2025 Edition(新年版)

Suzuki's Education

for the Blind

English Translation by Sierra Wann & Lee Jeonghan

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✠ About 2025 Edition ✠

Mr. Suzuki devoted his life to education for blind children.

This book is about his lifelong educational activities and research.

It is written in simple English for easy use for teachers and parents.

In the 2025 edition, we added useful information for parents because early education is very important for blind children.

I hope it can help many parents all over the world.

Suzuki's visit to a blind school in Korea

✠ Education for children with visual impairments ✠

1. Raising children with visual impairments

Humans get 80% of the information through their eyes. Blind children are less motivated to explore or study the environment because they can't see what is around them. Therefore, it is important to educate them at an earlier age in blind school.

1) Critical basic tasks: mobility, life skills, literacy.

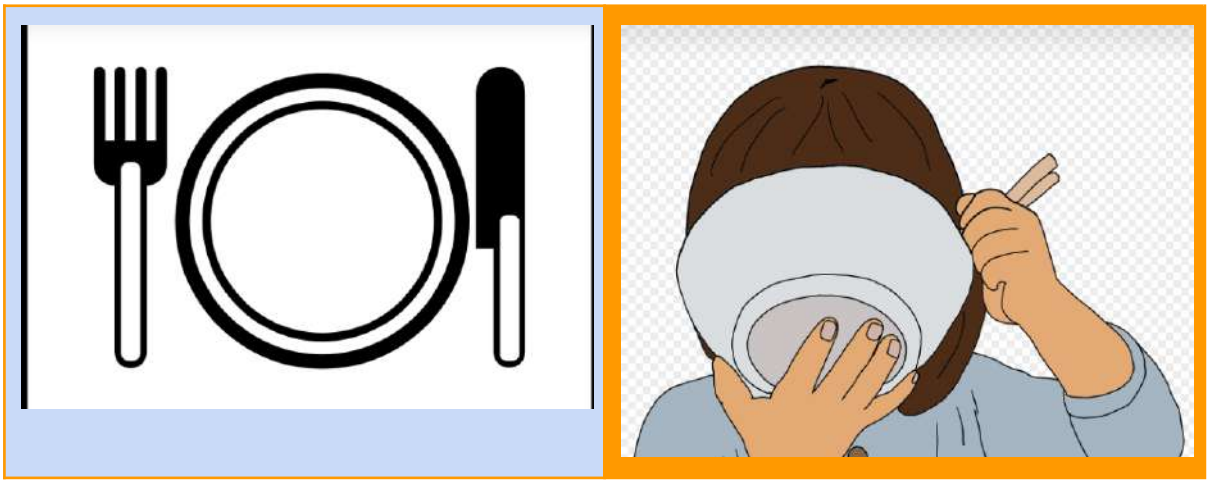
   The three most important tasks for visually impaired children are mobility, life skills, and braille literacy.

   Mobility is to move safely and efficiently to a place.

   Life skills are things like eating, bathing, dressing, undressing, cleaning, building friendship, etc.

   Literacy is to understand braille, symbols, and maps.

Education for visually impaired children must be done carefully step by step because they may easily get confused. For example, when teaching how to use chopsticks, you have to train them in various places with different types of foods. They will slowly adapt to the different conditions. It takes a lot of time and effort, so it is better for them to attend a blind school which has a more appropriate curriculum for them.



(They should eat in various conditions)

2) Parental Support

Physical contact delivers warmth of parents to the baby. If a blind baby often feels warmth of the parents' skin, the baby can develop the power to overcome the difficulties in mobility and life skills training. This is because the warmth from parents' skin is the best encouragement to the baby.

Father's role is different from mother's role

Role sharing between father and mother is very important. Sometimes I can hear complaints from mothers that their husbands don't help enough with childcare at home. The reason may be an inappropriate role sharing for father and mother. Mothers should take part in preparing meals and teaching the child how to use the bathroom and eating with spoons and chopsticks, or dress and undress. Fathers should be in charge of physical activities like playing sports or walking or exercise outdoors with the child.

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<tr>
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  </td>
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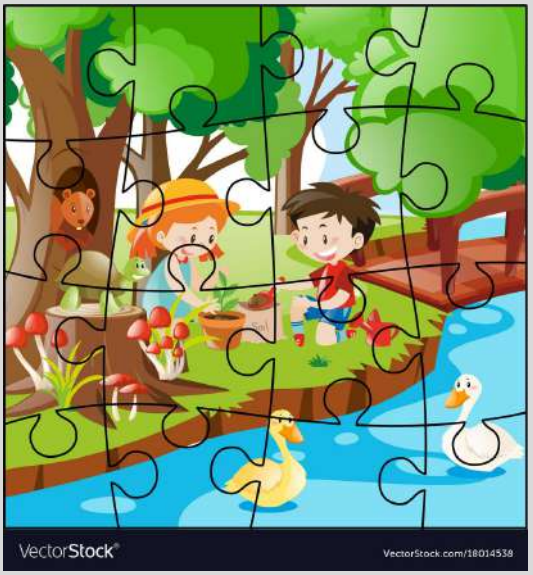
<tr>
<td>mother's role</td>
<td>father's role</td>
</tr>
</table>

3) Low-visioned children

I recommend low-visioned children to wear contact lens or glasses to raise their visual abilities and protect current vision. At home, parents should encourage them to use their current vision to see picture books or supermarket flyers.



