**White Cane Care and Maintenance**

**White Cane Types:**

Canes can be made of aluminum tubing, solid fiberglass, fiberglass tubing, and carbon fiber compound tubing. Each material has different characteristics of strength, weight, and flexibility. Each one sounds different as it strikes the ground.

*Aluminum tubing canes* are relatively heavy, but strong. They rarely break. If they are bent, they can usually be straightened out. These canes can still be used when slightly bent and are known for their longevity and durability. Most folding canes are made of aluminum tubing sections with some kind of elastic in the middle to pull the sections together. If you pull each section out firmly and give it a slight twist, it should stay in position during your trip. Most canes supplied by the Omaha Public Schools are aluminum.

*Solid fiberglass canes* (called rigid because they have no joints) are both strong and flexible. They weigh the least of the various types of canes. Solid fiberglass will take quite a bend and still straighten. If they are bent past a certain point, they will split into long splinters which are dangerous to touch.

*Hollow fiberglass canes* are lightweight and very easy to handle. It has a nice bounce to it, but will only take a moderate bend without breaking. That is, it may not withstand tripping someone. When it breaks, hollow fiberglass tends to crush and fall apart very soon.

*Carbon fiber canes* are fairly stiff and have only a little bounce. They are light weight and easy to handle. Compared to hollow fiberglass, the carbon fiber cane is somewhat stronger and lasts a little longer after a break.

**Cane Maintenance:**

The cane should be cleaned monthly or as needed. Folding canes should especially be cleaned at the joints. Dirt collects in this area and makes the cane difficult to disassemble. Clean the joint areas with a Clorox sheet or paper towel. Once dried, it helps to lubricate the indented joint area with a bar of soap (it will keep it from sticking) or a little oil / lubricant (you can use cooking oil, Vaseline or spray lubricant—although be sensitive to odors which are associated with the use of these).

Folding canes are held together by an internal elastic cord and need watching. Keep track of the wear on the elastic cord as these sometimes need replacement.

Cane tips last anywhere from a few weeks to a few months depending on the amount of wear and the surface on which it is most used. Most tips, used within the school building, will only need replacement once or twice per year; however, cane usage is **ENCOURAGED** away from school, which means more rough surfaces and more wear on the cane tip. I would rather we need to replace the cane tip weekly due to use than to not have to replace it at all.

Students have been instructed in how to change their cane tips; however, with students younger than 4th or 5th grade, we prefer this happens at school due to the retractable nature of the elastic cord.

All canes include reflective paint or tape on them. If you travel a lot during hours in which it is dark, it is advisable to add additional tape. These surfaces need to be kept clean in order for the reflective tape to work optimally.

*Provided as informational background by the Omaha Public Schools*