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KEEPING IN TOUCH!

A Newsletter for Parents and Service Providers
of Colorado Children Who Are Blind/Visually Impaired
January—February 2021

A (Work)Force, A Community, A Family

By Tanni Anthony

The definition of *profession* according to one web source is, “a paid occupation, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification.” Another definition by online Merriam-Webster adds a bit more clarity: “A calling requiring specialized knowledge and often long and intensive academic preparation ... and ... “the whole body of persons engaged in a calling.” Thus, are the professions of being a teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) and/or an orientation and mobility (O&M) specialist, brailleists, and BVI-specific paraeducators.

Yes, we are a paid occupation and one involving extensive training and credentialing. We are paid on local salary schedules and in the hard work, smiles, and achievements of our shared students. As for training, Colorado TVIs complete a comprehensive university training program and then demonstrate braille competency within their first year of employment. Colorado O&M specialists complete a rigorous university training program and must pass a test to be nationally ACVREP certified. Now combine the two sets of training and credentialing requirements, as well over half of our TVIs are also O&M Specialists! Professional training continues over the course of a career lifespan with the many ongoing updates specific to ongoing new technology, a recently new braille code, new assessments, improved strategies, a better understanding of brain-based visual impairment ... all on top of changes of academic learning standards and a steady drumbeat of new general education initiatives.

There are just about 100 TVIs and 60 O&M Specialists working currently in Colorado early intervention / childhood programs and school districts. Some administrative units have one person to represent both professions across the many miles, some have dyads, and some have up to six teammates. We also have over 20 brailleists working across Colorado, some with Library of Congress certification and many with CDE Braille Competency certification. Topping off our workforce are many BVI-specific paraeducators or techs who do daily close-up and personal work with our students.

We are a small, but mighty body of persons engaged in a true calling that came to the field mostly because for love of children, a commitment to teaching, and the lure of a profession that brings joy and challenge. Our profession brings and unites amazing colleagues. This is where we shine—we are a (work)force, a community, and a family. Truly a profession to cherish. Thankful to and for each of you!

Table of Contents

A (Work)force, a Family	1	Orientation and Mobility	26
Low Vision	2	Calendar of Events	28
CAER News	3	Connecting the Dots	33
Check It Out	5	Transition Information	38
Teacher Well Being Support Line	13	Just for Parents	40
Colorado Deaf-Blind Grant	14	Jobs in Colorado	45
Resources and Materials	17	Vision Coalition	46
CDE Happenings	19	Colorado Connections	59



LOW VISION EVALUATION



Low Vision Regional Evaluation Clinics for School Year 2021-2022

Region	Dates	Site Coordinator(s)
Western	TBD for SY 2021-22	Angela Sims
Southern	TBD for SY 2021-22	Debbie Haberkorn
Northern	TBD for SY 2021-22	Liz Wieder
Metro	TBD for SY 2021-22	Morgan Fitzpatrick and Karin Hensel

We Are Working on a Game Plan for School Year 2020-21

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have cancelled our Low Vision Evaluation Clinics for this school year. The good news is that they are funded for school year 2020-21 and we will soon start working with the identified Site Coordinators and our LVE Team to set dates for the Fall 2021 into Winter 2022. We are forging ahead with great optimism and ties to recommended safety protocols ahead.

If you believe you have a student who will benefit from a LVE clinic, be in touch with one of the Site Coordinator in your area. We just need numbers at this point to confirm the need for a one to a three day clinic. The team will be as flexible as possible in the Western Region to accommodate the vast geography of our students. Our hope is to be able to announce clinic dates in the next newsletters.

Celebrating Low Vision Resources

Read the Building the APH Low Vision Toolkit blog (<https://www.aph.org/building-your-low-vision-toolkit/>) for product suggestions to make your student's academic and daily living experiences more accessible.





The Colorado Chapter for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired

CAER Works for You!

Are you a member of the Association of the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired? CAER, our State Chapter, hopes so! Check out the many good things our Colorado State chapter is doing for you and for us!

They maintain the [CAER website](https://aerbvi.org/about/chapters/colorado/), that includes updated information regarding Colorado AER. (<https://aerbvi.org/about/chapters/colorado/>)

To get there from the [national AER website](https://aerbvi.org/) (<https://aerbvi.org/>)

- Go to **About** at the top and pull down to AER Chapters
- Then find **Colorado** on the left side and click on it

This will take you to the [Colorado Chapter for the Association of Education and Rehabilitation webpage](#).

Update News

The International AER Conference has been rescheduled for July 20-24, 2022 in St, Louis, MO.

AER E- Learning



Check out their course offerings at:

<https://www.pathlms.com.aer.courses>

The courses are offered for ACVREP course credit. AER members receive a discount on registration fees.



The Colorado Chapter for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired



CAER Annual Awards

By CAER President Heather Solberg

These awards are given annually to professionals working with those people who are blind or visually impaired. Each of you gives above and beyond what is required, and you all deserve recognition. Please nominate someone who is providing dedicated service to our profession in one of the categories below. A brief narrative describing this person's achievements, as well as letters of support may be emailed to Heather Solberg at caerboard@gmail.com.

Here are the awards and the criteria to be considered:

President's Award: This award recognizes outstanding leadership in service to people with visual disabilities. True to its name, the current President will select and present this award.

Gary Schmidt Award: This award honors an AER member who works directly with students/clients. Nomination criteria include; ethical standards, sense of humor, degree of excellence in job performance, and professionalism. The CAER Board review the nominations for this award.

Connections Award: This award recognizes cooperative efforts that cross organizational lines, perhaps even groups working collaboratively to benefit our field. The CAER Board considers the nominations.

Lifetime Achievement Award: This award is presented to professionals who have given of themselves to students/clients throughout their career and are preparing for retirement.

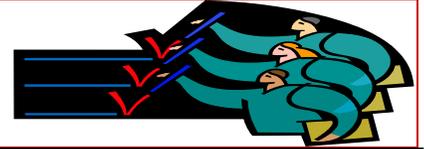
Ken Neve Award: This award is to recognize an AER professional in the area specific to orientation and mobility. The CAER Board considers the nominations.

Nominations for the awards will be gathered and then more information will be given about presenting the awards in at the spring breakfast banquet.

The CAER Board thanks you for your membership
and dedication to our field.



CHECK IT OUT!



CDE COVID—19 Resources

- [CDE Website](#)
- [CDE COVID Resources](#)
- [CDE Office of Special Education COVID resources:](#)

The CDE Office of Special Education COVID resource webpage has many topics specific to federal/state guidance, topics for instruction, disability-specific resources, and parent support resources. There are also a series of Q and A topics.

Also the [CDE Visual Impairment, Including Blindness webpage](#) has been built out.

[Google Drive with BVI COVID Resources:](#) thanks to Nancy Cozart, Elsa D’Angelo, Karin Hensel, Julie Hutchinson, Jamie Lugo, and Tanni Anthony. This link does not require that you have a Google account.

Tactile Act Club

This group is going strong thanks to the organizational efforts by Rishika Kartik. Check out her [blogpost of our December TAC meeting](#) as well as her [2020 Year in Review blog](#) with her favorite highlights of 2020 and how current events have shifted her perspective about accessibility, Tactile Art, and inclusivity.

The Tactile Art Club meetings for 2021 will continue on the **3rd Tuesday of each month at 5 p.m. MST**. Please mark the dates on your calendar and stay tuned for more details about the remaining TAC meetings on March 16, April 20, May 18, June 15, July 20, August 17, September 21, October 19, November and 16, December 21 2021.