Vision Training at home

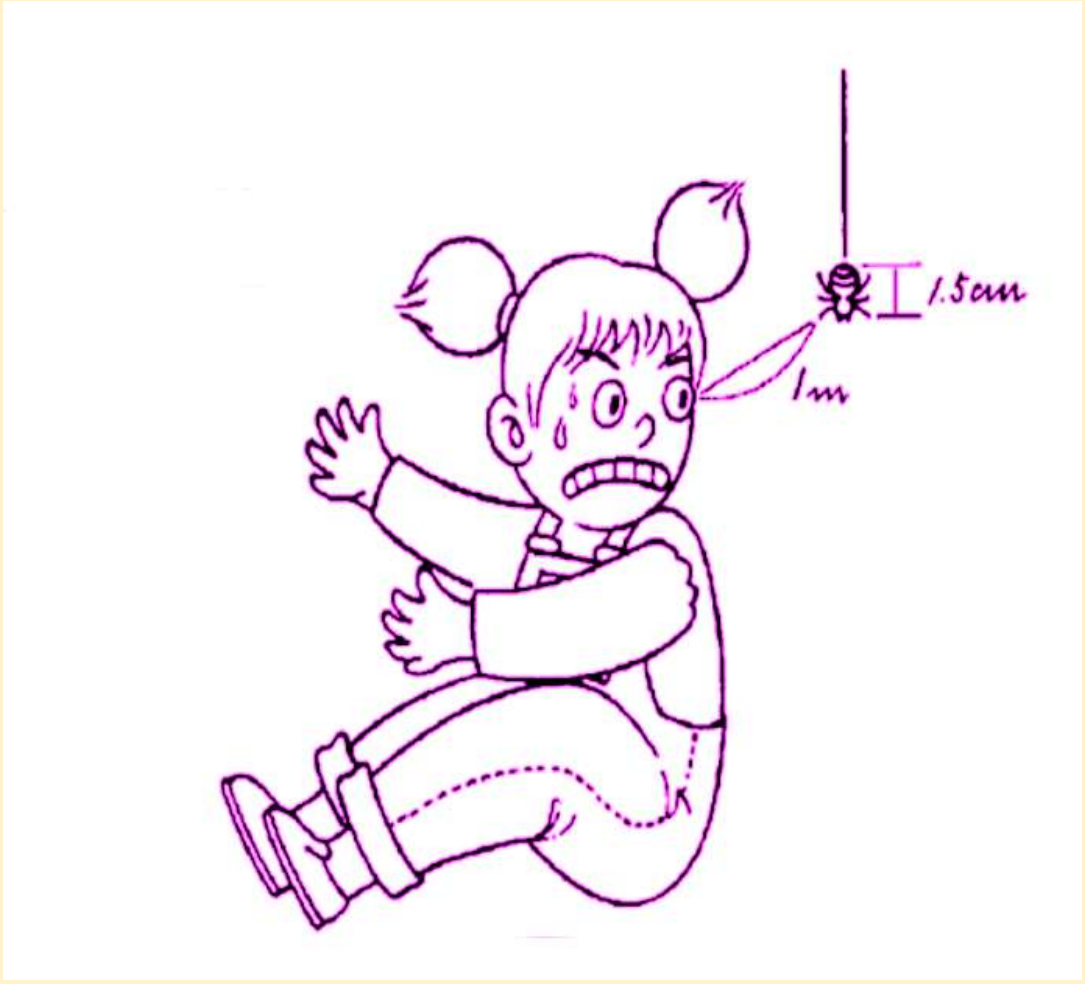
It is very important for parents to know their children's vision because it is essential information to communicate with teachers and trainers to make the best education for the child. If a child has difficulty with reading the vision test board in hospital, the following formula can be used to determine approximate vision of the child.

<How to know a baby's vision>

*If a child finds something and reacts to it at home, the size (A) of the object and the distance (B) from the eye to the object should be measured.

Key principle of vision :

*** 0.3 ✖ B(m) ➗ A(mm) = estimated vision**

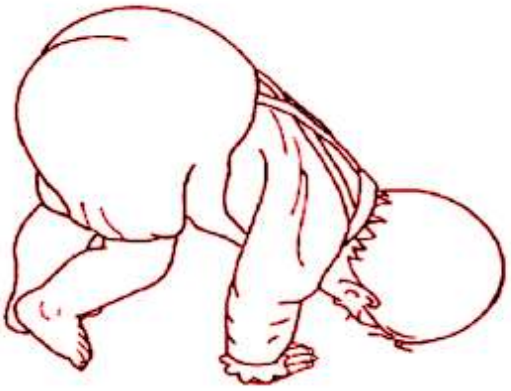


0.3 ✖1 ➗15 = 0.02 (her estimated vision)

4) Baby's crawling and walking 🚶

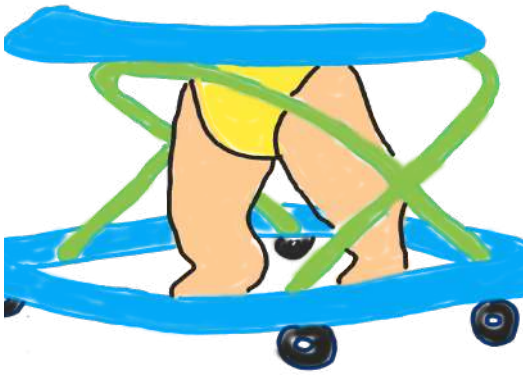
Modeling is a very important way to learn for general children. But it is impossible for blind children to see and imitate other people's movements, so parents should directly teach them how to crawl by physical contact. It should be divided step by step for easier understanding for the blind baby. The mother should hold the baby's leg with one hand and hold the baby's arm with the other hand to show how to crawl. It is helpful to put a toy which makes sound or flickers in front of the baby to draw attention and guide onward.

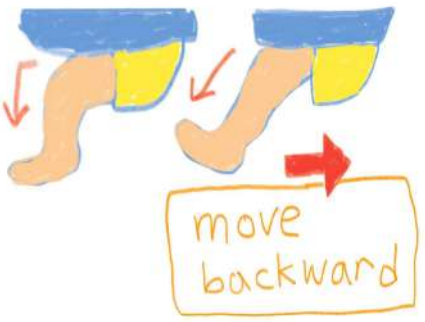
If the mother does not teach how to crawl, the blind child will move around with the hip raised and the head down on the floor as shown in the picture below.



He will use feets to check things around instead of hands

When it's time to learn walking, blind children should practice with a baby walker. They might move backward on the walker at first by pressing the floor with their feet. In that case, place a toy with sound at the front to guide onward.

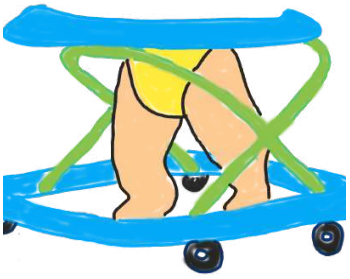




Following the sound makes him to move forward

When the child gets used to the baby walker, it’s time to try more challenging ways. Now they can try elderly people’s walkers or walk with their parents' hands.

