





# RWANDA ALBINISM SOCIETY

## ALBINISM - SKIN

People with albinism have little or no skin colour otherwise known as pigment. Skin colour or pigment is needed to protect all persons from the sun and sunburn. With little or no pigment, people with albinism must always dress with protective clothing or use sunscreen lotion if available. Without these, the person with albinism is at strong risk (especially in sunny countries) of getting and dying from skin cancer.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP:

**Protect your SWA from the sun.**

**Protective clothing** – This is the most important and the most readily available. Advise the student to wear long sleeved shirts and a hat that shield him or her from the sun, especially when outside.

**Sunglasses** – Permit students to wear sun glasses/shades when outdoors or indoors (as needed).

**Exemption from outdoor activities** – Please exempt the students with albinism in your class from such activities unless the activity can be moved to a shaded area. Please encourage students with albinism to seek shaded areas whenever possible.

**Sunscreen lotion** – When available, ensure that your student with albinism uses sun protection cream on a daily basis. This could be used to protect the small areas of the body (hands, ears, nose, forehead, cheeks, chin and neck) that are still exposed even while wearing protective clothing.

# RWANDA ALBINISM SOCIETY

## ALBINISM - EYES

**Almost all people with albinism have visual challenges. Most cannot see things clearly from distances.**

**What can you as a teacher can do?**

**Help your SWA see the blackboard**

Use "BLACK" black boards NOT green black boards or white boards. Green boards and white boards are harder to see for students with albinism. If green boards and white boards are the only options you have, please talk to our staff about obtaining a blackboard.

**Keep your blackboards black**

This is necessary so that the contrast of the white chalk may enhance readability. Where it is absolutely necessary to use the green or white board, please keep green boards at their darkest green and use only white chalk on them. Keep white boards at their whitest while using only black pens on them.

**Repositioning the SWA**

Teachers and educators need to make extra effort to organize the classroom so that the student with albinism is positioned in front and as close to the blackboard as needed. Depending on the visual needs of the student with albinism, he or she might be more comfortable with front and center or the front and far right or the front and far left. Please work with the student with albinism to determine which position is best. Re-positioning must be done so that the student with albinism is not staring into sunlight to see the blackboard

**How you write matters:**

**Speak while writing:** SWA are more active learners when they are able to listen and write. This technique is generally preferable by students with albinism. **Change your writing style to clear print.**

For Example, "*This is a door*" is very difficult for a student with albinism to read whereas "This is a door" is likely more legible to the SWA.

Write only on the portion of the blackboard that is most visible by your student with albinism. Increase the size of your handwriting on the blackboard until the student with albinism can see it.

# RWANDA ALBINISM SOCIETY

## ALBINISM - SKIN (CONTINUED)

**Note:** Increasing the size of your print on the blackboard does not always work for all students. This is because one student with albinism does not always have the same visual level as another student with albinism. When increasing the size of your print on the blackboard does not work, go to the following steps:

If possible, photocopy and provide your notes to the SWA. Teachers and educators must be prepared to photocopy their notes and give copies to each student with albinism in their class. It is preferable that notes be provided some time before the relevant class or lecture so that the student with albinism has time to prepare in advance. If the notes are confidential, they should still be provided if they are necessary for learning. In such a case, the student with albinism may be asked to sign or promise that the notes they receive are confidential. Photocopying the notes of a capable student is not ideal but acceptable.

### **Slanted Desks**

When possible, allow the student with albinism to use a desk with a slanted top. This reduces the distance between the student with albinism and his or her work thus allowing the student with albinism to see his or her work better in a comfortable position.

### **Peer Mentorship**

Always link a reliable academic student with a student with albinism in the class so that he/she can assist in things such as reading, note-taking, and general peer mentoring. In choosing a peer mentor, be sensitive to the dynamic of the relationship between the student with albinism and the mentor you choose. If the pairing does not work, end it and find another peer mentor.

### **Glasses**

Even though most students with albinism will need or currently use prescription glasses, these often do not completely correct visual challenges. With or without glasses, most students with albinism have to hold text very close to their eyes to read it clearly and comfortably. Students with albinism rely on their glasses for various reasons. Some may need it for clarity, some for distance, or some for reading, while others for all of the above.