For more information, please reach out to Rishika at rishikakartik@gmail.com



COVID-19 Impact and an Opportunity to Share

Dr. Penny Rosenblum has asked to share her blog post, [Share Your Photos: Let’s Show What Education Looks Like in 2021](#) With proper permission, you may want to consider sharing your experiences and inviting your students and families to share theirs by submitting photos. At the bottom of the blog is the release form in English and Spanish. Those submitting photos will be entered into a drawing for an Amazon \$25 gift card.

Check out the [Access and Engagement report](#) take a moment to learn about the impact of COVID-19 on education in the spring. Dr. Rosenblum shares, “not a lot has not changed and a lot is different!”



Book Lovers: Enter the 2021 Typhlo & Tactus Contest

Do you have a story you've written that can be turned into a tactile illustrated book? Have you read a story or have a favorite children's book that can be adapted for a child between the ages of 3 and 12 who would enjoy tactile illustrations? Then don't miss your chance to submit your tactile book in the Typhlo & Tactus Competition.

This popular international contest encourages creators to make a tactile book prototype for young children with visual impairments. Tactile books provide a child's first, fun introduction to tactile illustrations and provides their first pleasant experiences refining their tactile skills, fine motor abilities, and exploratory skills. Children learn symbolic representations from tactile books and become acquainted with the basic conventions of tactile displays, which they will use in textbooks and other accessible, tactile resources later in life. And they learn all these things from fun books that anyone can enjoy!

Everyone is invited to enter the contest. Book prototypes must include large type, bright and contrasting color design, and engaging tactile elements that would make your book come alive for exploring fingers. The inclusion of braille is strongly recommended, and we can help you do that. We especially invite scrapbookers, illustrators, authors, all who love the book arts, and all creatives who care for young readers with vision loss.

As the sponsor of the contest in the United States, the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) will award \$300 for First Place, \$200 for Second Place, and \$100 for Third Place. The entries will be selected by a local panel of judges. The winners of the U.S. competition will go on to the international competition. Entries are due on August 10, 2021.

For more information, contact Rob Guillen rguillen@aph.org or 1-800-223-1839, extension 242. We look forward to all the wonderful entries.

InSights Art Accepting Electronic Entries for 2021

This year, teachers and parents can submit a student's 2021 InSights art entry by e-mail or flash drive. Usually, the American Printing House for the Blind requires the original student artwork for the judging, but they realize the significant challenge to art educators with so many students learning and creating from home. The deadline will remain the same: **March 26, 2021**, but art entries can be sent as a digital photo, if you choose.

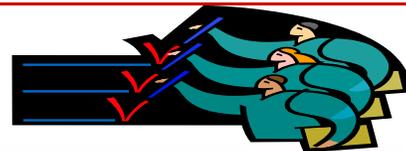
However, if the artwork is selected for an award, you must mail the original artwork to APH at that time. If the artwork is not shipped to APH, it will be subject to disqualification, as indicated in the entry form for adult, electronic submissions. So, keep those originals in a safe place! You can still ship the original artwork to us by March 26, 2021 if you prefer. We always love experiencing your creations in person.

For more information, visit insights-art.org.





CHECK IT OUT!



APH Virtual ExCEL Academy

The American Printing House for the Blind will continue to provide the APH Virtual ExCEL Academy for students in the new year. They will be offering FREE engaging lessons for students with a variety of abilities and hope to model ways that online learning may be used to supplement services. The staff of APH understands that children's needs are unique and that lessons may not apply to all kids, but they are dedicated to working out a plan to provide as much as they can. Beginning January 12, 2021, the APH Virtual ExCEL Academy will be held at 3:00 eastern time (1:00 p.m. mountain standard time) on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. The days will be grouped by age; therefore, APH will work hard to provide classes as follows:

Tuesday: Focus from Birth to 6th grade

Wednesday: Focus from 7th to 12th grade

Thursday: Focus on students with multiple impairments

Once a student is registered, the link remains active from October 13, 2020 until May 27, 2021. Because APH knows students are not always able to attend during the scheduled hour, they will be recording these sessions so all have the opportunity to learn. Many educational professionals as well as college students preparing to enter the field will be participating in the webinars to watch teachers at work. Remember, professionals are able to observe but please stay in the background just as if you were in a physical classroom. APH will not be able to provide you with ACVREP credit for this type of activity.

[APH Virtual ExCEL Academy Registration](#)

Virtual ExCEL Academy and Summer Camp Archives

Missed a chance to attend one of the American Printing House for the Blind webinars or just looking for more resources? Check out their ExCEL Academy and ExCEL Camp webinars on the APH YouTube Channel.

It has been suggested that these webinars may be a good way to spend an administrative unit inservice day, as approved by your administrator. The content is relevant to personnel working with students who are blind/visually impaired. [Check out the many archived webinars.](#)

APH Access Academy

Access Academy (formerly #AtHomeWithAPH) is a one-stop resource for the meaningful education and training webinars you need to get the most out of APH products and services. From tutorials on new products and hacks on how to get the most from your technology, to information on resources, services, and programs: the goal is to give the information needed for home, the classroom, and the workplace.

The majority of Access Academy webinars also provide [Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Education Professionals](#) (ACVREP) credit. Credit is only available for the live presentation at this time. To collect ACVREP credit, please listen for the opening and closing codes during the live session and submit these on the ACVREP Certificate Request form linked from our [Education Training](#) page. Following submission, a certificate will be emailed to you within a week.

[Check out the upcoming Access Academy upcoming and archived offerings.](#)



**AMERICAN
PRINTING
HOUSE**



CHECK IT OUT!



EDUCATORS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS

Coffee Hour with TSBVI



Mondays at 3:00 pm (CDT), Thursdays at Noon (CDT)
TSBVI.EDU/COFFEEHOUR

Please join members of the TSBVI Outreach team in discussing topics related to supporting students and families of students with visual impairments or who are deafblind.

TSBVI Outreach Coffee Hour happens on Mondays at 3:00 PM (CDT) and Thursdays at 12:00 PM (CDT) .

Captioning will be provided, if you need anything else, please email Kaycee Bennett. Some logistics will be different this time around, but you can expect the same commitment to providing information, discussion, and collaboration on topics important to students who are blind, visually impaired, or deafblind, including CVI, Active Learning, distance strategies, and family engagement.

Here are some important details:

1. Coffee Hour sessions happen every week on Mondays at 3:00 pm (CDT) and Thursdays at noon (CDT).
2. Registration is required for each session. This means that CEUs are available! Registration links can be found in the schedule on the next page. (You must have an account in our ESC-Works system to register for the Coffee Hour sessions. If you do not have an account, you can [set one up here.](#))
3. Zoom links will be provided for each session. Please make sure you register!



Photos Needed! A Request!

Dr. L. Penny Rosenblum, from the *Foundation for the Blind*, is asking Colorado parents and teachers to submit photos showing what education looks like in 2021.

Please read the blog post that explains the request and also has the photo release form in English and Spanish. Any child or adult whose face is at all visible needs a form.

<https://www.afb.org/blog/entry/share-your-photos-education-2021>

Hello all:

The Colorado Department of Education's Significant Support Needs Network is announcing Office Hours for the remainder of the school year. Office hours will take place on the 1st Wednesday of each month beginning February 3, 2021 from 3:00 – 4:30 in the afternoon.

We have extended the hours to allow time for a short and focused presentation and questions and answers. There will also be time to discuss other topics at the end of the session.

The topics for the Office Hours are as follows:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| March 3 | Co-Alt: Assessment Information and Q and A |
| April 7 | Using the Quality Indicators to Improve Services for Students with SSN |
| May 5 | Collaboration – General Educators and Special Educators with Focus on Students with SSN |



Please use the [SSN Registration Form](https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/fa6c3780757a4fb395c41b8a5b68e760) (<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/fa6c3780757a4fb395c41b8a5b68e760>)

We look forward to seeing you!