If the child walks confidently with the elderly walker or holding a parent’s hands, now it’s time to try walking by holding a towel or rope linked to another person.

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
		

5) Early Education

Before blind children can touch things and find out what that is, they should develop interests and curiosity to explore the environment and study things. Therefore, if a baby tries to touch or search for something, praise and encourage their effort. They will be motivated to try further study.

Parents need to play with their children using tactile toys, such as clay, sand, and paper. They should talk to their children as often as possible because conversation with parents makes them feel relieved and secure. Also, it is better to use entire bodies when playing together.

When changing clothes or eating meals, a child may have a hard time doing it alone. However, it is important to wait and give him a chance to do it alone. Don’t try to stop children from being messy when they touch food or play with dirt. It is a necessary process for them to study the world.

6) Language Education

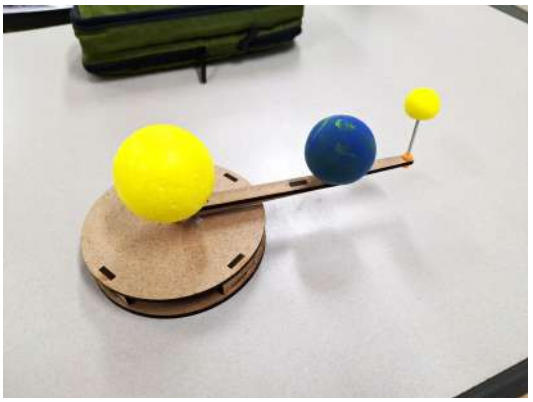
Since blind children need more direct experiences to understand vocabulary, people should help them from earlier ages. Parents and teachers should take more effort and time to teach words. The following are concepts difficult for blind students to understand. Teachers and parents should make more efforts when teaching these things.

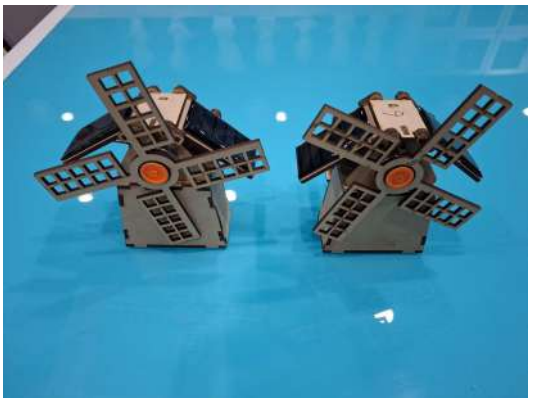
🤔Difficult subjects to understand

- Something that is too big: the sun and mountains…
- Something that is too small: ants, microorganisms…
- Places you can't go: the moon, the space, sea floor…
- Things that cannot be touched: fire or boiling water.
- Things that are easy to break: bubbles.
- Things that keep moving: falling leaves or flying baloons.
- Aerial substances: clouds, fog and rainbows.
- Something too complex: design drawings, blue print…
- Planar figures
- Colors and lights.
- A series of movements: dancing or throwing a ball

Experience and observation are very important.

Models are also very useful to help blind children understand things that cannot be touched or experienced. So parents need to have skills to make simple models with things available at home or science kits.





models

2. Look by ears

1) Catching clues from sounds and echoes

People who teach children with visual impairments are often surprised to see the student's amazing sensitivity to sound. For example, they can identify a person just by listening to one's footsteps and the pattern. They can also find intersections on the street by listening to the flow of cars.

Sounds and Echoes

Children with visual impairments listen and respond to both sounds and echoes. **Sounds** are those coming directly from cars, footsteps, or music played by shops along the street. It is easy to grab information from these sounds. **Echoes** come from almost everything like walls, floors, trees, water and even open spaces. These sounds also give them information. Children with visual impairments can even catch slight differences in the echoes. Therefore, if there is a tree or pole or telephone booth on the street, blind children will identify it by listening to the echos.

2) UltraSonic Technology : The K-sonar

The K-sonar is assistive technology that tells the distance to an object from the user. The user can know the distance by the sound signal from the machine. It projects ultrasonic waves to the subject and makes sound signals according to the distance; 1m is signaled by the sound of 1 khz, 2m by 2 khz, 5m by 5 khz… Besides just telling the distance, it can also identify the type of objects by using different sounds.

K-sona

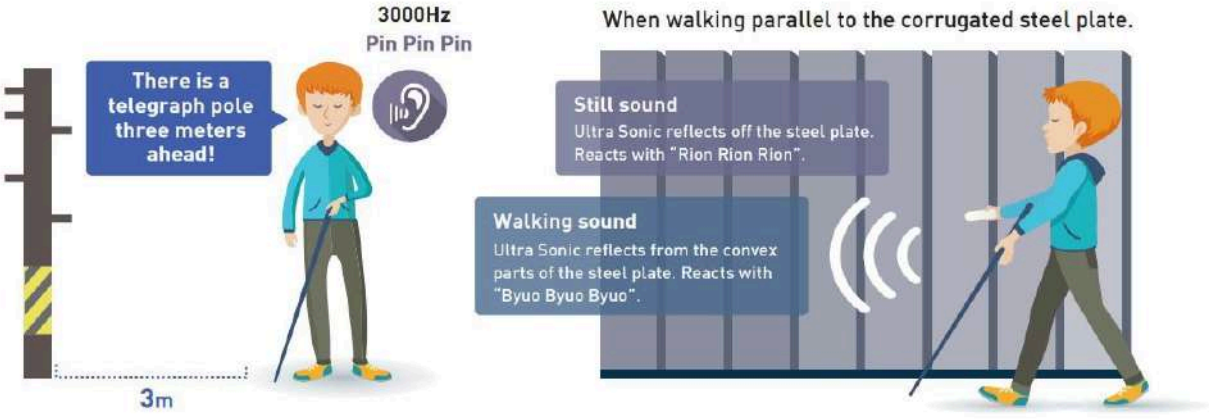
Even the same material will have two different sounds depending on whether the user is walking or standing still. It offers clearer information because the user can compare the sounds to know what is ahead.

