Special Education-Visually Impaired

I. Knowing the Content

The professional education program provides evidence that candidates for Blind/Visual Impairments certification complete a program equivalent to a bachelor's or master's degree in education of the blind and visually impaired. The program shall require candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of and competence in applying the fundamental concepts of special education in teaching students who are blind or are visually impaired, at the pre-school, elementary and secondary levels (N-12) including:

IA. Philosophical, historical, and legal foundations of education of students with disabilities including:

- federal entitlements that relate to the provision of specialized equipment and materials for learners with visual impairments,
- array of service options,
- educational definitions, identification criteria, labeling issues, and current incidence and prevalence figures

I.B. Models and theories of typical/atypical growth and behavior across age groups, and philosophies that provide the foundation for research based special education practice including:

- cognition,
- communication,
- emotional/social,
- motor,
- adaptive,
- sensory

I.C. Characteristics of learners and the human visual system including:

- terminology related to the structure and function of the eye including diseases and disorders,
- normal development of the visual system,
- development of secondary senses (hearing, touch, taste, smell) when the primary sense is impaired,
- diseases, disorders and the impact of additional disabilities,
- effects of a visual disability on early development, social behavior and independence, language and communication, the individual's family and the reciprocal impact on the individual's psychological and educational development,
- effects of medications on the visual system

I.D. Procedures for screening, assessment, diagnosis, classification, referral, and evaluation of students with visual disabilities including:

- specialized terminology and policies regarding referral and placement procedures,
- alternative techniques to measure learning,
- interpretation and application of assessment results, including learning media and functional vision,
- implications for students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds

I.E. Disability-unique methods to acquire academic skills through developing special tactual, visual, and auditory communication skills including:

- braille reading and writing (using brailler and slate and stylus), braille notetaker,
- handwriting for students with low vision and signature writing for students who are blind,
- instructional technology including access technology, e.g., keyboarding, screen readers, screen enlargement, refreshable braille displays, braille translation programs and printers, abacus, talking calculators, and tape recorders,
- alternatives to nonverbal communication,
- instruction in the use of print adaptations and developing visual efficiency,
- listening skills and compensatory auditory skills,
- tactile perceptual skills (including interpreting tactile graphics, maps, charts, tables etc.),
- sources of specialized materials

I.F. Methods and strategies for the development of independent life skills needed by students who are visually impaired including:

- reasoning and decision making skills,
- organization and study skills,
- pre-cane orientation and mobility assessment and instruction,
- human sexuality using anatomically accurate tactual models,
- adapted physical and recreation skills, and lifelong leisure skills,
- social and daily living skills typically learned visually,
- career awareness and vocational counseling, knowledge of job functions,
- required adaptations for employment

I.G. Communicating and collaborating with partners including:

- strategies for assisting parents and other professionals in planning appropriate transitions,
- identifying resources, networks, organizations and services for the visually impaired and related fields,
- roles and responsibilities of professionals and paraprofessionals,
- transdisciplinary teaming practices

II. Performances

The professional education program provides evidence of the candidates participation in sequential and developmental field experiences and student teaching, under the supervision of college personnel and cooperating teachers who are well-trained in blind/visual impairments, have interpersonal skills and demonstrated competence in teaching. The program also provides evidence that the criteria and competencies for exit from the Blind/Visually Impaired certification program are assessed in coursework, field experiences and student teaching and require the candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and competence in fostering student learning through:

II.A. Assessment, diagnosis, evaluation and referral including:

- interpreting eye report and other vision related diagnostic information,

- using disability-specific assessment instruments,
- adapting assessment procedures,
- creating and maintaining records,
- collecting background information about academic, medical and family history

II.B. Planning of instruction based upon knowledge of:

- general curriculum and specialized curriculum,
- Pennsylvania Academic Standards,
- needs of visually impaired learners,
- cultural background and community,
- career potential

II.C. Instructional content and practice including:

- using assessment data in developing individualized instructional plans,
- adapting materials and the educational environment,
- integrating technology into the instructional program,
- sequencing and evaluating learning objectives that require problem solving strategies

II.D. Planning and managing the educational environment including:

- identifying and developing attitudes and behaviors that affect students with visual disabilities,
- implementing effective service delivery models,
- communicating the roles and responsibilities of professionals and paraprofessionals on transdisciplinary teams and utilizing role models with visual disabilities,
- encouraging active student participation, self-advocacy, and independence in group and individual learning activities,
- facilitating student learning through the use of braillewriter, slate and stylus, computer technology and other transcribing processes i.e., grade II Braille and Nemeth Code

II.E. Managing student behavior and social interaction skills including:

- preparing students with progressive eye conditions to achieve a successful transition to alternative skills,
- preparing students to access information from the community,
- preparing students to respond to societal attitudes and actions with positive behavior and self-advocacy

II.F. Communicating and collaborating with partners including:

- developing an understanding of the impact of a visual impairment on the educational and life experiences of students in parents and other professionals,
- reporting results of evaluations and their implications to students, parents, and school personnel,
- coordinating the activities of participants in the instructional program including implementation of transdisciplinary teaming practices

III. Professionalism

The professional education program provides evidence that candidates for Blind/Visually Impaired certification demonstrate knowledge and competencies that foster professionalism

including:

III.A. Professional and consumer organizations, publications, and resources

III.B. Integrity and ethical behavior, professional conduct as stated in Pennsylvania's Code of
Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators; and local, state, and federal laws and regulations

III.C. Communicating effectively (orally and in writing) with students, colleagues, families, paraprofessionals, related service personnel, administrators, agencies and the community

III.D. Establishing and maintaining collaborative relationship with basic and higher education colleagues, families and the community agencies to meet the needs of diverse learners