

VIBRATIONS

NEWSLETTER OF COLORADO SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH
COMBINED VISION AND HEARING LOSS

Serving Children with Vision and Hearing Loss, Their Families, and Service Providers

FALL 2003 EDITION

FUNDING, SWEET FUNDING!

We have very good news to report. The Colorado Services for Children with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss has been funded for the next five years through the federal government. We submitted our grant proposal in early August with other states in the country and just learned that we were given our top allotted amount from October 1, 2003 until September 30, 2008. This is fantastic news!

Existing staff, **Tanni Anthony**, **Gina Quintana**, and **Sharron Fieber** will continue on the project in their roles of Project Director, Project Coordinator, and Project Support Staff. New staff will be hired on a contractual basis to assist with the activities of the grant. **Karen Roberts**, parent of three children, one with combined vision and hearing loss, will be hired as our Family Specialist. Karen will provide technical assistance to families around navigating the educational system, and will assist with organizing networking and training events for families of children with combined vision and hearing loss. **Shannon Cannizzaro** will continue her role as Parent Consultant to the project. Shannon has been a wonderful resource in planning the annual Family Retreats and coordinating the metro parent support group activities. She has three beautiful sons, with one child having both vision and hearing challenges. **Nancy Cozart**, a teacher certified in the area of visual impairment and an Orientation and Mobility Specialist, will be hired as a Technical Assistance Specialist. Nancy brings a wealth of expertise to the project. To access any of these individuals, please contact Tanni at (303) 866-6681 or Gina Quintana at (303) 866-6605.

We have several new activities to pursue during this five-year grant cycle. We hope to infuse more functional hearing assessments into the programming of students with combined vision and hearing loss, offer training specific to auditory skill development, and focus directly on the literacy programs of students. The annual Family Retreats and Summer Institutes will continue. And, of course, with the expertise and availability of new staff, we intend to intensify our commitment to technical assistance efforts. Please be in touch with us with your needs for training, consultation, library materials, and support activities. We are here to serve you!

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One Dad's Story

*Written by Kevin Reuter
Caitlin, Michael and Kenny's Dad*

Hi, my name is Kevin and I am a father to a really special girl, Caitlin. I am rather new at being a parent of any kind, let alone the parent of a special needs daughter. She came into my life six years ago when her mother and I started dating. I was not sure at the time about being involved with someone who had three kids, but then I met Caitlin. Caitlin managed to change my mind rather quickly about the whole situation. She was so loving and friendly when I met her that she came over and gave me hugs. That was the beginning of a wonderful and fantastic relationship.

As time has gone on Jillana and I were married and started our lives together. This of course included three wonderful children who I had grown attached to. Caitlin and I quickly bonded and at times became inseparable. We became play buddies, friends and some one to just laugh with. Along the way she has taught me so many things about life and she still continues to do so. The first thing she taught me about was unconditional love. She did not care about what mistakes I made or anything else I had done, she just loved me. That was and still is a fantastic feeling. I was the first man she signed Daddy for, telling me that I was her dad. It melted my heart and formed an even tighter bond between us. Not only has Caitlin taught me things; she has also learned some things from me. I taught her how to sign I Love You and she first signed this when I proposed to Jillana. I have also learned what it takes to be a part of Caitlin's special life as a parent.

After the first two years I became more involved with Caitlin's educational and physical needs. This included going to IEPs, doctor's visits, and anything else that I needed to attend. At this point is when I realized how great and strong a person Caitlin's mom, Jillana, was. I did not know that so much time and energy could be spent taking care of a child's needs. I was shocked that everything seemed to be a fight to get any thing done for Caitlin. I wondered why it was so difficult to get these things when typical children were getting there needs met easily. I just did not understand any of it at that time. Jillana started to inform me of all the procedures and paperwork that it took for anything to be done for our daughter. I was in awe that so much work was needed to see the results. I started to attend meetings and visits but I still did not fully comprehend all the details. I then became even more active mainly as a support for my wife and kids at these meetings. I did not necessarily speak up at these meetings but I did start to understand the processes, details, and everyone's role there. I was just starting to grasp all this information but I felt like we were alone in our fight for our daughter.

I was just starting to understand what was going on and what needed to be done when Jillana brought me new information. She had information about parents getting together over a weekend to share information, the Family Learning Retreat. That first year Jillana and the kids were able to attend but I was not. I was not able to attend until Jillana had been to two retreats. The information she brought back with her was great. Since then I have attended the past three years. All I have to say is WOW. All the information that is available was a shock. I did not realize that there were so many other families out there with the same questions and similar problems. I quickly figured out that the whole weekend is a chance for every family involved to talk and offer support to each other. The exchange of information is just phenomenal. If you do not know something or know just a little, chances are that someone there has the information. I noticed all this in the first retreat I attended but I also noticed that

there were a lot of moms and kids and hardly any dads. I wondered at this for a while but then got caught up in the whole weekend. The second year that I attended was pretty much the same as the first, mainly moms with the kids and just a few dads attending. This year though it was different in that more complete families were present.

It was a great time this year being held at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind (CSDB) in Colorado Springs. The school and the staff organizing such a great event impressed me tremendously. The thing that made it great for me was that Caitlin, who had gone to school there on a diagnostic placement a few years ago, recognized where she was. It was incredible that Caitlin remembered the school and that she led us around the campus. The retreat this year was just fantastic. Not only did we learn some new information but we also met new families. It was incredible to me to see more dads taking an interest in what was going on with their children. Not only were they there but that they also knew what was going on. When I went to my first retreat I had no idea what was going on or what to expect. Since then I have become more involved with all my children's educational needs. I may not speak up all the time but I know everyone there and also what needs to be accomplished.

I learned so much at this past retreat that I do not know where to start. One of the main things I learned this year was about being a father in the complicated life of my daughter. It is not always easy to be everywhere I need to be some days but it is definitely worth it. Even though dads are sometimes overlooked in the whole process, we too have a place. We may not say much in the meetings or in doctor's visits depending on the situation but we still are important. We show that we support our children by attending doctor's visits and being at educational meetings. When we attend these events we show a united front to the world with our wives about our very special children. There are times when we need to step forward when our wives are too stressed emotionally and physically to go to another meeting. I also have learned that sometimes our role is to keep things fun for our children. Dads are often called upon for many different forms of support but I am ready and willing to do whatever it takes for our children. Without this support my wife would be doing it all and that is not what this is about. The one thing that is most important to me is being a family and supporting each other. I have learned all of this in the very short time in being a part of this wonderful family. This is just one dad's story...

The Fathers Network

The Fathers Network provides up-to-date information and resources for fathers, family members, and care providers. Here you will find current news, press releases, and timely articles. Also check out the Events Calendar for upcoming conferences and seminars, all designed to enhance your knowledge about the joys and challenges of children with special needs.

<http://www.fathersnetwork.org/>



Another Dad's Story

Written by Todd Cannizzaro

Dad to Andy, Chris and Nick



The longer I know Christopher the more impressed I am with him. Not only is he charming, witty and honest, he also possesses a stubborn tenacity I've never seen before. This young man can light up a room when he enters it (or clear it out depending on his mood!) He is always happy to meet new people, which is good seeing as the number of doctors, teachers, and therapists he has had surpassed my memory long ago. But Chris remembers each and every one of them and usually their names too. When I look at Christopher I think, how can someone so little take on such a huge burden in life, but he does, without even a complaint. Chris has given me new eyes to the world. I always knew I would love being a daddy, but Chris has taught me to appreciate all aspects of my life. My hardest days can't even compare to a normal day for him. When I see other parents in life who treat their children like things they are required to have or pets to feed and water I feel bad. I wish they knew what I knew. I wish they knew my little Chris. I also wish I could take the credit for some of these fantastic qualities, but I can't. He's just himself. He's just Chris.

That is why I felt the 2003 Family Learning retreat was as always a great overall experience! It's nice to get together with other families as well as the people who work so hard to bring all of the programs such as this to families with special needs kids.