Examples of sound signals when the user is walking or stopped

Object	Sound	
	Walking (移動中)	Stopped (停止)
 Pole / concrete	Pin Pin!~	Bin Bin~
 Streetlight / iron	Pin Pin!~	Pin Pin~
 Waved Fence	Shufin Shufin~	Rion Rion~
 Wired Fence	Pin Pin!~	Ryoshu Ryoshu~

 Bush Fence	Shua Shua~	Shoa Shoa~
 Brick Wall	Byu Byu~	Rion Rion~

(! : means the sound rapidly fade out)



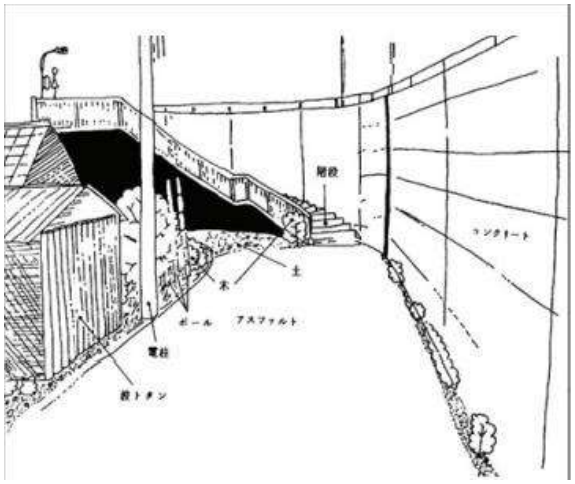
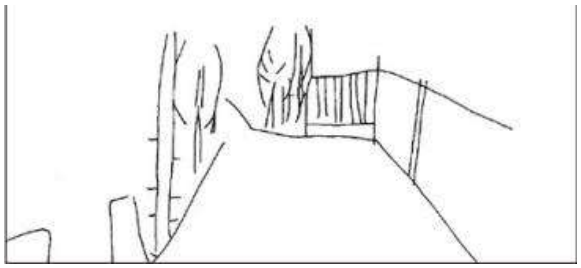
He can understand the surroundings

Mr. Suzuki used miniature 3D models to teach students who were using the K-sona. He made diorama sets with miniature trees, poles, fences and cars. Students then tested the K-sona to listen to the sounds from the diorama set. It helped them understand signals from the machine while walking on the street.

<table>
<tr><td>   </td><td rowspan="3">   </td></tr>
<tr><td>pole</td></tr>
<tr><td>   </td></tr>
<tr><td>Stairway</td><td>Building mini village</td></tr>
</table>

3) Teaching a Student with the K-sona

Suzuki met a student who had lost vision in middle school. Suzuki started training him using diorama sets and the student got used to sound signals from the machine. Later, when the student got used to the technology, he could draw the shape and things along the road with a tactile pen by listening to signals from the K-sona.

	**The student is walking with the K-sona**
	**He traveled this area**
	**He drew this after analyzing the echo signals from the K-sona**

Mr. Suzuki gained more expertise in teaching blind students using the K-Sonar. Students could have a greater awareness of various environmental conditions by using this device. Many teachers of blind students in Hokkaido noticed its effectiveness and used it, too. They started to teach students using the K-Sona and 3D miniatures.

As more teachers used the device, students were more engaged in listening to the change in tones as various objects translated into unique sound signals.

Eventually, they became more curious about general sounds even when they were not using the device. They started trying to notice small changes in sounds and echoes that came from the cane, traffic, walls and fences. That was the most important thing that teachers intended: understanding one's surroundings and knowing one's position in the environment.

3. Read by Hands

In 1970, Mr. Suzuki started teaching at the Sapporo Blind School. There, He saw students in vocational classes studying acupuncture, moxibustion, and massage. Their goal was to acquire a national license as a oriental therapist. They wanted to either get a job in a therapy clinic or open their own shop.

Mr. Suzuki noticed that students did not like to read braille textbooks even though the books contained very useful information. Most of the students studied with a cassette player which they had recorded teachers' voices during the class. Since most of them were staying at the dormitory, they couldn't just play the recording anytime they wanted because it could bother their roommate with the sound. Mr. Suzuki wondered why students did not like to study with the braille textbooks.

1) Why Students Did Not Like to Read Braille?

   Writing in braille is easier but reading braille with fingers is an extremely difficult and time-consuming task. Thus, people learning braille later than childhood say that studying with braille textbooks is almost impossible for them even after intensive practice. However, Mr. Suzuki doubted that and tried to come up with a solution.

2) Grouping of letters by level

   In 1966, Mr. Seo Masao, a teacher of a blind school in Tokyo, started teaching Japanese braille to 4 children in 1st grade elementary class. His lesson started in April. He evaluated students' development in May, June and July.

   He found the students easily memorized 17 letters. Those were the easiest letters and children immediately put those letters in their mind. Anyway, They felt a bit difficult with 16 letters and very difficult with the

other 13 letters. Inspired by the result, Mr. Suzuki categorized the Japanese braille into 5 levels based on how difficult it is.

Suzuki's Grouping

No 1	A	Me	Re	Fu	U	I	Ni	Ku			
No 2	Ko	Ka	O	Yo	Hi	Nu	No	To	Na		
No 3	Ta	Sa	Shi	Mi	Wa	Mu	Ne	Mo	Tu		
No 4	Yu	Su	Wo	Ya	Ha	Ru	Ma	So	Ki		
No 5	He	Ke	Nn	Ho	Ra	Se	Ti	Ri	Ro	E	Te

Level 1 has **あ(a) め(me) れ(re) ふ(hu) う(u) い(i) に(ni) く(ku)**. These are the easiest letters to read. They are very simple and clearly distinguished on finger tips. These can be learned in 5 to 10 minutes if one carefully studies the shapes.

For example, あ(a) looks like a dot (˙), め(me) is a block(⠿), れ(re) is a small block(⠶), ふ(hu) is a railway with empty space in-between(⠒), う(u) is a horizontal line(⠤), い(i) is a short vertical line(⠂), に(ni) is a long vertical line(⠇), and く(ku) is consists of three dots(⠅), which is just one more dot added to う(u)(⠤). This is how students learned level 1 letters.