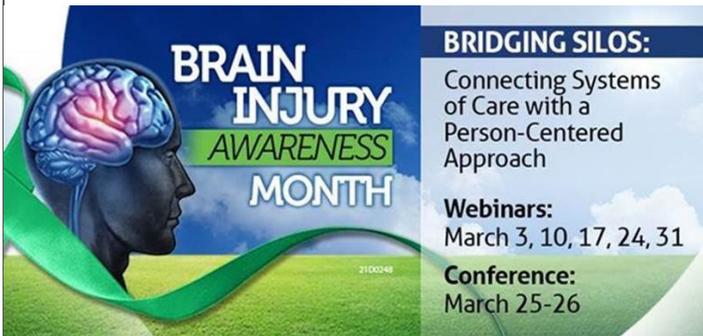
The Buzz: News from the APH Hive

Excited for more professional development opportunities? The APH Hive is welcoming a new course to its catalog, *Developing Self-Awareness*, which falls under the Self-Determination category of the Expanded Core Curriculum. Learn how to skillfully and successfully offer students practice opportunities of "knowing themselves" within the platform of remote instruction lessons all while earning two ACVREP credit hours. Check out all of their professional development opportunities!

[Sign up for the APH Hive today!](#)



CHECK IT OUT!



SAVE THE DATE

In recognition of Brain Injury Awareness Month in March, the Texas Brain Injury Programs at the Health and Human Services Commission will offer a **FREE** virtual **2021 Texas Brain Conference and Webinar Series**. The theme is "Bridging Silos: Connecting Systems of Care with a Person-Centered Approach."

Click on the respective link to register for each session.

Each Wednesday in March from 12:00-1:00 p.m. Central time, the **Texas Brain Injury Webinar Series** will feature the following topics:

[Session 1 – March 3: Introduction of Person-Centered Thinking Principles and Brain Injury](#)

[Session 2 – March 10: Co-occurring Disorders: Substance Use and Brain Injury](#)

[Session 3 – March 17: Brain Injury among the Veteran Population](#)

[Session 4 – March 24: Correlations with Domestic Violence and Brain Injury](#)

[Session 5 – March 31: Bridging the Silos - National and State Initiatives](#)

In addition, the **Texas Brain Injury Conference** will feature brain injury-related topics:

[Session 1 – March 25, 2021 from 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. Central time](#)

- o Stroke and Cardiovascular Disease
- o Brain Injury and Health Disparities/Racial Equity
- o Brain Injury and Vocational Rehabilitation

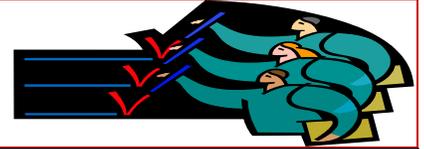
[Session 2 – March 26, 2021 from 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Central time](#)

- o Brain Injury: Criminal and Juvenile Justice
- o Mental Health and Emotional Needs Following a Brain Injury
- o Acquired Brain Injuries-Educational Needs for Students

This is a great opportunity to learn from state and national experts on the topics of brain injury, person-centered planning, and bridging silos for attendees. All activities will be free and open to the public. Continuing education credit for multiple disciplines will be provided for these events.



CHECK IT OUT!



OSEP-Funded TA Centers

OSERS' technical assistance centers are ready to address your questions regarding the IDEA and best practices and alternate models for providing special education and related services, including through distance instruction. The National Center for Systemic Improvement is the primary source for technical assistance resources during the COVID-19 national emergency for IDEA Part B programs. The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center is the primary source for IDEA Part C programs. For questions pertaining to Part C of IDEA, States should contact their [Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center State Contact](#). For Part B of IDEA, States should contact the [National Center for Systemic Improvement](#).

** Early Childhood



The [Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center](#) is providing State Part C and Part B, Section 619 programs with the [latest information](#) on funding and guidance.

** NCSI

The [National Center for Systemic Improvement's](#) web page provides a resource hub for supporting students with disabilities during the COVID-19 national emergency, including [educator resources to support remote learning](#).



** Proficient Communicators Who Are Deaf-Blind

The [National Center on Deaf-Blindness](#) has compiled and organized [Resources for Providing Technical Assistance During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). It covers OSEP guidance, distance TA, resources for families and service providers, and online learning for proficient communicators who are deaf-blind. The page is being regularly updated with input from state deaf-blind projects and national partners.



** Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

[TIES Center](#) has launched a distance-learning series that provides a framework for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to get through these new transitions, engage fully in academics online, and interact with their teachers and peers, a critical component of well-being. TIES Center is regularly adding resources to the distance learning series that offer the following recommendations to support the inclusion and engagement of students with significant cognitive disabilities. Current resources include:

- [TIES Distance Learning #1: Morning Meetings](#)
- [TIES Distance Learning #2: A Collaborative Start to Behavioral Supports](#)
- [TIES Distance Learning #3: Effective Specially Designed Instruction \(SDI\) Within the Distance Learning Environment: What in the World Does That Look Like?](#)



** Accessible Materials and Technologies

The [National AEM Center at CAST](#) has developed resources to support students who need accessible materials and technologies while learning remotely during the COVID-19 crisis.



** eBooks

[Bookshare](#) provides accessible eBooks for eligible individuals with barriers to reading. The resources linked here will help students with dyslexia, blindness/visual impairment, cerebral palsy, and other print reading barriers to continue learning during school closures.





CHECK IT OUT!



CVI and Math

CVI Now hosted a live virtual event on CVI and the Math Mind, which was held on February 12, 2021. Matt Tietjen, a TVI and leader in the CVI field, presented and answered parent questions about:

- how math happens in the brain
- why CVI can make math difficult
- neuroplasticity, potential, and opportunity for growth
- promising practices for helping kids with CVI learn math, including multisensory approaches and CVI adaptations and accommodations,
- and next steps to continue studying math and CVI

Exploring the intersection of math and CVI is new territory in the CVI field, so Matt had a lot to discuss and share. Matt presents for about 90 minutes and the Q & A begins at the 1:42 time stamp.

RECORDING OF LIVE VIRTUAL EVENT



CVI and the Math Mind



Perkins School for the Blind



Matt Tietjen, TVI and M.Ed, is an education consultant and teacher of students with visual impairments in Connecticut. Matt is a leader in the CVI field. He developed the What's the Complexity Framework that enables educational teams to evaluate and address barriers to a visually accessible school day. Matt also created the 2D Image Assessment, a tool that evaluates what your child's most accessible two-dimensional images are for learning. Matt is passionate about teaching families and educators about CVI and partnering with them to create CVI-driven educational programs

For more information, check out [Perkins School for the Blind—CVI NOW webpage](#).



University of Colorado **Anschutz Medical Campus**

Stressed? Virtual learning and changing plans wearing you down? Want support around COVID chaos?

W e ' r e h e r e f o r y o u .

Teacher/Educator Well-Being Support Line

303-724-2500

C a l l o r t e x t .

Talk to a trained Crisis Counselor volunteer who can listen and support you.
8 a.m.-8 p.m. 7 days a week via telephone or text message.
Free & immediate access to mental health services available as needed.

The Well-Being Support Line is a free service for all educators and school employees including ECE, K-12 programs, and higher education. The support line is available to any educator across the state including teachers, administrators, para-professionals, health care teams, and support staff.



BRAIN HEALTH for all, for life.

