes.

Time for services from the TBVI and COMS should not be determined based upon availability of personnel. The district should establish procedures for documenting student need and the vision professional's time. There is an ongoing shortage of vision professionals in this state and country. Districts should collaborate with MDE and others to identify needs and provide better supports statewide. Therefore, in order to ensure adequate current and future supplies of certified and qualified vision professionals, a district's program should include active recruitment for new TBVIs and COMS in conjunction with MDE, MSAB, and personnel preparation programs throughout the country.

For example, students require intensive instructional time when beginning to learn braille, including both literary code and Nemeth Code. A Minnesota-licensed TBVI should provide braille instruction on a daily basis, often for one to two hours per day. Preparation of materials and collaboration with the team will require an additional two to three hours per day.

- Social skill instruction must be frequent enough to ensure mastery and generalization. Instruction may need to be provided directly to the student with guided practice and observation across school and home settings. This may need to take place outside the school day. Vision professionals also have important roles in training school staff and family members to reinforce newly learned social skills.

- COMS may schedule lessons in two-hour blocks to ensure adequate time for community instruction. Therefore, they will also need to build in the schedule time for travel to appropriate settings and time to explore and learn decision-making skills for safety in unfamiliar situations.
- Students with low vision who are learning to use optical devices may initially require intensive, direct instruction one to three times per week followed by reduced time as mastery increases. Some visual conditions require flexible scheduling to support learning in nighttime environments.
- Students with multiple impairments need routines that create predictable patterns for learning. To support instruction of newly-introduced skills in a transdisciplinary model, the TBVI may initially schedule more intensive daily consultation for a specified period of time for:
 - Observing the student's current skill levels
 - Working directly with the student to determine appropriate modifications to materials or instructional methodology
 - Modeling teaching to show other team members appropriate techniques
 - Monitoring student progress
- There should be scheduled time for active collaboration and consultation with the educational team, including family members, for each student. Participating in team evaluations, contributing to the writing of IEPs, working periodically with the student, observing across activities, modeling appropriate teaching strategies, creating and preparing communication materials, and attending staff on a student with complex needs may require considerable time from the TBVI and/or COMS when the consultative model includes these activities.
- An independent student with stable low vision may require minimal assistance beyond adapted materials and communication with the general education team and family. Assuming the student's progress in the ECC is evaluated by the TBVI annually, this student may only require consultative services on a monthly or twice monthly basis.
- Service delivery for infants with visual impairments should be individually planned to match the needs of the family. The TBVI and COMS may provide direct instruction to the infant and family. In addition, to ensure consistency and prevent fragmented services, home visits may be combined with other team members such as early childhood special education teachers, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, or social workers.

The TBVI and O&M specialist recommend whether direct and/or indirect (consultative) service is needed. This decision must be based on the assessed needs of the student. Direct service is appropriate for a student who has needs that only a particular professional can meet efficiently, legally, and appropriately. For example, the O&M specialist is the professional who should introduce instruction in the use of a cane or teach the use of distance optical devices for street crossings. The TBVI is the professional who teaches new braille skills or evaluates visual functioning in classroom environments. In addition to direct services, the vision professional must schedule time with the other team members and the family to ensure consistency in programming across the day.

Collaborative consultation is a model that can effectively support a variety of educational purposes. Consultation (or indirect) services can be used to ensure that a student has multiple opportunities in a day to use a particular skill and that identified modifications are implemented throughout all instructional settings. This model is critical for students who cannot generalize to new locations or situations. Communicating about student programming and progress with all parties involved in a student's educational program can be extremely time-intensive. Depending on the student's needs and the instructional setting, the amount of time needed for consultation can vary from daily to monthly. Observation times across the school day and at home must be scheduled to provide documentation of student progress and necessary programming adjustments. TBVI, COMS, classroom teachers, the family, and other personnel should collaborate to assure that the student's needs are addressed appropriately.