The retreat is a good chance for dads like me to meet with other dads and share experiences as well as new ideas to help in raising our kids typical and non-typical alike. So many times in our every day, rat-race lives we forget how many other people share in our unique situation, and how to keep in touch, so the retreat is a wonderful opportunity to rekindle friendships, and make some new ones!

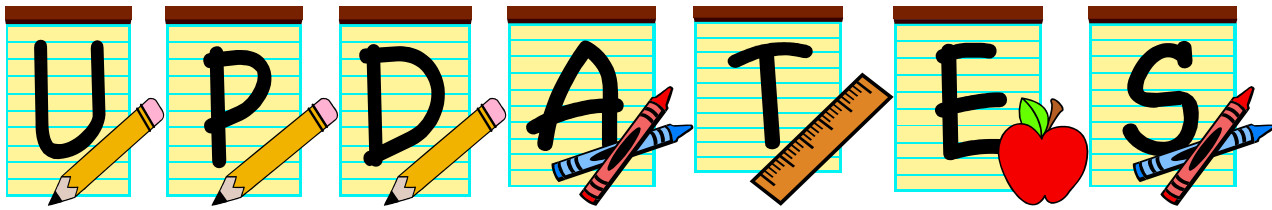
Overall the family learning retreat is a true godsend in the sense that it gives us an opportunity to take our families to a relaxing safe environment where we don't have to worry about making meals or where we will stay. I sure hope more families will take advantage of this annual event!



Helen Keller Kids Museum Online

AFB celebrated Helen Keller's birthday this June with the launch of a multimedia Helen Keller Kids Museum Online.

You can tour the museum and enjoy its timeline, photographs, film clips, and fun facts and quotes on www.afb.org/braillebug.



This Newsletter: The topic of this edition is Literacy for ALL! This was the theme of our 2003 Summer Institute on Deafblindness.

Colorado Census of Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss: The forms will be mailed out in mid November. Please help us ensure that all children, birth through 21 years who have combined vision and hearing loss are identified.

Colorado Student Assessment Program – Alternate (CSAP-A): The CSAPA will be administered in Grades 3-11 in the areas of reading, writing and math, and 8th grade science. There will be 2 different formats, either through typical administration or online format. The timeline for administration this year is **February 2- March 12, 2004**. Administration training will occur during the month of **January, 2004**. Please watch the CDE website for this information.

Family Retreat: Once again the 2003 Summer Family Learning Retreat was a huge success. We had several families spend the weekend with us at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind. We have already begun planning for next summer. If you have any ideas for presenters, or other suggestions, send Gina an email and she will take it to the committee.(quintana_G@cde.state.co.us) See the pictures in this newsletter!

Summer Institute 2003: Literacy for All was the topic of this year's Summer Institute. Karen Christianson from Arizona School for the Deaf and the Blind was here and really helped everyone to take a personal look at how we view literacy for students with deafblindness and significant support needs. There is a notebook available in the Lending Library that has all of her handouts, as well as notes from the training.

Technical Assistance: Gina continues to provide technical assistance to teams and families in a variety of ways. She can either come out or provide TA at school or in the home. She is also available for phone calls or emails, whichever is most convenient for whoever is requesting the technical assistance.

With our renewed grant funding, we have hired another Technical Assistance Specialist. Her name is Nancy Cozart. Read more about Nancy in the newsletter.

Parent Networking: The Metro Parent Group will continue to meet for breakfast on a monthly basis. Topics include conversation around families, kids, school, trials and tribulations, and planning for future networking events such as the Family Retreat and Picnic. We would love to have you join us. If you have any questions, you can call Shannon Cannizzaro at (303) 424-6077. Please see places and times in the newsletter.

2003 Summer Institute on Literacy for All!

A Parent's Perspective

By Karen Roberts, Family Specialist



It doesn't take much to convince me to spend three days in the mountains when it is pushing 100 degrees in Denver...but in my case, it did take some juggling as my husband was called out of town at the last minute, Children's Hospital insisted that a hearing test on Benjamin could only be done that week, and the usual chaos reigned.

In fact, when Karen Christianson from the Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind used Jan Pienkowski's book Phone Book, as an example of an interactive chant that can engage emergent "readers," I laughed because that book is our lives—all of us that are in the midst of raising our kids. And it can be very challenging to arrange an hour or two away, much less three days. But it can be so worth it, in many ways.

Over 100 people attended this year, yet only a handful of parents. But to the teachers of the visually impaired, the special educators, the therapists and the intervener and paraprofessionals—thank you so much for taking time out of your summers to learn about literacy and our kids. And to believe that it is possible! Because you are the ones that can convince us overwhelmed parents that there is more to our lives than trying to meet our child's basic physical needs. For many of us, even reading a book to our child is challenging because of time and because we don't even know if it really matters.

Research shows that every kid can learn some type of functional literacy and **"the assumptions we make and the theories we hold have a powerful effect on what and how we teach."**(G. Hillocks) So besides the practical approaches I learned for working with my child, I was also warmed by the enthusiasm displayed by the roomful of educators, by the opportunity for me personally, to get to know my child's intervener and occupational therapist better, and by the momentum generated in that room to accept the challenge and to be leaders in the field of teaching children with severe disabilities to read. To read was defined by Karen Christianson as "a communicative, receptive system the child is looking at or attending to tactually or visually, to get information."

The success of the conference won't be measured by the notes we took—but by the beliefs and enthusiasm we can bring to the classrooms of our kids. And my heartfelt thanks go to Tanni and Gina for bringing it all about. The Summer Institute is an absolutely incredible opportunity for educators and parents to learn the latest in practical applications of working with children with severe needs—but on top of "practical applications," it gives us the enthusiasm and encouragement that so much is possible. Definitely worth escaping the heat of the "flatlands" for!

Literacy for Persons Who Are Deaf-Blind

Barbara Miles, M. Ed.

Barbara Miles is a communication specialist/consultant and teacher, experienced with all ages and levels of persons who are deaf-blind. She has taught regional, national and international seminars on communication issues for children who are deaf-blind. Her articles have been published in professional journals & newsletters and she is co-author of the book "Remarkable Conversations."

January 2000. Printed with Permission from DB-LINK

Imagine this: In the living room of the Perez house it is getting close to bedtime. Manuel, 6, and his sister Julia, 4, are asking for their usual bedtime story. Mrs. Perez goes to get a storybook from the basket near the couch. Then she hears the cries of her 2-year-old, José, who is lying in a crib on the other side of the room. She goes to the crib and bends down to pick up José, still holding the book. Manuel and Julia are restless, clamoring for their story. Mrs. Perez is torn. She imagines that José wants to belong to this nightly ritual. But José is deaf-blind. He can't see the book, or hear the words as she reads them. She can't imagine how to include him, or what use it would be anyway. She doesn't know any other children who are deaf-blind, and she hasn't considered reading to be a possibility for him (or for anyone who is deaf-blind, for that matter).

But tonight she senses this young child's desire to be included, and she wants him with her and the other children. So, for the first time, she brings José into this family ritual. She holds him on her lap as Julia and Manuel cuddle on either side of her on the couch. Mr. Perez comes in from work just then and joins them. After greeting his wife and two oldest children, he sits next to Manuel. He reaches over to invite José to touch his beard, his usual way of greeting his son who cannot see or hear. Then he rests his hand lightly on José's shoulder so José knows of his continuing presence. José quiets when he feels himself settled into his mother's lap with his family around. He senses his mother's breathing and feels the vibrations of sound in her chest as she reads. José's hand can feel his sister's and brother's arms as they alternately turn each page—their long-established routine. José can smell the paper of the book—he buries his head in the crevice between the pages several times, and smiles with delight.