In collaboration with the University of Colorado Department of Psychiatry and
CDPHE Colorado Spirit's Crisis Counseling Program

Colorado Deaf-Blind Project News

Colorado Intervener Support

A huge shout out to Gina Herrera and Jessica Meisel for growing and supporting the field. We have four interveners enrolled in the San Francisco State University training program and another with the Utah State University Program. Others are being supported by Colorado Deaf-Blind Project training. Jessica is working diligently to organize a network of our interveners and to provide coaching support to the intervenes and school-based teams supporting students with deaf-blindness. It takes a team to support the role of an intervener with a student who is deaf-blind. Be in touch with your training and support needs.

The project's advisory met in November and offered input on how best to recruit personnel into this profession. We currently have positions open in more than one school district. If you know someone who would be interested in training and support to become an intervener, please be in touch with Gina at Herrera_g@cde.state.co.us We have children who are depending on these positions.



Child Find Count

We are in the process of reviewing the Child Count Forms that have been returned to CDE. Thank you to everyone who was on time with these data. It is so important that we have information on each and every child birth through 21 years with deaf-blindness. Children on the Child Count are eligible for free technical assistance from the project. We have two part-time technical assistance specialists to support the service providers working with the child. Thanks to Wendy Stoltman and Shelley Moats. To request a free technical assistance consultation, please be in touch with Gina Herrera at Herrera_g@cde.state.co.us



Virtual Helen Keller National Center Summer Programs

In a time when distance learning ensures the safety of consumers, HKNC has adapted their New York programs to online so that deaf-blind transition-age youth may still have the opportunity to learn from other deaf-blind individuals and our experienced professionals. They are offering three virtual summer programs.

Prior to the beginning of the program, HKNC staff will assess technology available to the participant to determine the best instruction modality that would insure full access to information and instruction. Instruction may be provided by telephone; iPhone; iPad, e-mail; computer; videophone; FaceTime; Zoom meetings and/or Google Classroom.

The Virtual Summer Assessment is an eight-week program designed to offer information and practical experience to expand participant's awareness, knowledge, skill and confidence. The assessment includes the topics of Career and Job Exploration, Virtual Worksite Tours, Workplace Readiness Skills, Counseling on Post-Secondary Education, Adaptive Technology, Self-advocacy- Facilitate IEP, Orientation & Mobility, Low Vision and Audiology, and Communication.

Program Cost: \$625.00 / week

Offered June, July, and August 2021

Along with the assessment areas, participants may choose to join peer-learning groups such as Emergency Preparedness, Living on Your Own, Savvy Shopper, Coping with COVID-19 Support Group, and Advocacy in the Deaf-Blind World.

Virtual Summer Assessment Outcomes:

- √ Participate in a variety of experiences and opportunities to gain information, assess strengths and challenges
- √ Identify resources and supports that will help prepare for work in the future
- √ Learn from competitively employed deaf-blind mentors and peer experiences
- √ Develop an understanding of work through virtual worksite tours and informational interviews

Colorado Deaf-Blind Project News

Virtual Helen Keller National Center Summer Programs (continued)

Prior to the beginning of the program, HKNC staff will assess technology available to the participant to determine the best instruction modality that would insure full access to information and instruction. Instruction may be provided by telephone; iPhone; iPad, e-mail; computer; videophone; FaceTime; Zoom meetings and/or Google Classroom.

The Virtual Summer Youth Vocational Program is a six-week program offering opportunities to gain knowledge and experience in areas of Vocational Exploration, Self-Determination, Advocacy, Communication Methods, Worksite Orientation & Mobility, Assistive Aids & Devices, and Interviewing & Employment Skills. They will explore the “world of work” through the distribution of information of a variety of career options and associated criteria. As a result of their discoveries through self-awareness and “world of work”, participants will narrow potential career options supported by informed decision-making.

Program Cost: \$625.00 / week

Session I: June 7, 2021 – July 16, 2021

Session II: July 19, 2021 – August 27, 2021

Virtual SYVP Outcomes:

- √ Learn from competitively employed deaf-blind mentors and peer experiences
- √ Develop an understanding of work through virtual worksite tours and informational interviews
- √ Increase self-awareness of personal strengths/interests through the SYVP seven focus areas
- √ Identify future skill building goals and develop an action plan to meet those goals
- √ Prepare for interview-readiness through development of a work portfolio and practice interviews
- √ Learn about universal precautions for work safety during COVID-19

Participants will virtually join peers ages 16-22 from around the country for this innovative six- week experience. Prior to the beginning of the program, HKNC staff will assess technology available to the participant to determine the best instruction modality that would ensure full access to information and instruction. Instruction may be provided by telephone, iPhone, iPad, e-mail, computer, videophone, FaceTime, Zoom meetings and/or Google Classroom.

The Virtual M~POWER is a two-week program offering an introduction to the world of work and emphasizes the five areas of Pre-ETS: Job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on post-secondary educational opportunities, workplace readiness training, and self-advocacy.

July 26, 2021 – August 6, 2021

Program Cost: \$625.00 / week

Virtual M~POWER Outcomes:

- √ Explore and learn skills in the core areas of Orientation and Mobility, Communication, Independent Living, and Adaptive Technology- essential for successful employment
- √ Learn from competitively employed deaf-blind mentors and peer experiences
- √ Learn how to apply for a dog guide and the skills needed to maintain the working team
- √ Identify job interests and what a typical day on the job is like through virtual job shadowing.
- √ Learn what skills are needed to be successful at work, for interviews, resume writing.
- √ Interview a successful employee who started as a volunteer and worked her way up to employment.
- √ Learn from students who are deaf-blind about successful college experiences.
- √ Learn how to develop self-advocacy skills to make informed choices in school, at work and for future plans while using an interpreter or SSP.

Participants will virtually join peers ages 16 - 22 from around the country for this innovative two-week program. Prior to the beginning of the program, HKNC staff will assess technology available to the participant to determine the best instructional modality that would ensure full access to information and instruction. Instruction may be provided by telephone, iPhone, iPad, e-mail, computer, videophone, FaceTime, Zoom meetings and/or Google Classroom.

For more information, contact Dora Carney, Admissions Coordinator: Dora.Carney@hknc.org

Or Your Regional Representative: <https://www.helenkeller.org/hknc/nationwide-service>

Colorado Deaf-Blind Project News

Project SALUTE

Project SALUTE (Successful Adaptations for Learning to Use Touch Effectively) was a model demonstration project funded by the U.S. Department of Education to California State University, Northridge from September 1, 1999 to August 30, 2004.

Multiple methods were used to identify and evaluate tactile strategies including:

- An extensive review of available literature
- Interviews with focus groups composed of English-speaking and Spanish-speaking family members and service providers, including those who are sighted and blind or visually impaired
- Annual meetings and online discussions with a national advisory committee of experts in the fields of visual impairments, severe disabilities, and deaf-blindness who represented family members, service providers, and state and national technical assistance projects
- Input from participants at project workshops and state and national conferences
- Analysis of video observations of four target children who are deaf-blind during home and school routines
- Interviews with family members and teams of service providers of the four target children who are deaf-blind

Reflections on professional experience and practice by project staff

Based on findings from these activities, the project produced numerous information sheets and articles, and a book on tactile learning strategies for children who are deaf-blind or blind with additional disabilities. These resources have been widely used and appreciated by professionals and families of children who are deaf-blind for many years. They were originally housed on the Project SALUTE website, which ended in December 2020.

The materials are now housed here on the NCDB website with the permission of Deborah Chen, Ph.D., who along with June Downing, Ph.D., was one of the project's co-directors.



Check it out at <https://www.nationaldb.org/info-center/project-salute/>

Resources and Materials

Discontinued APH Products

An updated [Discontinued Products list](#) is available on the American Printing House for the Blind's website. The list includes products that are no longer available from APH, and also shows the product number, product description, and the date the last product was sold. They will update the list as additional products are discontinued. If you have any questions, please, contact the APH Customer Experience team at 800-899-1839 or cs@aph.org.