For example, the TBVI may demonstrate instructional strategies to the classroom teacher that will enable a student to efficiently view a lesson. The TBVI may also meet with Early Childhood staff to recommend how to incorporate strategies important for sensory skill development into other developmental areas.

For another student, the vision professional may work with school personnel to provide tactual cues in the hallways and classrooms to facilitate use of independent mobility skills.

The time needed for an individual student from vision professionals can be expected to change over their educational career. Some students will perform independently and competently in school until changes occur in social demands, academic requirements, or new environments. For example, a student who has been receiving consultation only in elementary school may need direct instructional support, as appropriate, to match current needs upon entering middle school. Once skills are acquired, the IEP Team may reduce service time.

The primary service provider—typically the early childhood special education or classroom teacher—, with support from the vision professional, can develop and address many IFSP and IEP goals and objectives. The overall recommended time may be weekly thirty-minute or hour-long visits.

The district should establish procedures for documenting student progress in relation to the vision professional's time given to students and staff.

XVII. Determining Appropriate Caseloads for Vision Professionals

Guideline/Standard #12:

Written caseload guidelines are used to evaluate caseloads of vision professionals.

Districts should establish procedures to determine appropriate student caseloads for TBVIs and COMS. It is important that caseloads allow for necessary instruction and services to meet the unique educational needs of students with visual impairments. Objective tools should be administered, with supervisory input, at least annually to evaluate the adequacy of staffing levels. Although finding highly trained personnel in this field may be a challenge for Minnesota schools, establishing caseloads to assure that student needs are met effectively is necessary to support a quality program.

Division 16, the Itinerant Services Division of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), states that "a teacher's caseload should be based on the time needed for the student to achieve the IEP goals, including time for direct service, collaboration/consultation, lesson and material preparation, evaluation, and driving. Caseloads

based on the assessed needs of students will ensure that students will receive the amount of service necessary to meet their educational goals.”

Students served using the consultation model, particularly those with multiple impairments, may require as much time from the TBVI and/or COMS as a student who receives direct instruction. Participation in evaluation, observation in multiple settings and across multiple activities, modeling strategies, and attending team meetings can require extensive time.

Written caseload guidelines in the professional literature advocate an average ratio of eight to 12 students per teacher for quality services. The National Plan for Training Personnel to Serve Students with Blindness and Low Vision (CEC, 2000) noted a preferred ratio of eight to one. The American Foundation for the Blind (1989) and the California Department of Education (1997) both provide similar ranges as guidelines based on national averages for caseload and class size. For itinerant teachers, both describe an average range of eight to 12 students for TBVIs and COMS, a range of eight to 12 for a resource room with one teacher and one paraeducator, and fewer students for classes with younger children.

There are a variety of effective and objective tools for determining caseloads. Administrators can work with their vision professionals to implement the Michigan Severity Rating Scales, Iowa staffing pattern recommendations, Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) guidelines, Colorado Caseload Management Guidelines (1995), or the Quality Programs for Students with Visual Impairments (QPVI) program to assist in determining appropriate caseloads.

The BVI Advisory Committee has developed a workload tool using the resources above. The caseloads need to be regularly monitored to ensure equity between teachers and adequate staffing to meet student needs.

Guidelines for Determining Workload for Teachers of Students who are Blind or Visual Impaired and Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists

Note: This document was created from a variety of online sources, including the APSEA Guidelines for Determining Caseload Size for Teachers of students with visual impairments, the Connecticut Plan for Determining Caseload Size for Teachers of the Visually Impaired, and the Michigan State Severity of Needs Rating Scale.

Introduction

Children and young adults with visual impairments served by Minnesota’s TBVI and COMS are an extremely heterogeneous group. They vary in age (birth to 21 years), degree of vision loss, grade placement, cognitive ability, presence of additional disabilities, degree of independence and motivation, etc. TBVIs and COMS must develop schedules to accommodate an array of responsibilities, such as direct instruction of compensatory skills, adaptation of materials, assessment, programming, planning, consultation with parents, teachers, and medical personnel, creating, ordering and distributing adapted materials, teach orientation and mobility skills, intersection analysis, and bus route planning (COMS only).

