Psychological and behavioral characteristics of learners with visual impairments

- Language development is unaffected although there can be subtle developmental delays, especially in infancy.
- May be early delays in conceptual development, which don’t last long.
- Motor delays in infancy are common; adults need to encourage them to explore their environment to help overcome these delays.
- Orientation and mobility (O & M) depend on spatial abilities:
  - People with visual impairment can process spatial information either sequentially or as a cognitive map.
  - Some people with visual impairment have the obstacle sense.
- Some studies suggest those who are blind experience low academic achievement, which is likely due to low expectations or lack of exposure to Braille.
- Phonological awareness is important for learning to read print or Braille.
- Social adjustment problems are due to sighted society’s reactions to blindness.

Educational considerations for learners with visual impairments

- The ability to read Braille is a crucial skill.
  - Braille has slipped to dangerously low levels.
  - Braille bills have helped to ensure students receive instruction in Braille.
  - Federal law requires that Braille be available if thought necessary.
- The use of remaining sight is an important skill.
  - Large-print books are useful.
  - Magnifying devices can be used.
- Listening skills are important
- O & M skills are of critical importance.
  - Some resist using it though because they think it stigmatizing.
  - Preschoolers and young children can learn cane techniques.
  - There is a debate about whether those who are blind can be good mobility instructors.
- Some find using a guide dog very helpful.
  - Guide dogs are much more practical for adults than children.
  - Guide dogs don’t take the person anywhere; they alert the owner to dangerous areas.
- Tactile maps can be very helpful.
- Human guides are not recommended as primary means of mobility.
- Technological aids are becoming increasingly important.
- Itinerant teacher services are the most common service delivery model and is relatively popular.