Teaching Students With Visual Impairments About COVID-19

Are you looking for resources to help teach your students about COVID-19? The American Printing House for the Blind has good news! A supplement to APH's Health Education Guidebook (catalog #1-08054-00) (<https://www.aph.org/product/health-education-for-students-with-visual-impairments-a-guidebook-for-teachers-2/>) is now available to assist teachers in providing information about COVID-19 to their students with visual impairments. For more information and to download instructions for the COVID-19 supplement, read our latest blog. (<https://www.aph.org/teaching-students-with-visual-impairments-about-covid-19-disease/>)





2020-2021 DEAF-BLINDNESS WEBINAR SERIES

SESSION THREE: JANUARY 14, 2021 at 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

The Hidden Senses with David Brown

David will share how the ‘other’ senses, the proprioceptive sense and the vestibular sense, are particularly important. Knowing about these senses, how they work, what might happen if they are not working properly, and what to do about it, can make a surprising difference to the development of functional vision and hearing. A consideration of the functions of ALL our senses can help us to understand why we self-stimulate, and also understand what any child’s self-stimulation behaviors tell about their difficulties and needs.

SESSION FOUR: FEBRUARY 11, 2021 at 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Communication and Student’s Availability for Learning with Kathee Scoggin

This session will present participants with internal and external factors that affect a student's availability to learn and communicate. Find out the factors and how to reduce, eliminate and/or adapt your teaching to assist each child’s availability for learning and communication.

SESSION FIVE: MARCH 18, 2021 at 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Self-Determination with Kathee Scoggin

Self-determination is about each child’s ability for goal setting and self-advocacy. This session will address the first ways a **child** develops self-determination and how that leads to the more advanced stages of self-determination.

Participants: Colorado parents of and professionals working with children birth through 21 years with significant supports needs, including deaf-blindness. The focus is on learners who are not yet proficient in verbal and/or sign language.

Training Expectations: Full attendance of either session is a requirement. Please do not sign up for any of these training events if you cannot commit to the two full-hours of each training.

[Webinar series registration link](#)

Please share this registration link with appropriate families and colleagues. Each person must register separately. You can register for any one or all the posted trainings. When registering, please indicate if you will require special aids, services, and or accommodations at least two weeks ahead of each training event. Once registered, the link and handouts will be sent two days ahead of the training.

Colorado Department of Education

Exceptional Student Services Unit | 1560 Broadway, #1100, Denver, CO 80202



Presenter: David Brown

David Brown has been working with children with multi sensory impairments since 1983. In the United Kingdom he was the Head of Family & Children Services for Sense, the National Deafblind Association. He worked for the CA Deaf-Blind Project for many years and is currently a field consultant. David has a credential in the Education of Students with Multi Sensory Impairments from the University of Birmingham in England, and an Honorary Doctor of Science for his research work with children with deaf-blindness.

Presenter: Kathee Scoggin

Kathee Scoggin has 40+ years’ experience as a teacher (12 years), assessment specialist (4 years), principal (10 years), technical assistance (TA) provider 20+ years), and co-director for the Deaf-Blind Project in Washington state. Kathee is always focused on communication no matter what other things the student needs. She holds a B.A. in Deaf Education and M.Ed. in Special Education with an emphasis on visual and multiple disabilities.



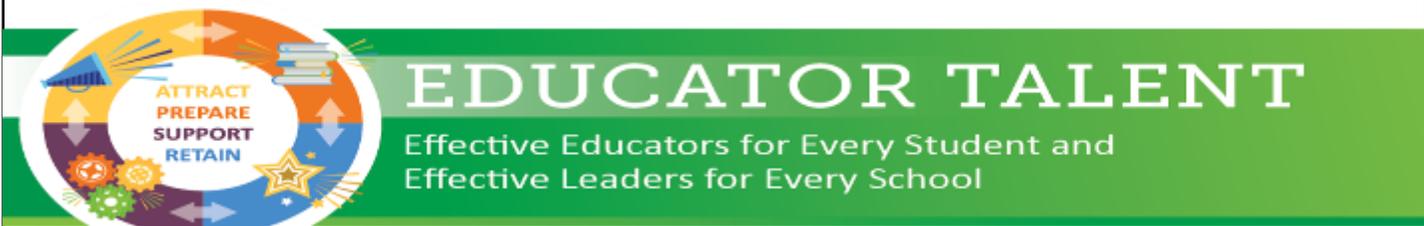
Licensure and Endorsement Specific to Visual Impairment

For information about the endorsement requirements for the Special Education Specialist: Visually Impaired Ages Birth-21, go to: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/endorsementrequirements>.

<p>Special Education Specialist: Visually Impaired Ages Birth-21: (9.02)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Must hold a Master’s degree or higher from a regionally-accredited institution in special education visual impairment or its equivalent, as determined by the Colorado Department of Education. ✓ Must have completed a program from a regionally-accredited institution for Special Education Specialists: Visually Impaired that includes prescribed field experience requirements.
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For information about the endorsement requirements for the School Orientation and Mobility Specialist, go to: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/endorsementrequirements>.

<p>School Orientation and Mobility Specialist Ages 0-21: (11.03)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bachelor’s degree or higher from a regionally-accredited institution. ✓ Completion of a preparation program from a regionally-accredited institution for school orientation and mobility specialists. ✓ Completion of practicum or internship, which must be in a school setting and equivalent to a minimum of 320 hours, full-time, under the supervision of an Academy of Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) licensed orientation and mobility specialist. ✓ Passing of the ACVREP exam. ✓ Hold a current and valid ACVREP orientation and mobility certificate.
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Educator Talent Website

Check out the Educator Talent website! Their mission is to develop, deploy and support talent management and human capital development strategies for districts and schools so that the most effective educators are in every school and classroom and all students are prepared for college, career, and life.

Check it out at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent>



Licensure Requirements for TVIs and Orientation and Mobility Specialists Colorado Initial Licensure in the Endorsement Area of Visual Impairment

For information about Colorado licensing requirements in the area of Special Education Specialist: Visual Impairment and/or School O&M Specialist, please refer to the information contained within Educator Licensing's Endorsement Requirements page at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/endorsementrequirements>.

All candidates for initial educator licenses in Colorado have historically been required to take and pass one or more of the PLACE Content Assessments. Candidates for the special education endorsement in Special Education Specialist: Visual Impairment were mandated previously to pass the *PLACE Educator Content Assessment for Special Education Specialist: Severe Needs – Visually Impaired*. This particular content assessment is suspended currently as a licensure requirement. Whether this specific test will be revised to include a section specific to Unified English Braille or is fully replaced with another test as a licensure requirement is yet to be determined.

At this time, it is important to note there is not a Professional Services and Educator Licensing Unit content test that requires a candidate for the Special Education Specialist: Visual Impairment to demonstrate braille competency as a requirement of licensure. It is further important to note that if such a content test is reinstated, it does not replace the Colorado Braille Competency Test administered through the Exceptional Student Services Unit. This latter test is not tied to CDE licensure.

Braille Competency Testing Requirements

All licensed teachers endorsed in the area of visual impairment, including those individuals employed on a temporary status (Temporary Educator Eligibility-TEE), who are completing their university program in visual impairment, must have a valid CDE Certificate of Braille Competency or a CDE Renewal Certificate of Braille Competency on file with their current administrative unit of employment. The CDE Certificate of Braille Competency must be earned no later than May 31st of the first instructional year, with a Colorado administrative unit as a teacher of students who are blind/visually impaired. If a TVI moves from one Colorado administrative unit to another, the expectation of first-year braille competency demonstration does not “reactivate” from year-to-year. The testing clock begins with the first day of Colorado employment as a TVI.