In addition, these professionals must travel from school to school. When assigning caseloads to itinerant teachers and mobility specialists, their supervisors must attend to all these considerations along with those associated with environmental factors (e.g., weather conditions, road conditions, distance between schools, school policies, and practices relevant to inclusion). The inclusion of these factors means the following suggested service levels function as guidelines in developing TBVI and/or COMS workloads.

Rating Scale: Based on a student's IEP, a rating of 0 to 4 is assigned in each of the following areas: medical, reading medium, compensatory skill needs, environmental/instructional adjustments, O&M, and travel time. The total points offer a baseline in the amount of vision and mobility related service that the TBVI or COMS should provide.

Medical

0 Points:

- Visual acuity between 20/20 and 20/60 with full visual field
- No significant pathology

1 Point:

- Possible progressive disease, but one eye still within normal limits
- Mild nystagmus
- Bilateral strabismus, which cannot be corrected: pre/post eye surgery
- Other severe temporary eye treatments, such as patching; significant bilateral field loss

2 Points:

- Acuity 20/70 to 20/200 in best eye after correction
- A visual field of more than twenty degrees
- Cortical visual impairment

3 Points:

- Acuity 20/200 to object perception in best eye after correction
- A visual field of twenty degrees or less

4 Points:

- Object perception to total blindness
- A visual field of ten degrees or less

Primary Reading Medium

0 Points:

- Regular print with no modifications
- Nonreader
- Uncontracted Braille reader mastery level

1 Point: (one to five times per year)

- Regular print with occasional magnification (i.e., video magnifier, handheld magnification) in addition to correction

2 Points: (one to two times per month)

- Regular print with consistent use of magnification in addition to correction
- Contracted Braille reader mastery level
- Audio or large print

3 Points: (1-2 times per week)

- Uncontracted Braille reader instructional level

4 Points: (three or more times per week)

- Contracted Braille reader instructional level

Compensatory Needs / Adaptive or Developmental Skills Instruction

0 Points:

- Needs no compensatory skills instruction

1 Point: (one to five times per year)

- Needs compensatory skills instruction in fine and gross motor areas, physical education/recreational activities, basic concepts, developmental/sensory awareness, augmentative communication devices, and/or functional life skills for supported living and work environment

2 Points: (one to two times per month)

- Needs compensatory skill consultation and/or instruction in use of remaining vision and low vision aids, calculator usage, pre-vocational skills, adaptive equipment, and/or assistive technology.
- Auditory computer user, mastery level

3 Points: (one to two times per week)

- Needs compensatory skill consultation and/or instruction in computer/keyboarding, map reading, geographical and science concepts, and/or career and vocational training
- Auditory computer user, instructional level

4 Points: (three or more times per week)

- Needs compensatory skill instruction in tactual development, abacus, slate and stylus, and/or independent daily living skills
- Auditory computer user, introductory level
- Electronic notetaker instruction
- Tactile development: raised line drawing, abacus

Environmental/Instructional Adjustments

0 Points:

- Needs no adaptations of educational materials or presentations

1 Point: (one to five times per year)

- Needs some adapted written materials, special seating, some magnification, and/or adaptive lighting
- Consultation regarding best vision use with assistive technology and/or positioning

2 Points: (one to two times per month)

- Classroom teacher needs some consultation/support in materials modifications
- Needs some adaptation of maps/graphs, frequent magnification

3 Points: (one to two times per week)

- Needs minimal tactile modifications/enlargement, adaptation of maps/graphs, pictures, and Braille production
- Tactile Communication / Calendar Box System

4 Points: (three or more times per week)

- Needs all curricular materials in Braille and/or tactile format

Orientation & Mobility (O&M)