This evening is José's first experience with literacy. In the nights that follow, Mr. and Mrs. Perez regularly include José. Over time, the experience gains more and more meaning for him. And then, as a result of help from educators of children who are deaf-blind, the Perez family is able to make and acquire adapted materials, including simple books that have both print and braille, and that have tactile pictures that José can feel. Manuel and Julia sometimes help make the pictures in their own favorite books accessible to José by pasting material on them, and by using pipe cleaners and glue to make outlines that his little hands can feel. Over time, too, the entire family learns sign language, so they can translate the language of the stories that José cannot hear into a form he can feel. Mrs. Perez's initial instinct to include José in this family story time blossoms into a lifetime of reading and writing experience for this child who is deaf-blind.

The Importance of Literacy for One Who Is Deaf-Blind: Each person who is deaf-blind—whatever her sensory, mental, and physical abilities—deserves the opportunity to become literate in all the ways of which she is capable. Reading and writing are especially crucial for one whose world is narrowed because of vision and hearing losses. Literacy can enable such a person to exchange information and ideas, and develop relationships that would otherwise be out of reach.

Literacy involves the use of language, whether the language is in print or in braille. Although not all persons with deaf-blindness will achieve formal literacy, it is important to consider the communication value that aspects of early literacy can provide. Being able to "read" a schedule that consists of objects arranged in the order of the events they represent, for example, can be of great benefit to someone who is deaf-blind, even if that person cannot read print or braille. Likewise, being able to point to a picture from a menu of pictures in order to express a

desire or make a comment can considerably improve the life of a person who is deaf-blind with little formal language.

What is more, society deserves the increased opportunity to get to know the thoughts, feelings, and ideas of persons who are deaf-blind. A person who is deaf-blind and who can read and write or who can use an object or picture communication system can communicate more and more with increasing numbers of persons in their immediate and distant environments. This person also has the potential of communicating with increasing precision and depth. Getting to know persons who are deaf-blind is likely to benefit many members of society whose experience of the world is limited to vision and hearing, and who thereby miss the uniqueness of experiencing the world primarily through touch.

Picture a woman who can neither see nor hear. Imagine too that she can read and write and that she has access to a computer with braille output and input devices. This woman is able to communicate with people all around the world through the Internet and has access to vast stores of information. Given the availability of today's technology, while she is on-line this person is practically not handicapped. Her ability to read and write is her key to relationships and interactions undreamed of even a decade ago. Perhaps, just as importantly, it enables others, who might not otherwise have the opportunity, to get to know her.

Likewise, a person who is deaf-blind and who has neither the cognitive ability nor the interest in using the Internet can benefit from literacy in countless other ways. A picture/print or object/braille communication system may allow him to communicate his desires and ideas to people around him; picture/print/braille recipes may enable him to cook independently; being able to read labels on food items may give him many choices at the store; writing and drawing in a daily journal may enable him to express himself, reflect upon his own past experiences, and share experiences with people not present at the time they occurred. These are only a few of the possibilities.

The opportunities that literacy provides to persons who are deaf-blind, and thereby to society at large, are vast. What is more, opportunities are increasing all the time as technology develops and as people—parents, educators, therapists, and people who are deaf-blind themselves—broaden their ideas of what literacy offers to people with limited vision and hearing.

What Is Literacy? Literacy generally refers to the ability to read and write. Reading and writing are symbolic systems that allow people to receive and send information across distances of time and space. Reading and writing have contributed significantly to the development of societies, cultures, and technologies. They allow people to transmit knowledge from generation to generation and from place to place.

There is now a field of educational research devoted to emergent literacy. It considers both reading and writing development from the child's perspective. Bloome and Green (1984) stated "Literacy is seen not just as a cognitive process, but also as a social, psychological, and linguistic process" (Dziwulski, 1992, p. 3).

When we think about literacy as it relates to people who are deaf-blind, it is important that we expand our conventional notions of reading and writing to include not only emergent literacy experiences, but also to include the various modes of literacy. If we conceive of literacy as the ability to read and write newsprint-sized print, for example, our conception will automatically exclude most persons with deaf-blindness. For a definition of deaf-blindness, refer to the DB-LINK publication "Overview on Deaf-Blindness." Fortunately for all people who are totally blind, Louis Braille invented a method of reading and writing that does not depend upon sight. And fortunately for people with low vision, engineers have invented a variety of large-print technologies. We, as educators, friends, and family members of persons who are deaf-blind, are challenged to become equally visionary when conceiving of reading and writing systems and ways of educating that can accommodate persons with deaf-blindness. Some of these people have unique visual difficulties, some have uniquely developing language abilities, some have cognitive challenges, and others have physical limitations. None of these should be a barrier to the development of some kind (or kinds) of literacy.

When a teacher or a family uses an object schedule system (sometimes referred to as a “calendar box”) with a child who is deaf-blind, that person is using a kind of proto-literacy to communicate with the child. A series of objects, placed in boxes or hung on the wall, and representing a corresponding series of activities, is a kind of calendar which the child without vision or hearing can read. As her hands touch each object from left to right, she gets information about the future, what will happen that day (or week, or month, depending on the size of the schedule). As she develops more abstract cognitive skills, these concrete objects may be paired with or replaced with pictures, print, or braille. Likewise, if she spontaneously goes to the calendar and picks up a ball and carries it to her teacher as an indication that she would like to go out and play, we might say that she is engaging in a kind of proto-literacy (or even proto-writing) behavior. She has read which symbol represents her desire and has brought that symbol to the teacher to read. She is using a symbol to convey information about what she wants to happen in the future. And her life choices are considerably enriched by this kind of literacy. People hoping to enlarge literacy opportunities for people who are deaf-blind need to continue to invent ways to make literacy available. The possibilities are countless.

The Social Functions of Reading and Writing: Literacy never exists in a vacuum. People read and write for many purposes, most of them social. At home bedtime stories provide young children with a foundation for literacy. Even though they are not reading, they are learning the social value of the printed symbol and are beginning to understand that pictures and symbols convey information. They are also learning that reading these symbols is fun.

As we seek to share literacy skills with persons who are deaf-blind, we need to be aware of what purposes these skills will serve. We need to ensure access to as many of the functions of literacy in their lives as possible—comparable to the access that hearing-sighted people have. We need a menu of possibilities.

- **Acquiring or transmitting knowledge or information:** books (nonfiction, reference); newspapers; environmental print (road signs, advertisements, etc.); Internet Websites; magazines; movie credits; telephone directories; restaurant menus; song lyrics; music transcription
- **Organizing and supporting memory:** schedules; calendars; grocery lists; shopping lists; to-do lists; histories; diaries; labels in photograph albums; transcripts of presentations; minutes of meetings
- **Entering or creating a fantasy world:** novels; stories; comic books; poetry
- **Self-expression:** journals; diaries; poetry; editorials; t-shirts or hats with messages; bumper-stickers; signs and placards; artistic expression with words
- **Entertainment:** novels; poetry; comic books; magazines; Internet Websites; computer games; computer chat rooms
- **Problem solving or problem posing:** crosswords; word problems; math problems; office memos; journal entries; advice columns
- **Financial negotiations:** money; bills; checks; contracts; wills; price-tags; receipts; bank statements
- **Creating and maintaining relationships:** letters; notes; greeting cards; computer e-mail; computer chat rooms; TTY phones
- **Dealing with emotions:** journals; diaries; notes; letters; advice columns; stories
- **Conveying or understanding instructions:** recipes; instructions for tools, devices, and appliances; directional signs; maps; computer graphics; ATM instructions; test instructions; game rules
- **Making or understanding announcements:** signs; posters about events; movie theater announcements; wedding or party invitations; brochures about events; leaflets announcing sales
- **Persuading people to do or buy things:** newspaper and magazine ads; billboards; TV ads; product logos; political ads; classified ads; product catalogues; banners
- **Identifying things or places:** street signs; labels on boxes, cans, packages; labels on pictures; titles on books; names on personal items, such as clothing, credit cards, library cards; addresses on letters, e-mail, fax transmissions; labels on elevator buttons
- **Giving or receiving inspiration:** quotes; sermons; self-help books; refrigerator magnets with messages; greeting cards; sky-writing (*Adapted from Dziwulski, 1992*)

Many educators of children and adults with severe or profound disabilities (including those who are deaf-blind) may discount some of these functions, thinking that they may not be possible or appropriate for children who have

particular challenges. Self-expression, entering fantasy worlds, and maintaining relationships are several functions that are frequently absent from curricula for children who are deaf-blind or who have severe disabilities. None of these functions need be inaccessible to any child. Our own ingenuity, creativity, and determination will be the keys that will allow a child access to any of these functions of literacy. Without exposure to them, it is impossible for a child to acquire them.