3) Suzuki's Braille Teaching 🧭

After a student gets used to the shapes of letters in Level 1, it is time to try with sentences.

Sentence 1: あめ(a/me) あめ(a/me) ふれ(hu/re) ふれ(hu/re)

⠁ a	⠿ me	⠁ a	⠿ me	⠒ hu	⠶ re	⠒ hu	⠶ re

Meaning: **rain rain drops drops**

Sentence 2: あに(a/ni) めいに(me/i/ni) あいに(a/i/ni) いく(i/ku)

⠁ a	⠝ ni	⠍ me	⠊ i	⠝ ni	⠁ a	⠊ i	⠝ ni	⠊ i	⠩ ku

Meaning: **going to see brother and sister**

Even those with acquired visual impairments could easily read the sentences shown above without taking much time. It gave students a great sense of accomplishment when they successfully read the sentences with their hands.

Ability to read in braille gave them hope and confidence to live a new life after despair of losing sight. The following is a detailed method of Suzuki's braille education.

<Three Principles of Suzuki's Braille Education>

1. Starting with the easiest letters

あ(a) め(me) れ(re) ふ(hu) う(u) い(i) に(ni) く(ku) are the easiest letters to read. Suzuki categorized Japanese braille into 5 groups, from easiest to the most complex. When a student mastered letters of the easiest group, Suzuki added other letters, one by one, to lead slow and steady improvement.

He always thought about how to make braille study interesting, so he came up with words and sentences that students could practice at each level. That improved students' proficiency, and students became more interested in braille study.

Suzuki found that praising is a very effective way to encourage children. When students read braille correctly, he did not hesitate to say, 'Good!' 'Great!' 'You are doing awesome!'. It surely kept students motivated.

2. Drills

Drilling is a very important method to enhance students' braille study. Teachers should cooperate with parents or dormitory staff to encourage students to study after school. In this case, recording teachers' voices can be a very effective way to study at home or in the dormitory.

3. Individualized Teaching Plan

Students' abilities, reading habits and skills are different from each other. Teachers must make an individualized education plan for each student and practice with love and patience. To do that, the first thing is to understand a student's current level of braille competency. A worksheet with random letters could be helpful to assess how well the student can read. Below is the worksheet Mr. Suzuki used in class. He let students read the letters to evaluate the student's current level.

ex) A worksheet to test a student's current level

は(ha) ぉお(o) う(u) つ(tsu) て(te) や(ya) さ(sa) ろ(ro) ま(ma) め(me) そ(so) し(si) の(no) い(I) あ(a) ひ(hi) り(ri) れ(re) こ(ko) み(mi) と(to) ら(ra) ぬ(nu)

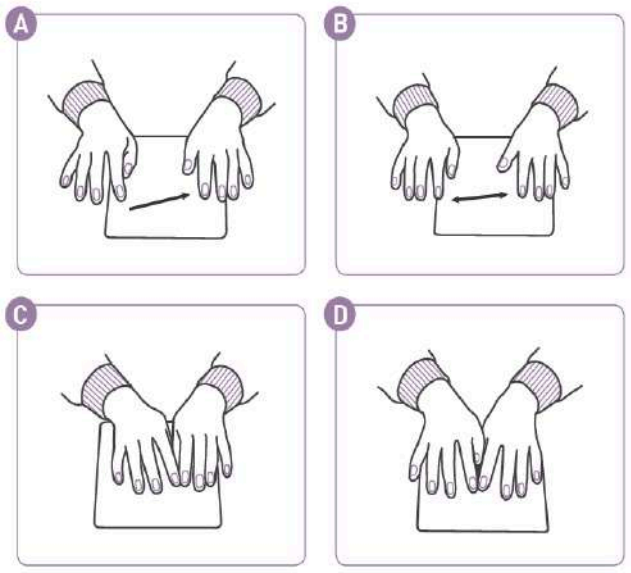
4) Correct Posture

Correct Posture

Correct posture is very important

The book is located at the center of the body. The height of the desk reaches the elbow. When sitting on a chair, the entire foot should contact the floor.

5) Reading with both hands



Students should use both hands.

It will surprisingly speed up reading fluency as skills improve.

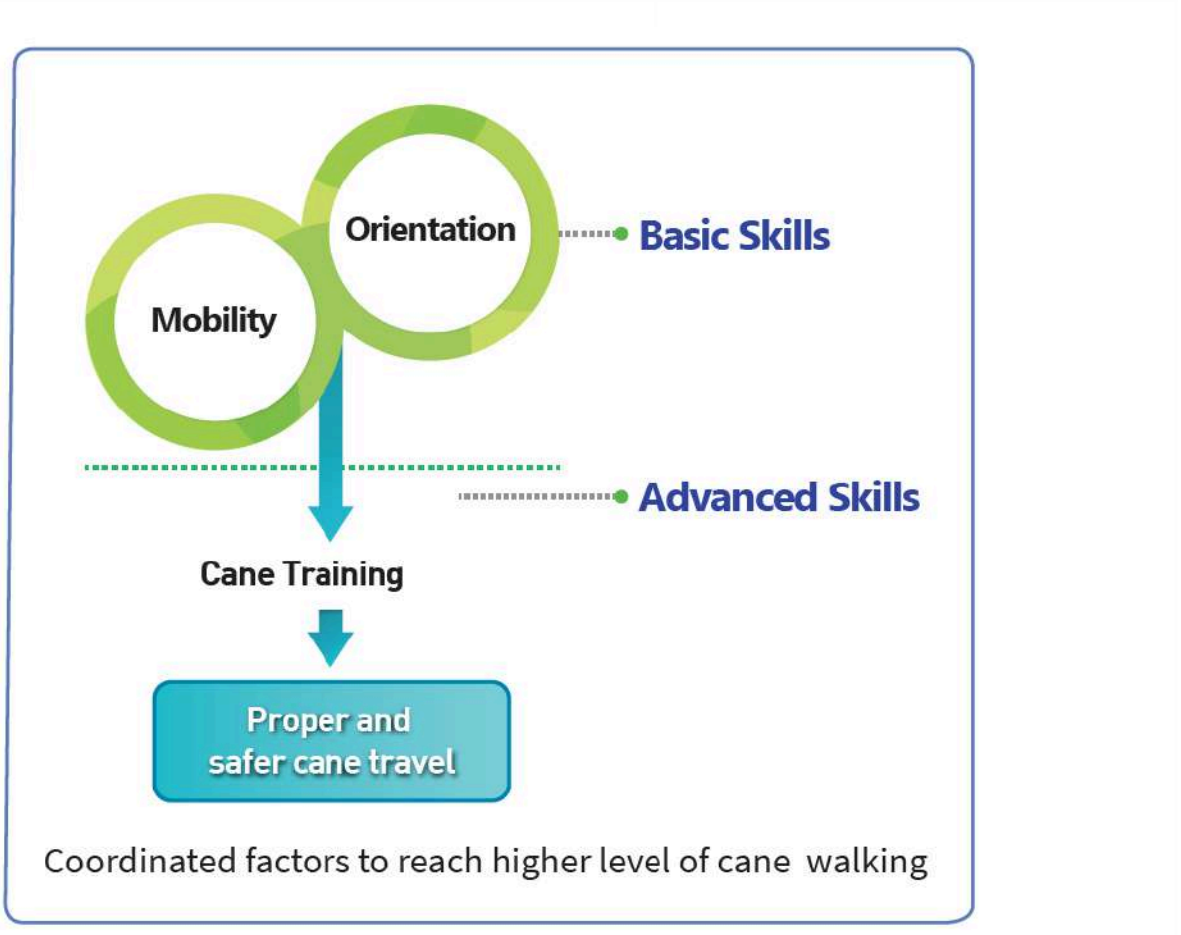
A. While the right hand reads, the left hand goes to the beginning of the next line and waits.
B. The left and right hand meet at the beginning of the next line.
C. The left and right hands move together to the middle of the line.
D. In the middle of the line, the right hand continues to read and the left hand moves to the starting point of the next line.