0 Points:

- Needs no further O&M instruction

1 Point: (one to five times per year)

- Needs O&M monitoring/consultation
- Orientation to new environments
- On campus routes/mobility

2 Points: (one to two times per month)

- Needs O&M supportive instruction
- O&M concept instruction
- Wheelchair mobility

3 Points: (one to two times per week)

- Needs intensive O&M instruction
- Emerging O&M/White Cane skills
- White Cane for identification purposes, low vision safe street crossing skills
- Beginning bus travel, exploring taxi, paratransit use

4 Points: (three or more times per week)

- Needs comprehensive O&M instruction
- Non-visual traveler learning to become a safe and independent traveler
- Street crossings, bus routes, route planning, business travel

Travel Time

Travel points measure distance in miles (one-way) from TBVI/COMS office/portal to student instructional site (home, school, business, or neighborhood).

0 Points:

- Full-time resource room based at school
- Students within a 0-10 mile radius

1 Point:

- Students within a 10-20 mile radius

2 Points:

- Students within a 20-30 mile radius

3 Points:

- Students within a 30-40 mile radius

4 Points:

- Students within a 40 plus mile radius

Interpretations:

Once the rating scale has been applied to each student on the TBVI's and or COMS' caseload, the following applies.

- 2.5 points = 1 hour of teacher time per week
- Half-time teacher: no more than 45 total points
- Full time teacher: no more than 90 total points

There should not be more than three academic Braille students assigned to one itinerant TBVI.

Table 1: Workload Rating Worksheet

Student	Medical	Primary Reading Medium	Compensatory Skill / Adaptive Instruction	Environmental Instructional Adjustments	O&M	Travel Time	Totals
Teacher Total:							

XVIII. Conclusion

Students with visual impairments, including those with multiple disabilities and/or deafblindness, are a heterogeneous population. Because there are relatively few students with visual impairments, it is difficult for any one school or program to have full knowledge and adequate resources to meet varied and intensive specialized needs of this unique student population. This document was designed to provide a guideline into key components for appropriate individualized education program planning for these students and critical resources available to schools and families. The document references the impact and key areas as outlined in the Goal Statements of the *National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities*. Further information and support is available from the Minnesota Department of Education, MSAB, and local vision professionals.

XIX. Additional Resources

Additional information on the education of students with visual impairments:

[Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals:](http://www.acvrep.org/)
<http://www.acvrep.org/>

[American Foundation for the Blind \(AFB\):](http://www.afb.org) www.afb.org

[AFB Family Connect](http://www.familyconnect.org/parentsitehome.asp) <http://www.familyconnect.org/parentsitehome.asp> and

[AFB Career Connect:](http://www.afb.org/info/living-with-vision-loss/for-job-seekers/12) <http://www.afb.org/info/living-with-vision-loss/for-job-seekers/12>

[American Printing House for the Blind](http://www.aph.org): www.aph.org

[Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired](http://www.aerbvi.org): www.aerbvi.org

[Bookshare](https://www.bookshare.org/cms): https://www.bookshare.org/cms

[Council for Exceptional Children](http://www.cec.sped.org): http://www.cec.sped.org

[DB-LINK](http://nationaldb.org/): now part of the National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness http://nationaldb.org/

[Hadley School for the Blind](http://www.hadley.edu/default.asp): http://www.hadley.edu/default.asp

[Helen Keller Services](https://www.helenkeller.org/): https://www.helenkeller.org/

[IDEA legislation](http://idea.ed.gov/): http://idea.ed.gov/

[Learning Ally](http://www.learningally.org/): http://www.learningally.org/

[National Center on Accessible Learning Materials](http://aem.cast.org/): http://aem.cast.org/

[National Federation of the Blind](http://www.nfb.org/): http://www.nfb.org/

[National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments](http://www.napvi.org): www.napvi.org

[PACER Center of Minnesota](http://www.pacer.org/): http://www.pacer.org/

[Paths to Literacy](http://www.pathstoliteracy.org/): http://www.pathstoliteracy.org/

[Perkins School for the Blind](http://www.perkins.org/): http://www.perkins.org/

[Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired](http://www.tsbvi.edu): www.tsbvi.edu

XX. Referenced Publications:

Americans with Disabilities: 2002 Household Economic Studies, Current Population Reports (Issued May 2006) by Erika Steinmetz, Dept. of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. The report is based on data from the 2002 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) collected by the Census Bureau. Retrieved from www.afb.org/Section.asp?SectionID=15&DocumentID=4435.

