



Tar Heel
Shared
Reader

Getting Started with Students Who are Blind or Deafblind

Students can actively engage with the text through their hands.

Should students who are blind be included in shared reading?

Yes. Blindness does not change what is taught only the way it is taught. Shared reading provides the student who is blind a way to experience text in an organized, consistent, and meaningful way. Shared reading is an important teaching strategy that helps them build their knowledge about the world, words and text.

What will students who are blind learn during shared reading?

For all students, shared reading provides opportunities to learn about speaking, listening, reading, writing, and thinking about various types of text. For students who are blind, it's also an opportunity to help them figure out that written words have a place, are different than spoken words in a conversation, and are represented in print and/or braille. It also helps them learn that symbols carry meaning and can be used to represent people, objects, places, events and ideas. Finally, it helps students learn to actively engage with the text through their hands and learn that they can communicate with others while engaging with text.

Should students have access to Braille and tactile supports?

Students who are blind, like all students, require experiences with a range of text types so they can develop knowledge of the world that can't always be developed through direct experience. In order to foster literacy learning for these students, they need to have access to a changing assortment of accessible books that have been adapted with braille and other tactile supports. Even when students may lack the physical skills to interact with braille independently, it is important that they have experiences with braille to maximize their ability to learn everything their peers learn during shared reading.



Center for Literacy
and Disability Studies

Tar Heel Shared Reader

Interaction • Language • Print Awareness

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How can students who are blind actively participate?

Offering books with tactile supports, including braille, gives students a way to be active participants in each shared reading lesson. For all students, shared reading should be an enjoyable time to explore books. In the beginning, students may be hesitant or unfamiliar with texts, but teachers can use hand-under-hand to gently help students gain experience and increase their willingness to interact and explore. Over time, students may begin to move their fingers across pages independently, even if they have no idea what the letters and words say.

How do I download books from Tar Heel Reader so I can make them accessible to my students?

Go to <https://tarheelreader.org>. Find the book you would like to read. Go to the first page of the book. Click on the small gear icon  in the upper righthand corner and select Download. You can download into PowerPoint or ePub. Then print and add braille and tactile supports as appropriate. Remember that a book without tactual supports is like a book without pictures! Tactile supports make it more interesting to explore. For ideas on how to add braille and tactile supports visit the following websites.

<https://www.teachingvisuallyimpaired.com/create-tactual-books.html>

<http://www.pathstoliteracy.org/blog/tactile-books-students-visual-impairments>

<https://www.makingtactilebooks.com>

What do I do with the adapted text during shared reading?

As the teacher reads the book, the teacher or other classroom staff encourage the student to interact physically with the text. If needed, they use a hand-under-hand approach to help the student explore the text. In this approach, the student's hands ride on the adult's hands and feel what the adult's hands are doing. Exploring the text may mean feeling the whole page to "see" what is there and/or tracking the braille so the student can begin to understand where the words are on the page. It may also include turning the pages back and forth to re-read a page or to move it along. Whether through encouragement or hand-under-hand exploration, the student is invited to interact with the text. However students should never be forced nor should their hands be moved for them as is often the case when hand-over-hand support is provided.

*Hand-Under Hand
Support*



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