4. Walk by head

1) Orientation and mobility

There are two primary ways to teach orientation and mobility skills to children with visual impairments. First, students travel through a planned route. In this scenario, they already know the destination and the necessary clues. Second, students travel through an unfamiliar environment. They create a mental map by making connections between sensed information and clues on the path.

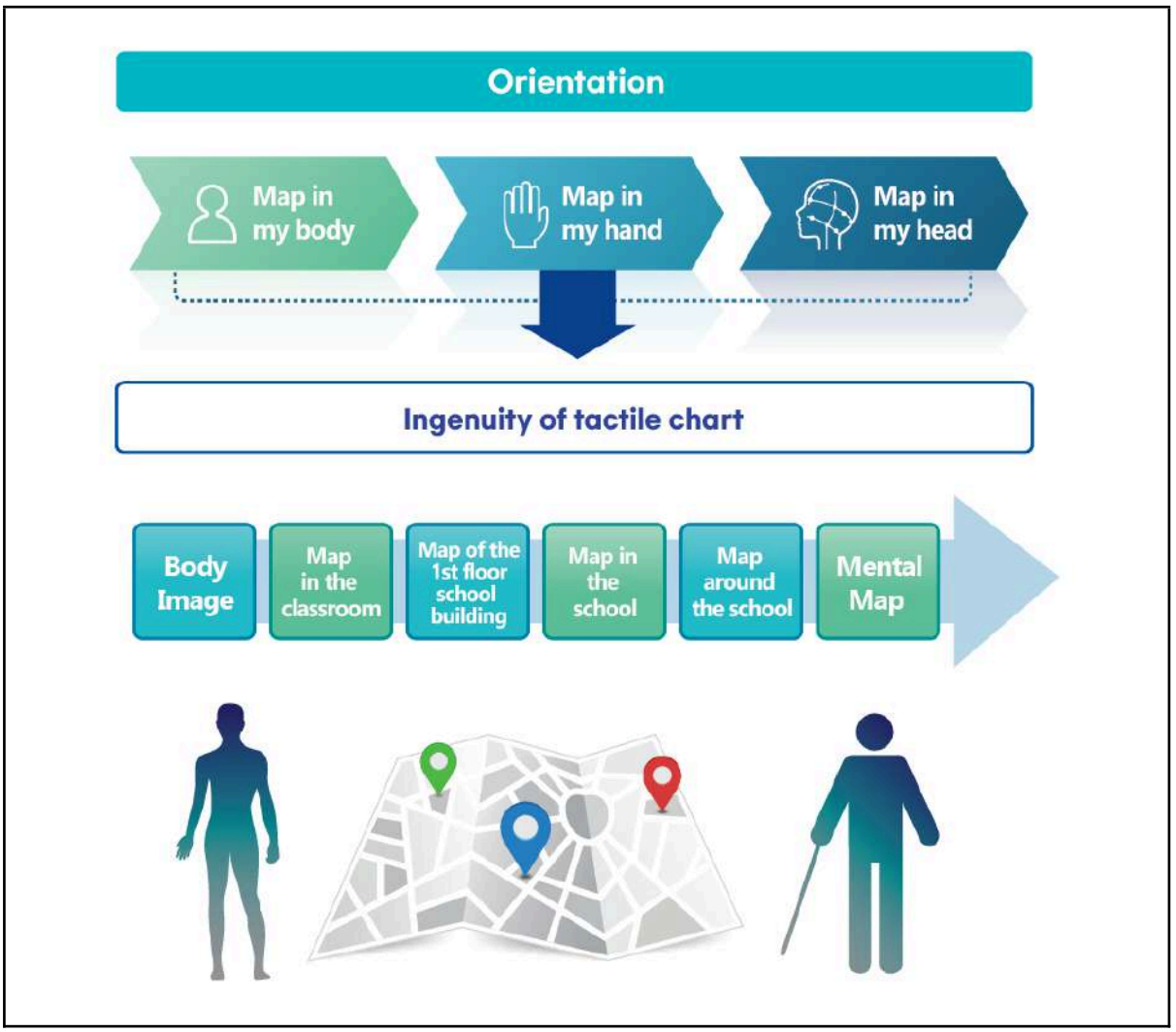
The former is for those who begin to learn basic skills or have limited intellectual abilities. As students grow proficiency in these basic skills, teachers should set long-term goals for them to create mental maps in various settings and walk to the goal using as many methods as possible. Children with higher orientation skills usually have better spatial understanding and awareness.