Blankenship, K. (2007). Iowa expanded core curriculum resource guide.

Iowa Department of Education.

Corn, A.L., Hatlen, P., Huebner, K.M., Siller, M.A., & Ryan, F. (1995).

National agenda for education of children and youths with visual impairments including those with multiple disabilities. New York: AFB Press.

Department of Education 34 CFR Parts 300 and 301 RIN 1820-AB57.

Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education Final Regulations. (August 14, 2006).

Division on Visual Impairment of the Council for Exceptional Children Position Papers available at: <http://community.cec.sped.org/DVI/resourcesportal/positionpapers>.

Griffin-Shirley, N., Kelley, P., & Lawrence, B. (2006). The Role of the Orientation and Mobility Specialist in the Public School (CEC position paper)
<http://community.cec.sped.org/DVI/resourcesportal/positionpapers>.

Erin J.N., Holbrook, M.C., Sanspree, M.J., & Swallow, R.M. (2006).

Professional Preparation and Certification of Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (CEC-DVI position paper) <http://community.cec.sped.org/DVI/resourcesportal/positionpapers>.

Hazekamp, J., & Huebner, K. M. (1989). Program planning and evaluation for blind and visually impaired students: National guidelines for educational excellence. New York, NY: AFB Press.

Huebner, K.M., Merk-Adak, B., & Wolffe, K. (2004). National agenda for the education of children and youths with visual impairments, including those with multiple disabilities. New York, NY: AFB Press.

Huebner, K.M., Garber, M., & Wormsley, D.P. (2006). Student-Centered Educational Placement Decisions: The Meaning, Interpretation, and Application of Least Restrictive Environment for Students with Visual Impairments (CEC-DVI position paper)
<http://community.cec.sped.org/DVI/resourcesportal/positionpapers>.

Koenig, A. & Holbrook, M.C. (2000). Foundations of Education, 2nd Edition Vol. I: History and theory of teaching children and youth with visual impairments. New York, NY: AFB Press.

Koenig, A. & Holbrook, M.C. (2000). Foundations of education, 2nd Edition Vol. II: Instructional strategies for teaching children and youths with visual impairments. New York, NY: AFB Press.

Loftin, M. (2006). Making Evaluation Meaningful: Determining Additional Eligibilities and Appropriate Educational Strategies for Blind and Visually Impaired Students. Austin, TX: TSBVI.

National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE): Blind and Visually Impaired Students: Educational Service Guidelines (1999). Dr. Gaylen Pugh, Project Director. Watertown, MA: Hilton Perkins Foundation, Perkins School for the Blind.

Pogrud, R. L. & Fazzi, D.L. Eds. (2002). Early focus: Working with young children who are visually impaired and their families. New York, NY: AFB Press.

Spungin, S.J. & Ferrell, K.A. (2007). The Role and Function of the Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (CEC position paper)
<http://community.cec.sped.org/DVI/resourcesportal/positionpapers>.