If you are a teacher or a parent reading this list, you might think also about how to expose the child or adult who is deaf-blind to an increasing number of these uses of literacy. You may draw her attention to a t-shirt logo the next time you see one, or you may show her a newspaper ad, or a wedding invitation, and explain what each says in a way that the child may understand. Even a child who is totally blind can benefit from these gestures and the simple explanations that accompany them. In fact, being shown these things by an adult and having them explained, is the only way in which many children and adults who are deaf-blind will ever know that they exist.

Conditions Necessary for the Development of Literacy: There have been many interesting recent developments in the teaching of literacy to children and adults with severe special needs, as well as those with hearing impairments and those with linguistic and cultural differences. Many of these developments have important implications for helping children and adults who are deaf-blind learn to read.

This recent research and longtime experience point to several basic conditions necessary for the development of literacy. Each of these conditions implies a variety of possible opportunities that can, and should, be made available to people with vision and hearing impairments.

Observation of Significant People Reading and Writing for a Variety of Purposes: Children with good vision encounter print and its uses from the day they are born. This is especially true in highly literate societies and in families where literacy is central. Children in such environments routinely see people reading and writing for many different purposes. It is widely acknowledged that children who grow up in literate families generally have good reading skills; this is probably due to the motivation instilled in a child who sees the people he interacts with and admires using reading and writing regularly.

A child who is deaf-blind usually does not have opportunities to observe people reading and writing unless they are specifically provided. Here are some ideas for ways to create these experiences:

- Invite children and adults who are deaf-blind to observe as you use the computer, read the newspaper, write notes, check calendars, read signs, and engage in other literacy activities. Such observation will need to be tactual for the child who has no vision. Invite the child to “look” again and again. Place your hand slightly under the child’s hand (so the child’s hand remains free) and move toward what is happening, so the child is invited to explore both the materials and the actions. For specific ways to do this refer to the DB-LINK publication “Talking the Language of the Hands to the Hands.” Invite a child with low vision to witness these activities by being physically close. Be sure also to discuss what you are doing (“I’m checking my calendar. This is my calendar.”).
- Arrange specific opportunities for the child or adult who is blind to touch adults or young people as they read braille. A child who is blind needs to be exposed not only to braille itself, but also to the act of reading braille, and to its uses. This exposure must happen again and again in the context of meaningful relationships. The child must touch, again and again, the fingers of people she knows and admires as they read and write braille words, sentences, magazines, labels, and books. Only in this way will she be enabled to build a social concept of literacy—a concept that comes so naturally to the child with vision. These opportunities to observe people using braille will motivate her to read and write.
- Read stories to children who are deaf-blind, using speech and/or sign language as appropriate, with support of print, braille, related objects, and pictures (including tactile pictures), as appropriate to the child. Adapted materials (see below) will enable a child who is blind or who has low-vision to follow along tactually or to handle related materials that will give concrete references to the language in the stories. (Useful suggestions

for reading to children who are deaf can be found in the May/June 1999 issue of *Perspectives in Education and Deafness*.) Regular exposure to stories is important, as is repeating favorite stories or using predictable stories. All children like the sense of knowing and predicting. It encourages participation and involvement.

- During the course of each school day and each day at home notice all the many opportunities for children to see or touch print or braille. In the classroom, use accessible labels on rooms, shelves, coat hooks, and furniture, as well as object/picture/print/or braille schedules, lists, recipes and books. Long before a child is expected to read these things, he can benefit from observing others reading them and from seeing or touching these words naturally during the course of his daily routine. Make a practice of inviting children to be near as you use these forms of reading and writing.

Meaningful Conversations during Literacy Experiences: Conversational interaction ensures that the development of reading and writing occurs within meaningful social contexts. It enhances the communication abilities of the child or adult and provides the teacher or parent with continuous feedback about the child's or the adult's understanding. Children who can see and hear have countless opportunities for conversations about the written word—as they are read stories by their parents or teachers, as they walk or drive by signs in the community and ask about them, as they observe Mother writing a grocery list and chime in with their preferences, as they talk to Father about a newspaper story he has just read, as they show their teacher a picture they have just drawn and explain the scribbles written above it, as they ask for help spelling a word in a story they are writing, and as they discuss their feelings about a book they are reading with their fellow classmates. Children who are deaf-blind need parallel opportunities for interactions around literacy experiences. These might include the following:

- Pause a moment as a child notices a label (in print, braille, tactual object or marker), be aware of the child's reaction, and make a simple comment in gesture, speech, and/or sign language, as appropriate. This comment may serve as the beginning of a short conversation. For example, the child touches a coat hook label. Teacher says, "Yes, this is your coat hook. Mine is over here" (showing child). Pause. Wait to see what the child does. (He touches another hook and label.) "That one is John's." Pause. And so on. Taking the time to make a small conversation each time the child has a literacy experience—even before the child is reading—will give the child many opportunities to build both concepts and relationships.
- Pause often during story-reading times, notice and respect the child's reactions, and respond to them. This will make the story times enjoyable for both adult and child and will build concepts and relationships. Often the reactions of the child who is deaf-blind—especially when the child has little language—will be gestures and facial expressions, or even as subtle as tension and relaxation of muscles. Mirror and comment on each of these responses so the child becomes engaged in a turn taking process as the story progresses. Reading the story is thus not something being "done to" the child, but is a mutual activity between teacher (or parent or friend) and child. Such a conversation might look like this: Sammy is sitting in Father's lap. A mirror is propped on the table in front of them so Father can see Sammy's face. Father reads print with his eyes and moves his fingers along the braille under the print, while Sammy's hand follows. Then he signs, "The bear is soft," Sammy's hands following the signs by resting lightly on his father's hands. Father then gives Sammy a soft teddy bear from the "story box" accompanying the book (see below, under accessible materials). Father waits to give Sammy time to respond. Sammy touches the bear's face, and begins fingering the plastic nose. Father notices and touches the nose along with Sammy, his finger following his son's. He signs "Bear's nose" as Sammy feels the signs. Then Father touches Sammy's nose and signs "Sammy's nose." Pause. Sammy reaches up toward his father's face. Father laughs and puts his hand lightly under Sammy's hand to invite him to follow as he touches his own nose. He signs, "Yes. Daddy's nose." Then, back to the book. Father's hand again moves over the braille, with Sammy's hand following. Father speaks and signs, "The turtle is rough," and then gives Sammy a small plastic turtle with a rough shell. He again waits to see what Sammy will do. And so on...
- Use a dialogue journal with a child who is deaf-blind and who has some beginning reading and writing skills. A dialogue journal will allow her to express her own ideas freely and also to read the genuine response from her teacher about what she has written. Such a journal can be a conversation on paper that has short entries

written every day, either in print or in braille, as the student requires. Entries can range from very simple to quite complex. The students should be equal initiators of the topics in these conversations; the teacher's entries will serve to confirm the student's ability to communicate in writing about something that really interests her. The teacher can also model good language in his responses and can continue the conversation in natural ways, with comments and questions about the child's ideas, as well as adding his own related topics (see Bailes, 1999).

- Respond conversationally (and encourage classmates to do the same) to any drawing, proto-writing, or writing attempt made by the child or adult who is deaf-blind. Bringing an object-symbol can be regarded as a kind of proto-writing. So can any scribbling or use of writing or braille materials. All drawings and attempts at drawing (including use of clay) are forms of self-expression which, when responded to with comments and interest, lay the foundation for the child's confidence in herself as a writer.