When students gain basic skills, they should advance to cane walking

2) How to develop orientation and mobility skills

Mr. Suzuki highlighted three steps to develop orientation skills for blind children: the 1st is understanding the map in the body, 2nd is reading a braille map, 3rd is having a mind map.



3) 12 Subjects

He taught 12 subjects to students, from kindergarten to high school, on orientation and mobility skills

12 subjects for walking independently	
1	Body Image / basic understanding of our body

2	Directions / understanding directions
3	Sound Detection / knowing which direction the sound is coming from
4	Sound Trajectory / knowing which direction the sound is moving in
5	Route Trailing / moving on the planned route
6	Orientation by the sun and wind / getting clues from the position of the sun and the direction of the wind *It is helpful to know the location of the sun according to time or season ☀️ *The direction of the wind in the city is a clue to the layout of the surrounding buildings 🍃🏢🚃
7	Understanding Familiar Places / understanding the layout of classrooms and the school
8	Cane Handling / basic cane skills and simple movements
9	Cane Techniques / advanced cane skills and complicated movements
10	Tactile Map / basic understanding of tactile map
11	Walking with tactile map / using tactile map to reach a destination
12	Walking on Snow-covered Area / Hokkaido is a snow country

4) Mind mapping (from basic to advanced level)

Mind mapping is very important to understand the surrounding environment and move to the planned destination. The following are the steps to reach efficient mind mapping.

Step 1: Trajectory
Sound Trajectory 👂🔊 a) Tracking sound trajectories in empty spaces b) Listen to the sound and mark its movements on paper
Walking along the route

a) Walking along the course
b) Reading a map and walking

Step 2: Understanding map 🗺️

a) Map of school 🏫
b) Map of school and surrounding area 🏡

Step 3: Drawing a map

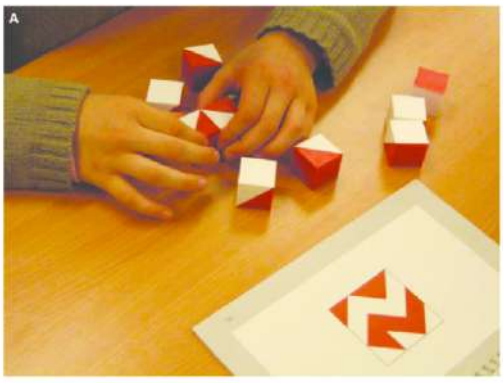
a) Map of school
b) Map of school and surrounding area

Step 4: Walking using a map 🌳

a) Walking in familiar spaces
b) Challenging new places

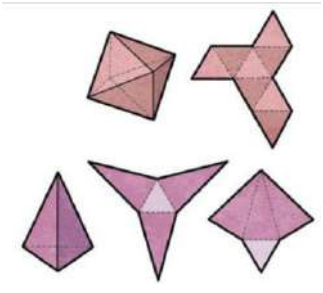
Step 5: Advanced study on the tactile map ✋

a) Shapes and signs : knowing shapes and signs used on a tactile map
b) Useful materials for creating tactile maps
> Miniatures from the Ohwaki Intelligence Test Kit (right picture)



> Miniatures from the Stanford-Kohs Tactile Block Design Set (left picture)

c) Studying planar figure (figures cut open and laid flat)



d) Tactile maps
e) Crafting 3-dimensional set

f) Learning general letters used by sighted people

5) Walking in Snow-covered area

Snow Country Hokkaido! ☃️❄️

Hokkaido is the region that snows most frequently and heavily in Japan. People in Hokkaido live with snow almost 3 months every year. Blind children in the region must learn how to walk safely and effectively in a snow covered environment.

Introducing Snow Tip

When blind people walk in the snow-covered area, their cane would not clearly detect the snow piles because the tip is hard and sharp. The tip will easily poke into the snow. Blind people should still need information on how much snow is piled on where. Mr. Suzuki found that the rubber bulb used in

science class was a solution. People could detect the snow shapes more clearly with the snow tip. It gave them better regional information when snow piled up on the area.

About Snow patterns

Mr. Suzuki took pictures of snow patterns on roads for 3 years and analyzed them. He sorted snow-covered roads into 3 patterns as shown below.

	Pattern 1: Snow starts ◇Snow found on the shoulder of roads
	Pattern 2: In the middle of snowing ♦Snow piles on everywhere
	Pattern 3: Melting ◇Sidewalk is still frozen while roads are clear of snow

If a student knows the snow pattern shown above, he or she will effectively and safely navigate the city with a cane.

5. My Life

This article is about my life as a teacher and my goals 🪚👩‍🏫

1) Visit to Taiwan 

In March 1973, I visited The Taichung City's Board of Education because I had heard about Taiwan's excellent integrated education system for blind students when I had attended a workshop held in Osaka in 1972.

They introduced me to Principal Lin because he could speak Japanese. Lin and I visited many schools which were doing inclusive education for blind students. I also met another expert, he was teacher Han. Han was in charge of training itinerant teachers for blind students. Han showed me and taught me a lot of things while traveling many places on his motorcycle. Sometimes, we used the train when traveling far-fetched cities. I often traveled to Taiwan even after that to develop my skills about inclusive education.


Suzuki and Mr. Han

I shared my knowledge and information learned from Taiwan with teachers in Sapporo. I also applied that to my students. I had a good opportunity because one of my students wanted to study in a general school. He studied very hard and passed the entrance exam but the school didn't have any braille textbook for him. Teachers in the Sapporo Blind School translated textbooks into braille. I rented an apartment in

front of the school for a year and lived with the student. I cooked and made lunch boxes for him and translated learning materials from the school into braille. He successfully finished study and graduated. He is currently working in the Japan Red-cross's Braille Library in Sapporo.

2) Focus on Body Image 🚶‍♀️👫

While I was studying inTaiwan. I learned about the essential concept of body image. It is very important for blind children to have body image before learning mobility skills.

