

## *Classroom Assistance: Visual Impairments*

### **Understanding Low Vision or Blind?**

**Low Vision** refers to a vision loss in distance and/or near vision, specifically, visual acuity of less than 20/60, but equal to or better than 20/200, or visual field loss to less than 20 degrees, in the better eye with best possible correction. **Blindness** refers to complete or severe vision loss in distance and/or near vision, specifically, a visual acuity of less than 20/200, or a visual field loss to less than 10 degrees, in the better eye with best possible correction.

Students use a combination of vision and other senses to learn, and they may require adaptations in lighting or the print size, and Braille. Each visually impaired student's needs are unique. Any visual impairment will make it difficult to see the chalkboard or to gather detailed information from filmstrips, charts, or overhead screens.

*Source: The World Health Organization*

### **Suggested Best Practices for Visually Impaired Students**

- ✓ Prepare book lists as soon as possible. It takes six to eight weeks to get textbooks into alternative formats.
  - Higher-level technology, math, or science textbooks could take up to three or four months.
- ✓ Allow students to tape record lectures and directions for assignments.
- ✓ Verbalize information written on the board or on overheads.
- ✓ Provide appropriate verbal descriptions to accompany visual aids, diagrams, films, or videos used in class.
- ✓ Allow service animals in the classroom; they are trained and will not disturb the class.
- ✓ Encourage students with visual impairments to sit in the front of the class.
- ✓ Suggest that students utilize a note-taker.
- ✓ Use clear handouts. Old, used handouts are difficult to read even when enlarged.
- ✓ Allow extended time for testing in an alternate setting. Tests will need to be read to students, enlarged, or Brailled.
- ✓ Give assignments in both verbal and written forms.
- ✓ Supply students with copies of your own notes and overheads which can be enlarged for them.