XXI. MN BVI Specific Rule & Statute:

125A.06 BLIND PERSONS' LITERACY RIGHTS:
<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=125A.06>

256C.06 CITATION- "Minnesota White Cane Law":
<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=256C.06>

3525.0755 EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR SERVICES:
<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=3525.0755>

3525.1327 DEAF-BLIND: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=3525.1327>

3525.1345 VISUALLY IMPAIRED: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=3525.1345>

3525.1350 INFANT AND TODDLER INTERVENTION SERVICES:

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=3525.1350>

3525.1351 INTERVENTION SERVICES- AGES THREE THROUGH SIX YEARS:

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=3525.1351>

3525.1352 DEVELOPMENTAL ADAPTED PHYSICAL EDUCATION- SPECIAL EDUCATION:

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=3525.1352>

3525.1550 CONTRACTED SERVICES: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=3525.1550>

3525.2335 EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM SERVICES, ALTERNATIVES, AND SETTINGS:

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=3525.2335>

3525.2340 CASE LOADS: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=3525.2340>

3525.2810 DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM PLAN:

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=3525.2810>

3525.2900 TRANSITION AND BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION PLANNING:

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=3525.2900>

8710.5100 TEACHERS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION: BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED:

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/?id=8710.5100>

Appendix A.

MDE and collaborative agency involvement that address ECC needs

The following table shows which collaborative agency supports and MDE initiatives align with ECC learning opportunities across Minnesota. (This is not an exhaustive list of resources and supports available. There are other activities and groups that are specific to regions within Minnesota that are not highlighted in this report. For questions regarding what resources might be available in your area, contact Kristin Oien: kristin.oien@state.mn.us .)

A brief description of each collaborative agency is included after the table. Readers are encouraged to follow the link to each agency's website for more information.

Table 2: MDE Initiatives and collaborative agency supports

ECC Skills	Compensatory	O&M	Social Interaction	Career Education & Planning	AT & Optical Devices	Independent Living	Recreation & Leisure	Self-determination	Sensory efficiency
AEM Interagency Agreement	X								
American Printing House for the Blind (APH)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
BVI Electronic List	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Communities of Practice	X			X	X				
District 917 ESY/ECC	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Low Vision Clinics	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
MMP	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
MSA/MNRL	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

ECC Skills	Compensatory	O&M	Social Interaction	Career Education & Planning	AT & Optical Devices	Independent Living	Recreation & Leisure	Self-determination	Sensory efficiency
MSAB / FTW & PCI	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Northern Plains Visions of Sport Camp	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
State Services for the Blind	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Statewide Vision PD	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Summer Transition Program	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Table 3: Collaborative Non-Profit Agencies

ECC Skills	Compensatory	O&M	Social Interaction	Career Education & Planning	AT & Optical Devices	Independent Living	Recreation & Leisure	Self-determination	Sensory efficiency
ACB of MN	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
AFB	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

ECC Skills	Compensatory	O&M	Social Interaction	Career Education & Planning	AT & Optical Devices	Independent Living	Recreation & Leisure	Self-determination	Sensory efficiency
BLIND, Inc.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Camp Butterscotch	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
DB Project, MN	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
DB Services of Minnesota	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lighthouse Center for Vision Loss	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
MDVI	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
MNAPVI	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NFB of MN	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Vision Loss Resources	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Accessible Educational Material/State Services for the Blind Interagency Agreement: This interagency agreement between MDE and State Services for the Blind (SSB) supports individual school districts with the provision of Accessible Educational Material (AEM) in the form of braille and audio materials. School districts in Minnesota who agree to participate in the special education assurances are provided with certain braille and audio materials at no cost.

American Printing House for the Blind (APH): The American Printing House for the Blind (APH) is the world's largest nonprofit organization creating educational, workplace, and independent living products and services for people who are visually impaired. Founded in 1858 under the 1879 federal Act to Promote the Education of the Blind, APH is the official supplier of educational materials for visually impaired students in the U.S. who are working at less than college level. APH provides products, services, resources, and field services to students who are BVI.

BVI Electronic List: MDE sponsors an electronic list through the Statewide Low Incidence Projects dedicated solely to the education of children and youth who are blind or visually impaired in Minnesota. This list is a public place where anyone interested in this field can post a question or an answer, share a BVI specific announcement, or stimulate discussion related to the education or service delivery of children and youth who are BVI.