Accessibility of Literacy Materials: Accessibility includes the adaptation of materials to compensate for sensory losses and physical disabilities. It takes into account cognitive understanding and individual interests. Adapting books and materials for the individual's sensory, cognitive, and motor needs is necessary to give the child access to the information. And, as with oral and signed language, unless the child receives a great deal of accessible print or braille input, she cannot produce any meaningful output in print or braille. All children and adults need books that are interesting to them: books that have accessible print or braille, pictures, or tactile illustrations; books that are about subjects that are interesting; and books that use language that is appropriate to the child's or adult's individual level of understanding. To the extent that they are possible and practical, they also need accessible labels and other forms of all the pragmatic uses of literacy mentioned above.

Because each child and adult is so unique, many books and materials will need to be made or adapted specially (see the section below on individual experiences). The task of adapting books and materials is one that a teacher and child can often do together, or the child can do with another classmate. For example, the child can participate in braille or printing words (or watch as the teacher does it), or in making and gluing tactile pictures to pages, or in the writing of the stories themselves. This participation serves to help the child understand how things are created, cuts down on out-of-class preparation time for the teacher, and gives classmates something to share and do together.

Accessibility also necessitates adapting the environment so the child or adult has the time and physical ability to interact with materials, as well as the social encouragement and motivation to do so. Here are some specific suggestions:

- Accumulate braille books and other materials and/or books-on tape if these are useful. The child also needs a slate and stylus and/or a brailler (*Editor's note: this is the responsibility of your teacher certified in the area of visual impairment*).
- Make a "story box" to accompany a simple braille or print story. Dolls, toys, and other "props" related to story content can be kept in a box alongside the book, so that when the story is read, there are concrete representations of the characters and major items in the story. These will greatly facilitate the child's understanding of the story, and will also make conversational interaction much more likely and easy.
- Adapt storybooks by using textured pictures to help a young child read the pictures. For example, when reading the board book version of *The Hungry Caterpillar*, texture the caterpillar with felt. Every time the child touches the caterpillar, assume he is looking at the picture with his fingers (and with his eyes, if he has some vision). Comment on the caterpillar: "There's that hungry caterpillar." Pause and observe what the child does and respond to that. When parents read to young children, they often don't actually read the stories verbatim. They use the pictures in the storybook and often story time means quality social and cognitive time. This opportunity should also be available to children with deafblindness.
- Provide a child who has low vision with large-print materials and adaptations. Recent computer advances

have made these adaptations much easier. A closed-circuit television (CCTV) available in the classroom can enlarge any print placed under it and is useful for many students with low vision. Often a black permanent marker is sufficient to make print accessible. Simply taping modified print and simplified sentences over the ones in a ready-made book can make it accessible for a child with low vision.

- Give props to a child with physical limitations to help her to handle reading materials by herself. A stand can hold a book at an appropriate angle on a wheelchair tray and will enable a child to see it well without needing someone to hold it for her. Page “fluffers” (bits of foam or other material glued to the edges of the pages to hold them apart) and/or tabs on each page can enable a child with limited physical dexterity to turn the pages of a book independently. Voice output switches can be used so a child who is non-speaking, hard-of-hearing, and motor involved can recite a line in a nursery rhyme or repetitive book.
- Supply appropriate writing materials to a child with visual and/or physical limitations. Black markers, large crayons, special grips (which may be as simple as tape wrapped around the marker to make it more graspable), adapted computer keyboards and/or screens with large print and picture display, head-sticks or laser pointers that allow a child or adult who cannot use his hands to use a keyboard with head movements, adapted brailers with extended keys—these are just some of the ways that a child or adult who may have difficulty writing may be aided in doing so.
- Provide sign language for a child who is deaf and being read to. This will allow real access to the language being represented by the print or braille. Ideally, the parents or the teachers will know sign language fluently and will have the skills to comment on the child’s interests as well as sign the story. Even learning the most salient signs in the book will be helpful to the child.
- Adapt the language level and concepts in standard textbooks and reading materials for the older child or adult who is deaf-blind. These need to suit the unique understanding of the particular child. As the child grows in age and experience, her interests will often exceed her reading ability. This does not mean that her reading experience should be limited. With adapted materials, each child can read about subjects and ideas that are interesting. The child will thus be appropriately challenged to continue to expand her concepts and reading abilities. The fields of Deaf Education and English as a Second Language have much to offer in the way of materials and methods of teaching those for whom English is not the first language. Teachers of children who are deaf-blind need similar knowledge of how to assess a child’s syntactical structures, vocabulary, and idiomatic understanding; how to adapt materials accordingly; and how to help a child progress in these areas. The help of a deaf-blind specialist will often be necessary to accurately measure the reading skills of a child who is deaf-blind and to design appropriate instructional strategies.

Accessibility also means that the child is physically able to get the materials and is encouraged to do so. Each classroom should have a library where books are displayed at a level where the children can reach them. Writing and drawing materials should also be accessible. In addition, the child should have time to use these materials. In the home, too, there can be a labeled box, bin, or shelf designated for books, pictures and related materials.

Connection of Literacy to Experiences and Interests: A child who is deaf-blind and who also may have additional disabilities usually has unique and limited experiences. Often such a child’s world extends no further than the reach of her hands; her concepts are therefore very basic and concrete. The teacher must think about how to gradually expand the children’s experiences and thereby assist them in building concepts about the world beyond themselves. Experiences become the vehicle for developing concepts, upon which language and literacy can be mapped.

The experience of a child who is deaf-blind differs so significantly from most children’s experience that standard reading programs are not usually effective in the beginning stages of literacy learning. Reading and writing need to be meaningfully connected to the hands-on explorations, experiences, and interests of each child who is deaf-blind. Here are some ways to make those connections:

- **Use key vocabulary:** The first words a child learns to write and read are especially important. They will often determine whether or not that child becomes excited about reading and writing as a key to future learning. If the teacher can listen carefully to a child and give the child words to read that match that child's own deepest concerns and excitements, then reading and writing will forever be connected with power and interest, and the child's motivation for learning will last well into the future. Literacy and its power will be unlocked. (Techniques for presenting key vocabulary can be found in *Teacher* by Sylvia Ashton-Warner.)
- **Use memory boxes or memory books:** Each time a child who is deaf-blind has a meaningful experience there is the possibility of documenting that experience in some way. This documentation can become the beginning of literacy. For a child with no vision, a "memory box," or a series of "memory boxes," can be made by saving objects associated with meaningful activities. A leaf, a stone, or a twig can bring back a memory of a walk in the park; a shell can help recall a trip to the beach; a straw, a cup, or a napkin can recall a meal in a restaurant, and so on. Bringing these things home or back to the classroom in a pocket, and keeping them in a box, can serve as a kind of diary. The box can become the source of many enjoyable conversations and is a real beginning of literacy. A similar book can be made by gluing or taping objects to pages or by using photographs or drawings for the child who can see them. Print or braille labels—first in the form of single words, later as simple sentences—can begin to give meaning to writing.
- **Write poetry:** Poetry-writing opportunities can help students enjoy language for its own sake and learn to play with words and word combinations. Magnetic poetry sets, in print or braille, can often stimulate students' creativity.
- **Write experience stories:** As the child begins to be interested in words and in their power to express things, short stories about the child's own experiences (written either in print or braille, as appropriate) are wonderful learning tools. These stories can be written together with the child and his classmates, drawing from them the meaningful aspects of each experience. (See *Remarkable Conversations*, pp. 195-196 and *Perspectives in Education and Deafness*, pp.36-38 for specific techniques for writing and using experience stories.)
- **Create journals:** Journal writing can begin very early for the child who is deaf-blind and is an important part of teaching the child confidence in her own ability to express herself. Even a single word brailled or printed, or a simple drawing, can constitute an exciting form of expression for a child. Journals, unlike more formal written work, should not be corrected, since correction can inhibit the child's enthusiasm. A short journal time every day is a valuable addition to a child's schedule. (See *Remarkable Conversations*, pp.199-200 for specific techniques for using journal writing.) Journals and logs can also be used during academic lesson times—in conjunction with science, math, literature, or social studies, for example—to reinforce learning and to make writing experiences relevant to each child's unique experiences.