For more information about Colorado's braille competency requirements, please go to:
http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-vision_guidedocs

CDE Licensure Requirement for O&M Specialists

If you are working in a Colorado administrative unit as a School Orientation and Mobility Specialist, please know that you **MUST** have a current CDE license as a Special Services Provider: School O&M Specialist. If you do not have this license, your scope of O&M services should be restricted significantly to those skills that could already be taught by a TVI. Without this license, you are placing yourself and your AU at risk for O&M-related liability. There is no temporary or emergency licenses for School O&M Specialists.

Questions or need some assistance? Contact Tanni at anthony_t@cde.state.co.us.

New State IEP Vendor

The CDE is in process with a new state IEP vendor. Please take a moment to visit the new [Ascend Colorado website](https://co.ascendsuites.com/): <https://co.ascendsuites.com/>.

This webpage will have the most up-to-date information regarding the development of Ascend Colorado. If you would like, you can sign up for the newsletter to keep up with progress on the development of Ascend at <https://co.ascendsuites.com/announcements/>.



Several Options for K-3 Teachers to Meet READ Act Training Requirements

The Colorado Department of Education has developed a number of options for kindergarten through third-grade teachers to meet the new professional development requirements in the READ Act. Part of legislation passed in 2019 to improve early literacy rates, the changes to the READ Act require K-3 teachers in Colorado to receive additional training in evidence-based reading instruction by the beginning of the 2021-22 school year. Teachers need to meet this training requirement only once. It is specifically for K-3 teachers who are responsible for literacy instruction and may include the main instructor for a class, an instructional coach, reading interventionist, special education teacher, Title I teacher or others who play a critical role in teaching reading. **When it doubt, talk to your special education director about the expectation for you to participate in these requirements.**

CDE is providing both asynchronous and synchronous training at no cost to teachers. Find out about [the online training here](#) or the [face-to-face training here](#).

Teachers also can complete a [district- or BOCES-led training](#) or a [training program included on the CDE Advisory List of Professional Development](#) that has been designed to meet this requirement.

Additional options for teacher to complete this requirement:

- Teachers who have a Colorado Reading Teacher or Reading Specialist endorsement already meet the training requirement. [Click here to explore the reading endorsements.](#)
- Teachers may take and pass an authorized reading content assessment or pass a Praxis Teaching Reading: Elementary 5205 exam (approved in April 2020) with a score of 159 or above. [See the board approved assessments here.](#)
- Teachers may submit to CDE evidence that they successfully completed an undergraduate or graduate course in teaching reading. (CDE is currently creating a system for teachers to submit documentation of meeting the requirement.)
- Teachers may submit to CDE evidence they successfully completed a course teaching reading appropriate for license renewal.

The department has received requests for flexibility in the requirement given the added challenges teachers face as they adapt to remote instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, the State Board of Education at a recent meeting affirmed its commitment to the new requirements for teachers to ensure that all students have teachers who are trained in evidence-based reading instruction by January 31, 2022.

[More details about the requirement are available on the CDE website.](#)

[Click here for Frequently Asked Questions on the K-3 teacher training](#)



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Colorado Academic Standards Review and Revision Committee Application

The Office of Standards and Instructional Support (SIS) is seeking applications for review and revision committee membership in the content areas of social studies, dance, drama and theatre arts, music, and visual arts. During the 2020 legislative session, the General Assembly passed Colorado House Bill 20-1032 (section 22-7-1005(6) C.R.S.) amending the provision that required the regular review and revision of the Colorado Academic Standards. The statute previously required all content area revisions to occur within six years of the prior cycle which occurred in 2018. The changes now require the state board to review and revise approximately one-third of the standards beginning in 2022 and an additional one-third every two years thereafter.

More information about the Colorado Academic Standards review and revision process and applying for committee membership can be found on our [website](#). [Click Here for Additional Information](#)

For More Information, Contact: Joanna Bruno, Teaching and Learning Unit
Email: bruno_j@cde.state.co.us Phone: (303) 866-6571

EDUCATOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS



Educators are required to [renew their professional licensure](#) every five (5) years. To do so, they must complete 90 contact hours (equivalent to six (6) semester hours of college or university coursework) of professional learning within the preceding five years.

While educators generally have carte blanche to determine which professional learning to pursue, they must, at a very high level, align those choices to their endorsement areas, the Colorado academic standards, educator quality standards, school culture and climate, student safety and wellbeing, or leadership.

Recently, however, three initiatives stipulated professional development for some groups of educators. Two of those initiatives require the professional development as part of the 90 contact hours for licensure renewal and one (READ Act) requires districts to assure their teachers' completion of the professional development. In brief, these requirements are as follows:

- As result of [HB 20-1128](#) and [HB 20-1312](#), educators must complete a minimum of 10 contact hours of training in special education and behavioral health, with at least one (1) hour in special education or behavioral health. *This is a recurring requirement for licensure renewal*
- Effective Sept. 1, 2018, the state board requires [45 contact hours of professional development](#) regarding English Language Learners (ELL) for teachers who hold an elementary, English, math, science, social studies or middle-level endorsement. *This is a one-time requirement for licensure renewal for these educators.*
- Pursuant to [SB 19-199](#), teachers employed in K-3 classrooms in Colorado must show evidence of competency in teaching science-based reading or complete 45 hours of professional development for the READ Act. *This is a one-time requirement for currently employed educators teaching reading in K-3 classrooms.*
 - **Important note:** This pertains to all educators teaching reading in a K-3 classroom, regardless of whether they hold an interim authorization, an alternative, initial or professional license, or no license at all.

Special Education and Behavioral Health Licensure RENEWAL Requirements

Recurring requirement every five (5) years upon renewal

Teachers holding professional licenses are required to complete a minimum of 10 contact hours of professional learning as follows:

- A minimum of one (1) contact hour related to behavioral health that is culturally responsive and trauma- and evidence-informed; and
- A minimum of one (1) contact hour related to increasing awareness of laws and practices pertaining to educating students with disabilities in the classroom, including but not limited to Child Find and inclusive learning environments.

Special service providers, principals and administrators are required to complete minimum of 10 contact hours of professional learning related to increasing awareness of laws and practices relating to educating students with disabilities in the classroom, including but not limited to Child Find and inclusive learning environments.



All educators seeking to renew any professional license on or after June 30, 2023 will need to meet this requirement upon each renewal moving forward.

English Language Learner Professional Development Licensure RENEWAL Requirement

One-time educator licensure renewal requirement

Forty five (45) contact hours of [ELL professional learning](#) is required of all educators holding a professional teacher license with an elementary, English, math, science or social studies endorsement (this includes middle-level endorsements, too). This requirement is mandatory regardless of what content the educator is currently teaching. These 45 hours may be used toward fulfilling the 90 contact hours for renewal, and an educator may meet the requirement by completing an [approved program](#) or by applying professional development or college coursework from any point in time.

All individuals who received a professional license on or after Sept. 1, 2018 will need to meet this requirement by their next full renewal cycle.

READ Act Teaching Reading Professional Development DISTRICT Requirement

One-time requirement for educators teaching reading in K-3 classrooms (at the district level for districts that receive READ Act funding)

The [READ Act](#) requires every school/district, including charter schools, that receives READ Act funding to assure that each teacher employed to teach kindergarten through 3rd grade reading has successfully completed evidence-based training in the science of teaching reading by January 31, 2022.

Rules approved by the state board in March 2020 ([1 CCR 301-92](#)) note the evidence-based training in teaching reading must include a minimum of 45 hours and must address the content of the educator preparation literacy standards referenced in the state board's Rules for the Administration of Educator License Endorsements ([1 CCR 301-101, 4.02\(5\)-4.02\(12\)](#)).

