

# Teaching English to Visually Impaired Learners

## Session 1. Understanding your Learners

### Working with Families

(Information taken partially from “Autonomía y socialización, ejes del trabajo con la familia del alumno con discapacidad visual en la Educación Primaria” M<sup>a</sup> Carmen Echevarría Chicoy)

Families are an essential aspect of education and they need to be informed about everything that happens in the child's school environment.

Families have the right to be informed and they have the obligation to inform the school about their children. Visually impaired students' families have even a bigger obligation in this respect. They need to contact teachers to express any need or difficulty their child might be facing.

As teachers, it is important to have regular meetings with them in order to be sure that the student feels understood in class. These meetings are even more positive if they are face-to-face. Some aspects to discuss with families might be:

- Does your child feel relaxed and happy in the group/class?
- Is there anything that parents think should be changed in the classroom? (light, organisation, etc.)
- Are the materials appropriately adapted?

It is also advisable to have a preliminary meeting with the families before the course starts. Parents give us information about how to face the first moments with visually impaired students and they will explain everything, because nobody knows our students better than their parents.

In this preliminary meeting, something important to discuss with families is the level of autonomy the student has got. This will give us a lot of information to find out whether group activities or individual tasks need to be changed or adapted. As English teachers our objective is the learning process, however something relevant to discuss with families is the following aspect:

If there is a moment that makes our student face a difficulty in terms of autonomy, as parents, do you understand we (teachers) might help them in order to promote their language learning, even though this can make the student lose their autonomy at specific moments?

In general terms, families will give us practical and useful information that we need to take into account in order to find a balance between autonomy and language learning. Moreover, this information will help us to understand as well how to adapt our materials in order to enable the student to learn as much as possible within the class-group.