Regular Opportunities For Independent Use Of Reading And Writing Materials: Children with adequate vision routinely have the opportunity to scribble, draw, use computer keyboards, look at magazines, read signs, or thumb through books. In an interesting study, it was noted that while only 15 % of children entering school believe they can read, fully 90% believe they can write (Rebecca Edmiaston). Scribbling and drawing are a kind of proto-writing. In the child's mind, they are a form of expression equivalent to what grown-ups do when they write. Opportunities for independent use of materials build confidence. Parallel opportunities need to be provided for the child or adult who cannot see or who has low vision and for the one who has physical limitations. Very often teachers of children who are deaf-blind or who have multiple disabilities are reluctant to let the child have genuinely independent experiences of exploration. But these are necessary. Make the following resources available:

- Classroom or home library, with accessible materials, and regular free time to explore
- Time and opportunities to use writing and drawing materials—crayons, markers, paints—without teacher direction
- Adapted writing and drawing materials to accommodate for physical limitations (see above, under accessibility)

- Free use of drawing programs on a computer
- Free use of clay or playdough for a child who is blind (see Fukurai, S.)
- Texture-making materials (such as stylus, shells, stamps, wood, pastry rollers) for use with clay, playdough, or paper
- Opportunities (for the child who is blind) to play with and explore a slate and stylus and a Braillewriter when available

The child who is deaf-blind should have frequent visual and/or tactual access to others who are also engaging in free exploration of materials. Simply placing a child in front of some clay, and then sitting and watching while she uses it, will not be as useful to her as joining her in using clay for free expression. Without the social aspect, it becomes a task that has little meaning. Knowing that others also express themselves in a variety of ways gives motivation to the child and opens up more possibilities. Be extremely careful not to impose your own expectations on the child. Simply engage in her own form of expression and be gently attentive to whatever the child seeks to do by herself.

Summary: Literacy can unlock countless worlds for the child or adult who is deaf-blind. Each of us who knows someone who is deaf-blind can invent ways for him or her to expand their possibilities for reading and writing. We can begin by sharing with them our own reading and writing experiences and by making materials accessible for them. We can encourage self-expression with gesture, clay, scribble, braille, writing—whatever forms each person can use. We can also regard each experience that we share with a person who is deaf-blind as a potential opportunity for literacy—we can save an object from the experience, we can write a story about it along with the child or adult, we can draw a picture and encourage the child to draw a picture, and we can write a letter or an e-mail to them about the experience. The opportunities are numerous. We are all inventors. We have much to learn together and much excitement to share. As we seek to share literacy skills with those who are deaf-blind, we can be continually aware of, and respectful of, the doors that are being opened, not only for those who are deaf-blind, but also for those who can see and hear and who thus have the opportunity to find out about the experiences of people whose hands and bodies and eyes and ears know the world in unique ways.

For Further Reading

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Materials

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National Family Association for Deaf-Blind

SUPPORTING PERSONS WHO ARE DEAF-BLIND AND THEIR FAMILIES

The National Family Association for Deaf-Blind (NFAD) is a non-profit, volunteer-based family association. Our philosophy is that individuals who are deaf-blind are valued members of society and are entitled to the same opportunities and choices as other members of the community.

- ⇒ NFADB is the largest national network of families focusing on issues surrounding deaf blindness.
- ⇒ NFADB Supports Families
- ⇒ NFADB encourages the founding and strengthening of organizations dedicated to assisting families of persons who are deaf-blind in each state.
- ⇒ NFADB advocates for all persons who are deaf-blind of any age and cognitive ability.
- ⇒ NFADB shares information related to deaf-blindness and provides resources and referrals.
- ⇒ NFADB publishes a tri-annual newsletter which addresses topics and activities of interest to parents and family members.
- ⇒ NFADB is national in scope.
- ⇒ NFADB supports national policies to benefit people who are deaf-blind.
- ⇒ NFADB works with national projects such as DBLink, the National Technical Assistance Consortium (NTAC), the National Coalition on Deaf-Blindness and the American Association of Deaf-Blind (AADB)
- ⇒ NFADB collaborates with professionals to strengthen consumer and family representation.
- ⇒ NFADB provides Regional Directors who serve as resources to families and professionals in their region.

More information about NFADB is on their web site: www.nfadb.org or writing to:

NFADB, 111 Middle Neck Road
Sands Point, NY 11050
Phone: 800.255.0411 - FAX 516.883.9060

NFADB has an Executive Board and ten regional directors. Each region covers several states.

Utah is in Region 8 and the contact information for the director of that region is:

Corry Hill, 2032 W Rocky Road,
Taylorsville, UT 84118
acorrynfadb@comcast.net



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Our Website Has the Following Things to Offer YOU

The **NEW** web address is

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdespec/SD-Deafblind.htm>

Check out the following items:

- **ECEA Regulations on Eligibility for Deafblindness**
- **Deafblind Census Forms**
- **Fact Sheets**
- **Literacy Modality and Communication Learning Plans**
- **Newsletters**
- **Technical Assistance Forms**
- **Lending Library Inventory and Request Forms**
- **Information on the Summer Family Retreat**
- **Links to State National Resources**





New Items in the Lending Library

S17 Pre Feeding Skills: A Comprehensive Resource for Mealtime Development, by Suzanne Evans Morris, PH.D, CCC-SLP and Marsha Dunn Klein, M.ED., OTR/L, 2000. The book that therapists have depended on for years to give them a comprehensive look at feeding skills has been greatly expanded and revised.

S14 The Educator's Guide to Feeding Children with Disabilities, by Dianne Koontz Lowman and Suzanne McKeever Murphy, Brookes Publishing, 1999. These reproducible pages help you provide parents and caregivers with exactly the feeding and nutrition information they need. The illustrated handouts include extensive information on: Nutrition Guidelines, Breast- and Bottle-Feeding.

H15 Sign Language for the Family: A Sign Activity Reference Booklet, by Susan Watkins, SKI*HI Institute, 1989. Developed to help families and parent advisors use the SKI*HI Home Total Communication video tapes effectively. This booklet is a follow-up reference for the video tapes.

S16 Mealtime Participation Guide, by Marsha Dunn Klein, M.Ed., OTR/L and Suzanne Evans Morris, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, Therapy Skill Builders, 1999. In this practical resource for feeding professionals, authors focus on mealtime skills rather than the more traditional feeding skills approach.

E29 Building Character and Confidence in Young Children with Special Needs, by Phyllis Leavitt, Hope INC, 2001. This is a handbook of discussions, ideas, activities, and inspiring vignettes that will help parents and family members foster character and confidence in young children with special needs.

H16 The INSITE Model: A Model of Home Intervention for Infant, Toddler, and Preschool Aged Multihandicapped Sensory Impaired Children (Volumes 1 & 2), 1998 The INSITE curriculum originated from a need to provide home-based programming for multihandicapped sensory impaired children who did not 'fit' existing curricula for hearing impaired or visually impaired children.

104. Discover IDEA / Descubramos IDEA: Supporting Achievement for Children with Disabilities, IDEA Partnerships and Council for Exceptional Children.

G24 Implementing IDEA: A Guide for Principals, IDEA Partnerships, 2001. The principal's role is critical to success as public schools strive to meet the challenge of implementing the new IDEA requirements. Through their leadership, principals can ensure that the school organization, climate, and staff development activities, as well as curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices reflect research on effective schooling and sound practice.

