5. Functional Vision Assessment (see Appendix B, Section G)

5.1 Purpose
The Functional Vision Assessment (FVA) assesses the student’s functional acuities, visual field loss, eye motor control, and eye-hand coordination, as well as, reading, writing, functional life skills, and processing in all school settings. A FVA is closely associated with a Learning Media Assessment (LMA) and helps to determine the student’s learning style and appropriate teaching strategies and accommodations.

Although it is important for each student with a suspected visual impairment to receive comprehensive and ongoing clinical assessments by an ophthalmologist or low vision specialist, an essential role of the Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments is the functional assessment of the student’s visual skills. How an individual student is using his or her vision within his/her daily tasks and environments may differ significantly from the visual conclusions derived from clinical assessment. Clinical assessments occur within controlled environments to optimize the accuracy of the results and offer educators an informational tool to frame their assessments.

Daily tasks within the classroom, home, or other environments, however, generally occur under less than optimal conditions. Factors such as glare, distance from tasks and print size may compromise a student’s ability to see and process visual information. Classroom and environmental noises may inhibit access to spoken directions, ability to orient oneself in space, and/or efficient processing of auditory information. The evaluator needs to assess both how the student has or has not learned to accommodate for visual impairment, and/or the compensatory skills the student needs in order to participate as effectively as possible across all learning situations.

A Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) can also use a Functional Vision Assessment (FVA) to analyze how a student uses vision for orienting and moving through space in familiar and unfamiliar areas.

As a result of a FVA, specialized instruction may be recommended for the student with visual impairment. The FVA results may also recommend consultation with the family and educational...
team regarding effective strategies to enhance the student’s learning and ensures access to the curriculum.

5.2 Completing the Assessment
A qualified individual, such as a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments conducts a Functional Vision Assessment as a recommended assessment under the “Assessment in All Areas Related To Suspected Disability(ies)” section of the Evaluation Consent Form (N1A).