Communities of Practice: MDE facilitates communities of practice (CoP) which include TBVI, COMS, and collaborative partners from other state, local, and non-profit agencies who provide services to students who are BVI. The CoPs change as needs fluctuate throughout the state. The current CoPs are American Printing House & Tactile Graphics Producers, Low Vision, Assistive Technology, and BVI Mentoring.

District 917 Extended School Year/ECC: Intermediate School District 917 Vision Program offers an extended school year (ESY) ECC program for students in grade 6-10. This is a day program that focuses on the nine areas of the ECC. Instruction is individualized to meet each student's specific needs.

Low Vision Clinics: A Low Vision Community of Practice Group comprised of TBVI, COMS, and Mayo/St. Cloud Clinic Optometrists have provided input to determine a process of providing low vision clinic services to students with the highest low vision needs around the state. Low Vision Clinics provided from 2005 to 2015 have served over 500 students from every region in Minnesota. They provide a unique and specific educational service to students who have low vision. Along with written reports and recommendations provided by the eye care specialists, low vision devices, and training is provided for the recipients, parents, and educators.

Minnesota Mentoring Program: The BVI Mentoring CoP collaborated to build a research-based mentoring program that supports teachers in BVI higher education programs, newly licensed TBVI, and experienced TBVI who may need specific topic assistance throughout their career. The Minnesota Mentoring Program (MMP) has grown to include professionals in other low incidence disability categories. For more information regarding the MMP, contact Becca Jackson: Rebecca.Jackson@state.mn.us.

Minnesota Resource Libraries: Minnesota Resource Libraries is a statewide library providing information and resources to help families and educators meet the educational needs of Minnesota children and youth who have a hearing and or vision loss.

MSAB Family Transition Weekend (FTW) and Parent Child Institute (PCI): Family Transition Weekend (FTW) and Parent Child Institute (PCI) are interagency programs between MDE, MSAB and SSB. These programs alternate every other year and address family needs for middle and high school transition age students who are BVI (FTW) and BVI specific needs for children who are age five and under (PCI).

Northern Plains Visions of Sport Camp: The Northern Plains Vision of Sport Camp (NPVSC) at Bemidji State University gives children and youth who are visually impaired, blind the opportunity to have fun in a safe environment with other children and youth who have similar abilities. The purpose of NPVSC is twofold: (1) to socialize children and youth into sport, so they can bridge the gap from where they are to a lifestyle that includes physical activity; and (2) to train future Developmental Adapted Physical Educators, Special Educators, and teachers of individuals with visual impairments to work with children who have these disabilities.

State Services for the Blind SSB: SSB is a Minnesota state agency under the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). SSB provides tools and training for employment, living independently, and accessing print. They assist Minnesotans who are blind, deafblind, experiencing vision loss, or have difficulty accessing the printed word. SSB provides a variety of supports and programs for students who are BVI including: Transition Supports-Individualized Plan for Employment, Communication Center, Summer Opportunities Fair, Career Expo, Personal Budgeting, Assistive Technology Evaluations, BLIND Incorporated Transition Program, Duluth Lighthouse Transition Program, Helen Keller National Center Youth Programs and features in "The Spectacle" newsletter.

Statewide Vision Professional Development: The Minnesota Statewide Vision Community of Practice provides a forum to gather and share pertinent information and evidence-based practices TBVIs and COMS in the field to build teacher capacity to increase student outcomes. Outcomes of the statewide CoP include professional sharing of information and knowledge specific to BVI and O&M, provision of in-service training and resources specific to teachers of children and youth with visual impairments, opportunities to increase awareness of new research, and data on teaching strategies and program trends for BVI.

Summer Transition Program (STP): STP provides experiences to address the specific transition needs of students who are Blind, Visually impaired or DeafBlind. STP complements each student's core curriculum at their local school by providing individualized opportunities in the three transition areas identified in their IEP. These unique transition activities, as part of the ECC, give each student the opportunity to increase independence in their school home, community, and work environments.