Body image was originally introduced in an article written by Dr. B. J. Cratty of the USA. In Japan, body image was often studied and used by special educators teaching the physically disabled. However, I thought having a clear body image will be very helpful for blind children when they learn how to mind-map the environment and develop their mobility skills.

I trained students to use their body image to understand the space they were traveling in. Then we could move on to lessons about mapping. They understood locations of the classroom, school, and the community because students had better understanding about the environment.

3) Dedication to Special Education

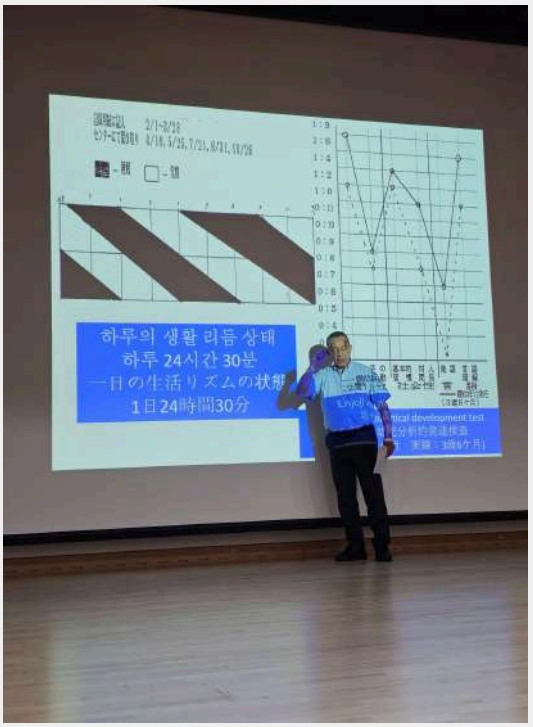
I think I was lucky because the Japanese Ministry of Education made a new curriculum called "care and self-reliance" for children with special needs when I finished my second year as a teacher. They needed many specialized teachers for the new subject. I applied for it and had a chance to teach all ages of students from preschool to vocational classes. Thankfully, I played a role in intensive and in-depth guidance on all areas of education for the blind. It was such a great opportunity for me.

4) Looking for Cooperation with Teachers Overseas 🌏

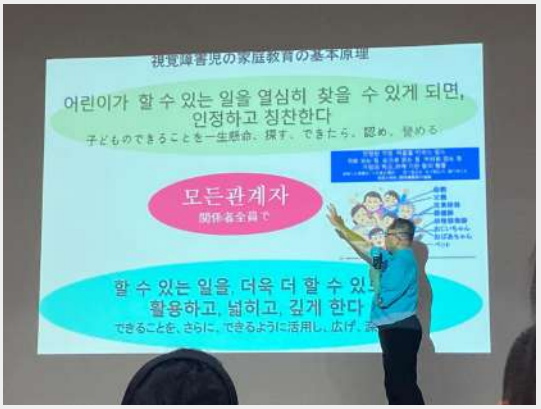
Korea

In August 2009, the soccer tournament for the intellectually disabled was held in Sapporo. A team from Korea joined the games. I became friends with Korean staff and players. We talked about the special education system of each country. Korea and Japan had both newly adopted regulations over the rights of the disabled and were looking for ways to practice them in each corner of the society. I found we had common interests.

The same year, in October, I was invited to the autumn workshop of the Korean Special Education Association. I delivered a presentation about Japanese Special Education. After that, I have visited Korea more than 30 times so far and lectured in many places such as universities, blind schools, and workshops.

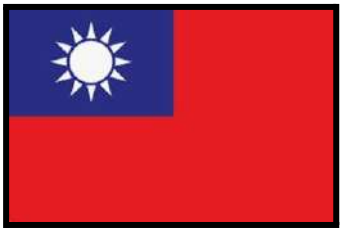


Parents` workshop in Korean Blind School, 2024 Summer



Korean Teachers are visiting Sapporo in 2025

Taiwan



When I traveled to Kaohsiung, Taiwan in 2017, I looked for Mr. Ko, who had taken care of me when I was in Taiwan before. He had already passed away. However, I met one of his old students, Mr. Lin. He was a teacher in Kaohsiung Special School at the time. He also reunited me with Mr. Han, who taught me when I had come to Taiwan to learn about inclusive education for blind children 45 years before. They requested a lecture about my life-long development as a teacher of blind children. I am still actively engaged in academic exchange with Taiwanese specialists.

International Conference in Taiwan 2023

Mongolia and Thailand

When I visited a Korean blind school, I met a teacher who is in charge of international exchange. He was Mr. Lee. He and I went to Mongolian National Blind School in Ulaanbaatar. The school was called the No. 116 School for the Blind. There, I held a two-day workshop for teachers. The enthusiasm and willingness of Mongolian teachers for education were very high and it was a very meaningful experience for me, too.

Mr. Lee(left), Mr. Suzuki(center) and The Principal of Mongol National Blind School (no. 116 School for the Blind)

Recently, I got a call from Mr. Lee, again. He said the principal of Mongolian Blind School wants to have another teachers' workshop because there are so many young teachers who just graduated from university. I am planning to go to Mongolia soon.

Mr. Lee also set me up with teachers in Thailand. I contacted the principal of Bangkok Blind School. I went to Bangkok by myself this time and the teachers welcomed me.I really appreciate that. I held a workshop there and spent a wonderful time interacting with people. It is always such a great experience to meet people with common interests in foreign countries and share ideas.

5) My Plan ⛵

I am 77 years old as of 2025. Statistics from the Japanese government said my life expectancy is about 87. People usually work until 65 and I think it is a waste of talent and abilities if they don't do anything after that. I would like to use the expertise I developed during my lifetime as a teacher for blind students and contribute to the world.

6) As Closing 🙇

In this book, I have summarized my life after I started my first career as a teacher. I realized that I have received a lot of help from many blind children and teachers.

I want to deliver sincere gratitude to Chairman Onodera Shingo of Asuka Welfare Group. He gave me a chance to serve the people who need help and support. I am very lucky to work in Asuka Welfare Group as a senior advisor. I will try to keep in good health to live up to my 100-years life plan of doing local and overseas volunteer work.

明日佳グループ
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Asuka Welfare Group

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