G25 Oh Behave! Sensory Processing and Behavioral Strategies: A Practical Guide for Clinicians, Teachers, and Parents, by MaryAnn Colby Trott, M.A., Therapy Skill Builders, 2002. This book is intended for professionals and parents who want to understand the 'why' of challenging behavior and provide instruction and support for children who need their help in changing challenging behaviors.

G26 SenseAbilities: Understanding Sensory Integration, Maryann Colby Trott, M.A. with Marci K. Laurel, M.A., CCC-SLP, and Susan L. Windeck, M.S., OTR/L, Therapy Skill Builders, 1993 Imagine not being able to make sense of your senses-of being unable to accurately process what you see, hear, feel, or experience every moment of the day. Imagine being a child who has a sensory integrative disorder. This sensitive book, written in easy-to-understand language for parents of children who have problems integrating sensory input, opens the door to understanding and treating the disorder.

G27 Parentally –Placed Students with Disabilities, The Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative, 2002. This article is intended to provide an overview of the IDEA, its regulations, and relevant case law regarding parentally-placed students with disabilities in private schools.

G 31 Creative Constructions: Technologies that Make Adaptive Design Accessible, Affordable, Inclusive and Fun, by Molly Campbell and Alex Truesdell, 2000. This book takes away the intimidation that many people feel about making light technology assistive devices. Because of its many great illustrations, you can pick up the book and quickly find a beginning for a project.

P12 Special Siblings: Growing up with Some One with a Disability, by Mary McHugh, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2003. Emotional and enlightening, Special Siblings captures the joys and challenges of having-and being- a “special sibling.”

G32 Person-Centered Planning: Research, Practice, and Future Directions, by Steve Holburn and Peter M. Vietze, Paul H. Brookes Publishing, Company, 2002. How can all members of a service team get to know an individual’s interests and dreams—and help that person realize life-improving possibilities?

G33 Teaching Self-Determination to Students with Disabilities, Michael L. Wehmeyer, Martin Agran, and Carolyn Hughes, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co, 1998. Includes instructional methods for teaching basic self-determination skills to students with disabilities.

G34 To Love this Life, Quotations by Helen Keller, American Federation of the Blind, 2000. “This volume is testimony to the many facets of Helen Keller, but most of all to the legacy of her life. .”

G35 The Transition Handbook: Strategies High School Teachers Use that Work!, by Carolyn Hughes & Erik W. Carter, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company, 2000. “Full of options for tailoring approaches to individual students’ needs and preferences, these strategies help develop supports in school, at work, and in the community while they increase students’ social competence.”

105 Discover the Magic of Reading, APH (1995). This brochure and the accompanying video provide a compelling account of the value of reading to young children with a visual impairment. The beneficial effects of reading aloud are apparent for children who are sighted and perhaps, more so for those who are visually impaired.

G36 Learning to Read and Write (Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children), by Susan B. Neuman, Carol Copple, and Sue Bredekamp, National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2000. The International Reading Association /National Association for the Education of Young children joint position statement on developmentally appropriate ways of teaching children to read and write comes to life here with photographs, concrete guidelines, and exciting ideas for the classroom.

V86 Developmental Guidelines for Infants with Visual Impairment (A Manual for Early Intervention), by Amanda Hall Lueck, Ph. D. Deborah Chen, Ph. D. and Linda S. Kekelis, Ph D., American Printing House for the Blind, 1997. This manual presents developmental guidelines for infants with visual impairment from birth to 24 months who have a wide range of vision loss.

H18 The Young Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child: A Family –Centered Approach to Early Education, by Barbara Bodner-Johnson and Marilyn Sass-Lehrer, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company, 2003. As deaf and hard of hearing children are identified at an increasingly early age, professionals need to expand their knowledge about early intervention and education for these young children and their families.

G37 The PVC Book 11: More Simple Possibilities, by Diane Brians, Assistive Technology Partners, CDE, SWAAAC, 2003. This book and the original PVC Book of Simple Possibilities are the result of

many years of trials and tribulations encountered by many parents, therapists, teachers, and assistive technology specialists who have attempted to make something just as good or better than what is already out there, while trying to keep cost to a minimum.

P13 Communication Fact Sheets for Parents, The National Technical Assistance Consortium for Children and Young Adults who are Deaf-blind, 2002. It is important to point out the purpose of these FACTS SHEETS is to provide information to parents and service providers so that they can better understand the communication and language modes and systems that may be appropriate for many children and youth who are deaf-blind.

V87 Making Life More Livable: Simple Adaptations for Living at Home after Vision Loss, American Federation for the Blind, 2002. The newly revised and updated Making Life More Livable is the essential guide for adults experiencing vision loss and is an invaluable resource for their family and friends. Full of practical tips and illustrated by numerous photographs.

V88 Tools for Selecting Appropriate Learning Media, by Hilda Caton, Ed.D., Editor, American Printing House for the Blind, Inc. 1994. Selecting appropriate learning media for children who are blind and visually impaired is one of the most serious issues confronting today's educators.

G38 School Function Assessment, by Wendy Coster, Theresa Deeney, Jane Haltiwanger and Stephen Haley, Therapy Skill Builders, 1998. The School Function Assessment (SFA) was developed in response to a clear need for an assessment tool that could help guide program planning for students with disabilities who are attending elementary school.

V89 Parents and Visually Impaired Infants, by American Printing House for the Blind, 1989. This was a 3 year project of the Blind Babies Foundation. The theoretical framework for the PAVII Project is based on the transactional model of development which views an infant's developmental outcome as an interaction between the infant's biological attributes, social agents, and the physical environment.

V90 Educating Students who have Visual Impairments with Other Disabilities, by Sharon Z. Sacks and Rosanne K. Silberman, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company, 1998. Edited by leaders in the fields of visual impairments and severe disabilities, this practical text brings together expertise from a broad range of disciplines to assist general educators, special educators, related-services personnel, and families in developing exemplary methods and strategies to meet the unique educational needs of students who have visual impairments with other disabilities.

A37 Alternative Approaches to Assessing Young Children, by Angela Losardo and Angela Notari-Syverson, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company, 2001. Sometimes traditional approaches to assessment are too confining to accurately uncover the needs of young children who are culturally, linguistically, and developmentally diverse.

C35 Augmentative and Alternative Communication, by David R. Beukelman and Pat Mirenda, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company, 2002. Written from an intervention perspective, this authoritative volume promotes a comprehensive approach to designing and providing AAC services for individuals with a full range of congenital and acquired communication disorders, including those associated with cerebral palsy, autism, aphasia, and traumatic brain injury.

G39 Sibshops: Workshops for Siblings of Children with Special Needs, by Donald J. Meyer and Patricia F. Vadasy, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company, 1994. Children who have brothers and sisters with special needs have needs of their own—needs that are often overlooked. This practical resource describes Sibshops, the award-winning program that brings together 8- to 13-year olds to express their good-and maybe not so good-feelings about having brothers and sisters with disabilities.

V91 Solutions for Success: A Training Manual for Working with Older People who are Visually Impaired, by Alberta Orr and Priscilla Rogers, 2003. Solutions for Success is a clear, easy-to-follow program designed to help anyone who works with older people-especially staff in assisted living facilities, nursing homes, continuing care retirement communities, home health care settings, and senior centers-learn the effects of vision loss and teach individuals who are visually impaired to carry out their everyday activities safely and independently.

V92 Instructional Strategies for Braille Literacy, by Dian P. Wormsley and Frances Mary D'Andrea, American Foundation for the Blind, 1997. Instructional Strategies for Braille Literacy offers instructors specific, practical strategies for the teaching of Braille reading and writing. This volume is part of a series focusing on Braille literacy from the American Foundation for the Blind.

V93 AFB Directory of Services for Blind and Visually Impaired Persons in the United States and Canada, American Federation for the Blind, 2001. The most important information tool in the blindness and visual impairment field.

E 30 Parent Early Childhood Education Series, by the Overbrook School for the Blind, American Printing House for the Blind, 1990. An information series especially designed to help parents of blind and visually impaired infants and young children work with their children in the home to develop increased skills and levels of sensory awareness.