Districts may demonstrate that their teachers have successfully completed evidenced-based training in teaching reading in any of the following ways (please visit the [CDE website](#) for more information):

- (a) passed a state board-approved assessment of knowledge required to teach reading; or
- (b) successfully completed a CDE-provided reading training designed to meet this requirement; or
- (c) provided documentation of passing a CDE-approved undergraduate or graduate reading course; or
- (d) provided documentation of passing a CDE-approved district or BOCES reading course; or
- (e) holds a state of Colorado endorsement as a Reading Teacher or Reading Specialist.

This requirement applies only to teachers in K-3 classrooms in schools/districts that accept READ Act funds. Although this requirement is not tied to a teacher's ability to renew their license, once CDE confirms that a teacher has fulfilled the requirement, a designation will be added to the teacher's license to allow ease of future reference for educators and districts. Although school/district assurances must be made annually, this professional development requirement must be met only once and is required of all currently employed educators teaching reading in K-3 classrooms, regardless of license type.

Educators can also use this professional development as part of their 90 clock hours toward professional licensure renewal credit.



Matrix of Educator Professional Development Requirements

The following charts outline what professional development is required of which educators, by when, and who is responsible for meeting these recent educator professional development requirements.

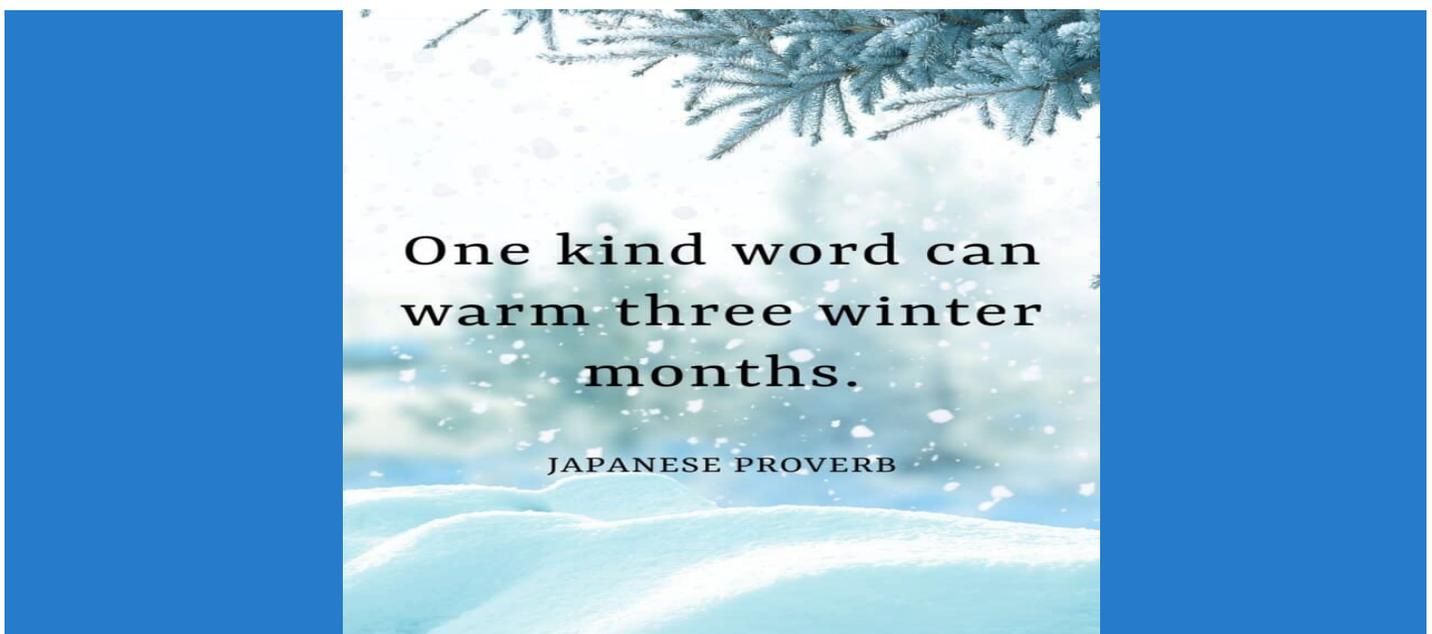
Responsible Party	Special Education and Behavioral Health 10 contact hours Timeline: Professional license renewal on or after June 30, 2023, and every 5-year renewal cycle thereafter	English Language Learner 45 contact hours Timeline: Professional licenses issued/renewed on or after Sept 1, 2018, in effect for renewal on Sept. 1, 2023	READ Act Teaching Reading 45 hours Timeline: Districts are responsible for ensuring all of their K-3 teachers have met this requirement by January 31, 2022 in order to receive READ per-pupil intervention funds.
Individual educators' responsibility to renew their professional license	X	X	
Schools/districts receiving READ Act funding			X

Grade Level or Content Area	Special Education and Behavioral Health 10 hours Who: All professional licensed educators; on or after June 30, 2023, and every 5-year renewal cycle thereafter	English Language Learner 45 hours Who: Professional licensed teachers with an elementary, English, math, science, social studies or middle-level endorsement; by Sept. 1, 2023	READ Act Teaching Reading 45 hours Who: All teachers employed to teach or provide literacy instruction in grades K-3; by January 31, 2022 in order to receive READ per-pupil intervention funds.
Early Childhood (0-3rd grade)	X		X
Kindergarten	X	X	X
1st	X	X	X
2nd	X	X	X
3rd	X	X	X
4th	X	X	



Grade Level or Content Area	Special Education and Behavioral Health 10 hours Who: All professional licensed educators; on or after June 30, 2023, and every 5-year renewal cycle thereafter	English Language Learner 45 hours Who: Professional licensed teachers with an elementary, English, math, science, social studies or middle-level endorsement; by Sept. 1, 2023	READ Act Teaching Reading 45 hours Who: All teachers employed to teach or provide literacy instruction in grades K-3; by January 31, 2022 in order to receive READ per-pupil intervention funds.
5 th	X	X	
6 th	X	X	
English	X	X	
Math	X	X	
Social Studies	X	X	
Science	X	X	
Special Education	X		*
All Secondary Educators	X		
All Special Service Providers	X		*
All Principals, Administrators	X		

*These educator groups are required to complete the READ Act training requirement if they support reading instruction for K-3 students.





Orientation & Mobility

The Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Division of AER 2021 DONALD BLASCH SCHOLARSHIP Application opens February 1, 2021

AER's O&M Division sponsors an annual scholarship competition for students enrolled in AER accredited O&M programs. The scholarship recognizes the vital contributions of the late Donald Blasch to the profession of O&M during his long tenure at Western Michigan University.

Individuals selected for the scholarship receive an unrestricted award of \$1,000.00. Two scholarships are awarded each year (depending on availability of funds).

THE DEADLINE FOR RECEIVING APPLICATIONS FOR THE BLASCH SCHOLARSHIP IS March 10, 2021

All O&M students enrolled in AER-accredited programs are encouraged to apply.