Be understanding and kindly refrain from enforcing a glasses-wearing pattern in your student with albinism which has not been sanctioned by the professional who prescribed the glasses or the student with albinism. Because the prescription glasses of student with albinism are expensive, please help them care for them to prevent breakage or loss.

# RWANDA ALBINISM SOCIETY

## ALBINISM - SKIN (CONTINUED)

### **Allow the use of technology**

Your student with albinism might want to use small hand-held devices such as a monocular, or a magnifier. These ought to be permitted, as they tend to enhance visual capacity. In higher education, such as university or college, permit the use of a recorder for recording lectures. This might be helpful for the student with albinism to play back as a form of review.

### **HELP YOUR STUDENT WITH ALBINISM READ & WRITE PRINTED MATERIALS**

#### **Steps to take:**

#### **Enlarge Exams and Other Handouts**

Exam questionnaires, teachers' notes, and other printed/photo-copied handouts must be clear and with large enough print.

#### **Provide Extra Time for Exams**

We suggest that extra time must be granted for exam-writing for the student with albinism. Actual exam time plus an additional half of actual exam time is suggested. This is especially important if the exam questions are provided in small or regular print, and if the exams are re-used/faded copies.

If extra time is granted it is advised that the student with albinism writes their exam in a different location from their peers so that timing logistics can be better coordinated.

# RWANDA ALBINISM SOCIETY

## RESPECT

**Respect ought to be shown to each student with albinism.**

### **RESPECT HELPS LEARNING**

Respect includes treating each student with albinism like other students while appreciating their particular needs as summarized in this Guide. It also includes upholding the human rights of SWA including the right to dignity and safety. Lastly and most importantly, respect is key to building self-esteem and confidence which in-turn enhances learning.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP:**

Help end name-calling and the use of common yet disrespectful labels. Lead the class in stopping the use of labels: Zeru-Zeru, Ma-albino, Mzungu, Whitey and other names more commonly used in your locality.

Lead the class in stopping referring to students with albinism as “albino.” To refer to someone as “albino” is to equate a human being to their most visible condition: albinism. This is contrary to global efforts to advance the dignity of all persons.

Try to use and lead the class in using more respectful terms including “person with albinism or student with albinism.

Importantly, use the student with albinism’s given name to refer to him or her. This will contribute to, as well as foster, understanding and respect.

# RWANDA ALBINISM SOCIETY

## END THE LIES

**Spread the TRUTH about albinism**

### **LIE**

Bad luck, sickness or death can come from a student with albinism.

### **TRUTH**

Contact with persons with albinism will never bring bad luck, sickness or death, but IT WILL FOSTER RESPECT, kindness and human dignity.

### **LIE**

One can “catch” albinism like a sickness.

### **TRUTH**

You cannot “catch” albinism because it is a genetic condition passed from BOTH parents to children AND ONLY THROUGH BIRTH.

### **LIE**

People can use body parts of persons with albinism to become healed, rich or lucky

### **TRUTH**

No one has or can become lucky or rich or healed from the use of the body parts of persons with albinism.

### **LIE**

People with albinism are a curse or are ghosts and they disappear when they die.

### **TRUTH**

People with albinism are NOT curses or ghosts and certainly do not disappear when they die. In fact, they are human beings with a simple genetic condition who deserve the same rights that all other Rwandese enjoy.

## **FINALLY & MOST IMPORTANTLY**

People with albinism are human beings like you. They need care and attention and protection from the sun. They have lower vision levels and need your help in overcoming this challenge in the classroom. With your help they can be very successful students and make significant future contributions to Rwandese society.



# RWANDA ALBINISM SOCIETY

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Credit:- The information in this Teachers' Guide was adapted from the Quick guide for teachers published in 2011 Under the Same Sun Tanzania and Canada UTSS TANZANIA PO Box 32837 DSM, Tanzania Tel: +255222780224 Fax +255222780224 Email: info@utsstz.com UTSS CANADA 400 – 15225 104 Ave. Surrey BC, Canada V3R 6Y8 Tel: +6045876502 Fax +6046340244 Email: info@underthesamesun.com