D93 2003 Summer Institute on Literacy for ALL! , July 2003, Karen Christianson.

A38 HomeTalk: A Family Assessment of Children who are Deafblind, Developed by the Bringing It All Back Home Project, 2003. *HomeTalk* is an assessment tool for parents and care providers of children who are deafblind and who have other disabilities. Its purpose is to help you participate in the planning of your child's education program. *HomeTalk* can provide a broad picture of your child's skills, special interests, and personality.



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Items Requested: _____

Please sign the following statement:

I understand that it is my responsibility to return these items in good condition within one month of receipt.

Signature

Date

Please mail or fax to:

Gina Quintana
Colorado Department of
Education
201 E. Colfax Avenue, #300
Denver, CO 80203
303-866-6811



Calendar of Events

2003	2003	2003	2003	2003	2003	2003
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November 6-8 **Charting a New Course: Transition Planning for Students with Visual Impairments - Aurora, CO**
Contact: Tanni Anthony - (303) 866-6681

November 13-15 **Parents Encouraging Parents - Grand Junction**
Online Registration www.cde.state.co.uws/cdesped/pep-new.htm
Contact: Katherine Keck (303) 866-6846

November 15 **Tangible Communication Symbols - Denver**
Contact: Tanni Anthony (303) 866-6605

2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004
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January 16 **Affective Needs Conference, Holiday Inn- DIA**
Contact: lkthoennes@aol.com

February 13-14 **Courage to Risk Collaborative Conference - Colorado Springs.**
Contact: www.couragetorisk.org

CSAPA administration window will be from February 2 through March 12, 2004.

April 1-3 **Parents Encouraging Parents in Estes Park**
Online Registration www.cde.state.co.uws/cdesped/pep-new.htm
Contact: Katherine Keck (303) 866-6846

April 14-18 **Council for Exceptional Children Annual Convention - New Orleans**
Contact: conteduc@cec.sped.org

Communication, Clear As Day!



In the Fall 2002 copy of *Vibrations* I wrote an article titled "Constantly Consistent" which was about a little boy by the name of Sam. Key players of Sam's educational team met last fall to develop an object communication system for him that was *consistent* across all of the environments that Sam encounters.

I recently received an email from Sam's mother to let me know what is happening with Sam and his new school. Sam started kindergarten this past August. Luckily for him, his intervener, Kelly, is able to attend the new school with him for part of his week. Kelly, along with other team members, is quite consistent with using the objects for Sam during his transitions. Two of the objects that Sam encounters are (1) a piece of sheepskin fabric which represents home; and (2) a small wooden block with fine sandpaper on it which represents school. The show him 2 objects in the same location, and he either eye gazes, or puts his hand on the object of the activity he wants. On particular afternoon, Sam was having a rough time at school. He started the afternoon whimpering and his teacher began to play the piano, thinking this would help. His mother thought he'd be fine, so she left. Well, after a few moments, he began to howl and was quite upset. Kelly showed him several choices by having him touch them and nothing seemed to help. She finally had him touch the 2 objects, the one for home and the one for school. She handed him the one for school, and he continued to fuss. She handed him the one for home and he calmed. Kelly thought, "Let's make sure this is what he wants." She handed him the school object, he cried. She handed him the home object, he calmed. So, unable to contact Sam's mom, Kelly (with prior permission), put Sam in his wheelchair and walked him home. She laid him on his spot on the floor and he rested. The next day, Sam stayed home, because he had a cold.

Communication, "clear as day," as Sam's mom says. Sam was able, through his object cues, let his intervener know that he didn't feel well and wanted to go home. According to his mother, "this was Sam's first meaningful (unstaged) exchange he has had with someone using a formal communication system. He made a real choice and it answered a question that we had. We weren't testing him or doing the 'drill,' and at that time he had no outward signs of getting sick." With consistency and practice, object systems can work! **Kudos** to Kelly, who honored Sam's communication!



Mom's Support Group

Come and join some of the Mom's for Breakfast and Networking. We will be discussing the upcoming Family Learning Retreat and any other topics the moms wish to talk about. This is a relaxing time to catch up and network. We will be meeting at the Village Inn on the corner of 6th Avenue and Simms in Lakewood. Please call Shannon Cannizzaro if you have any questions or need directions. We look forward to seeing you there. The dates for the meetings are: November 21st, January 20th, and February 19th.

Experience Books -

Gretel Sampson, Deafblind Consultant, W. Ross Macdonald School

All of us that work with individuals who are deafblind are constantly looking for effective ways to communicate. One way to have a meaningful conversation is to use an Experience Book. The W. Ross Macdonald School in Canada developed the Experience Book. The following questions and answers will help you understand why and how these books can be used with individuals with deafblindness.

What is an Experience Book?

An Experience Book is a personal book that contains pages that represent experiences that an individual who is deafblind has had. These experiences could be special days, fun and interesting daily events, changes in a child's life, achievements, anticipated future events and/or emotional experiences.

Why Should I Use An Experience Book?

Many of us make scrapbook pages or keep journals about events that happen in our lives. We do this because we like to share with others and remind ourselves of fun things that we have experienced. A book about oneself is very motivational.

Individuals with deafblindness can use Experience Books to remind themselves of things that they have done. They can be used to teach and review concepts and reinforce language experiences. Experience Books are individualized and are made to meet the unique needs of the individual with deafblindness.

How Do I Make An Experience Book Page?

First, find an activity or event that the individual with deafblindness has experienced. Always involve the individual, it is their book not yours. Gather different objects or textures that were used in the activity. Together make the page that represents the activity. For example, if an individual had the experience of going to the beach, objects that could be used might be seashells, sand or a shovel. The page might include a picture of the individual at the beach with the sand and shells in a baggie stapled to the page. This way the individual could open the baggie and feel the sand and shells and remember the activity. Caption the items in the person's voice. For example, "I went to the beach. I loved playing with the sand and shells." Remember the page relates to what the individual experienced, this may be different from your intended purpose.

Experience Books are a fun way for an individual with deafblindness to have a conversation with others about things they have done. It is important to make the page as soon as possible, so the activity is still fresh in one's memory. Always pick a time when the individual is best able to attend to the activity. It is also important to pick experiences that are most meaningful to the individual.

If you would like more information on Experience Books or other literacy activities for students who are deafblind, contact the Colorado Services to Children with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss at (303) 866-6681 or (303) 866-6605.

TANGIBLE COMMUNICATION SYMBOLS

November 15, 2003

Phil Schweigert is returning to Colorado for a one-day training specific to Tangible Communication Symbols. The full day session will be held at the Red Lion Hotel, which is located just off of Interstate 70 on Quebec Avenue, in Denver on November 15, 2003. Areas to be covered include

- What does everyone need to know about Presymbolic Communication?
- What are Tangible Symbols (2-D and 3-D communication symbols)?
- Who is a Candidate for Using Tangible Symbols?
- Where to Begin (levels of response)?
- How to Implement and Monitor Use of Tangible Symbols?

Video case studies of students across the age range of public school will be used. The training will be offered for 8 clock hours of credit (for full attendance) and is limited to 100 people.

Please make your check out to: **CAER** and send it with your registration form. PLEASE PRINT NEATLY. Mail your registration, with your check, to Tanni Anthony, CDE, 201 East Colfax, Denver, CO 80203. [If you have questions, email Tanni at Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us)

Name: _____ Discipline: _____

Address _____

Email: _____

I have enclosed my registration fee: _____ (\$40. early bird fee by Nov. 5, 2003)

_____ (\$60. late fee after Nov. 5, 2003)

Special Accommodations Needed (sign language interpreter, braille): _____

If you are working with a child/student who has combined vision and hearing loss, please complete this section. Your registration will be given top priority:

My role with a child who is deafblind (parent / professional): _____

Name of child: _____

School that the child attends: _____

Other team members who would like to join me in this training: _____

You will receive a confirmation email /letter once your application has been accepted

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