Please click here to access the scholarship application: images.magnetmail.net/images/clients/AERBVI/attach/BlaschScholarshipApplication_2021.docx (you may need to cut and paste)

Mountain Mobility Winter 2021

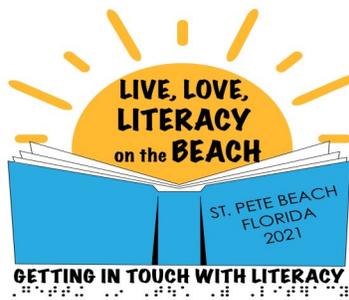
By Mike Plansker

The annual Mountain Mobility winter trip to Adaptive Sports Center (ASC) in Crested Butte happened February 11-15, 2021, and was once again a huge success with lots of new snow every day. While we still had COVID protocols in place, there was no stopping this group from three days of skiing and nightly activities. Mike Plansker was the chaperone for four wonderful, skilled and independent high school students from Thornton, Boulder, Denver, and Colorado Springs. Due to COVID, we got spoiled by not having to shop for our groceries or prepare meals. The wonderful ASC staff shopped and prepared the tasty meals and we just had to cook and of course, do the dishes. We participated in nightly activities after each day of powder skiing. While the students were a little wary of a drum circle and yoga, they really got into both activities. They found that drumming on trash cans is great fun and yoga is just great for you. Our last night's activity was indoor climbing on the ASC wall. The wall is made to look like a natural rock and does not have your typical bolted handholds. The weekend was over much too quickly and everyone was hoping we would get stuck in Crested Butte by a snowstorm for a couple more days! As usual, we had fantastic instructors and the students made great progress in meeting their personal goals and improving their skiing ability.

If anyone is interested in going to Crested Butte to ski with Adaptive Sports on their own with their families, go to <https://www.adaptivesports.org/> and sign up. The staff at ASC are amazing people to work with and love working with our students.

You can check out more Mountain Mobility photos at <https://adaptivesports.smugmug.com/Groups>.





Getting in Touch With Literacy

December 1-4, 2021
St. Pete Beach, Florida

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Proposals related to all areas of literacy for individuals with visual impairments are now being accepted for presentations at the **Fifteenth Biennial Getting In Touch with Literacy Conference**. Proposals will be considered that focus on development and use of literacy skills at all age and ability levels and other relevant issues for this special topic conference. To give as many presenters as possible the opportunity to present at this final conference, proposals must be limited to a total of two workshops and one poster session per person. This includes presentations as either lead presenter or as a co-presenter.

The Getting in Touch with Literacy conference is a conference that includes underlying respect for literacy at all ages and ability levels. Presentations are encouraged on topics related to infants and toddlers, school aged students, and adults. Professionals addressing literacy skills in rehabilitation settings are encouraged to submit proposals.

While we expect the conference to proceed as planned, we know there are still valid concerns regarding COVID 19. We continue to monitor conditions and will make any announcements regarding rescheduling the conference no later than July 31, 2021. Proposals are due by **March 31, 2021**. Program decisions will be made and presenters will be contacted by April 15, 2021.

For more information about the Call for Papers application and conference / registration information, please go to: <http://www.gettingintouchwithliteracy.org/>



Calendar of Events

2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021

March 1	Due date for See the Future Scholarship Application Visit See the Future (https://www.seethefuture.org/home.html)
March 3	SSN Office Hours —Topic: Co-Alt—Assessment Information and Q&A Registration: https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/fa6c3780757a4fb395c41b8a5b68e760
March 4	Putting Your Best Foot Forward —Registration for Virtual Training for Students Contact: Michelle Reed at michele.reed@state.co.us
March 5	CIMC First Friday Training Session —9:00—10:00 a.m. and 2:30—3:30 p.m. - Zoom Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@csdb.org
March 10	BVI Office Hours —Topic: TBD Registration: https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/7fe265f3864a434b8cf075d1862a98fa
March 11	Putting Your Best Foot Forward —Registration for Virtual Training for Students Contact: Michelle Reed at michele.reed@state.co.us
March 11	CAER Chapter Meetings —5:45 to 7:15 p.m. – Google Meet - meet.google.com/mnx-zkdz-juu Contact: Nancy Cozart – ncozart@lps.k12.co.us
March 11	Western Region TVI/O&M Specialist Meeting - virtual Contact: Julie King at julie.king@eagleschools.net
March 16	Tactile Art Club —5:00 p.m. - Guest Artist John Bramlett Contact: Rishika at rishikakartik@gmail.com
March 17	CSDB Parent Workshop —Independent Living Skills—11:30 a.m. Contact: Jamie Lugo at jlugo@csdb.org
March 18	DB Webinar Series —Self Determination w/ Kathee Scoggin Registration: https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/4746e2dffe45488db7b3437e5ed631c9
March 18	CAER Training - Use of Androids by Heather Solberg Contact: Heather Solberg at Heather.solberg@va.gov
March 18	Putting Your Best Foot Forward —Registration for Virtual Training for Students Contact: Michelle Reed at michele.reed@state.co.us
March 18	WRIEC —Using an Active Learning Approach with Infant and Toddlers Registration: https://www.tsbvi.edu/coffeehour —a month out of training
March 19	Southern Region TVI/DVR Meeting - 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@csdb.org
March 24	BVI Office Hours —Topic: TBD Registration: https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/7fe265f3864a434b8cf075d1862a98fa
March 24	Colorado Center for the Blind Fun Activities and Skills Training - 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. Contact: Martin Becerra- Miranda at mbecerra@cocenter.org




Calendar of Events

2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021

March 25	Putting Your Best Foot Forward —Registration for Virtual Training for Students Contact: Michelle Reed at michele.reed@state.co.us
March 25	Putting Your Best Foot Forward —Registration for Virtual Training for Students Contact: Michelle Reed at michele.reed@state.co.us
March 26	InSights Art entry due date For More Information: https://insights-art.org/
April 1	CIMC Textbook orders due — order forms and addition info at https://csdb.colorado.gov/cimc Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@CSDB.ORG
April 1	Putting Your Best Foot Forward — Registration for Virtual Training for Students Contact: Michelle Reed at michele.reed@state.co.us
April 2	CIMC First Friday Training Session — 9:00—10:00 a.m. and 2:30—3:30 p.m.- Zoom Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@csdb.org
April 7	SSN Office Hours — Topic: Using the Quality Indicators to Improve Services for Students with SSN Registration: https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/fa6c3780757a4fb395c41b8a5b68e760
April 7	BVI Office Hours —Topic: TBD Registration: https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/7fe265f3864a434b8cf075d1862a98fa
April 8	Putting Your Best Foot Forward — Registration for Virtual Training for Students Contact: Michelle Reed at michele.reed@state.co.us
April 8	CAER Chapter Meetings —5:45 to 7:15 p.m. – Google Meet - meet.google.com/mnx-zkdz-juu Contact: Nancy Cozart – ncozart@lps.k12.co.us
April 15	Putting Your Best Foot Forward —Registration for Virtual Training for Students Contact: Michelle Reed at michele.reed@state.co.us
April 16	Southern Region TVI/DVR Meeting - 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@csdb.org
April 20	Tactile Art Club —5:00 p.m. - Guest Artist Erin Schalk , (Art Instructor at Braille Institute) Contact: Rishika at rishikakartik@gmail.com
April 21	CSDB Parent Workshop —Assistive Technology—11: 30a.m. Contact: Jamie Lugo at jlugo@csdb.org
April 21	BVI Office Hours —Topic: TBD Registration: https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/7fe265f3864a434b8cf075d1862a98fa
April 22	Metro Region TVI/COMS Meeting - 3:30 to 5:00 p.m.—Aurora Public School District Contact: Jeannie Lei at jlei@cherrycreekschools.org




Calendar of Events

2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021

April 22	CAER Training - O&M virtual instruction by Karin Hensel, TVI & Rebecca Gardom Contact: Heather Solberg at Heather.solberg@va.gov
April 25	Putting Your Best Foot Forward —Registration for Virtual Training for Students Contact: Michelle Reed at michele.reed@state.co.us
April 28	Colorado Center for the Blind Fun Activities and Skills Training - 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. Contact: Martin Becerra- Miranda at mbecerra@cocenter.org
April 29	WRIEC —Through Native Eyes: Serving Native American Families and Tribal Communities Registration: https://www.tsbvi.edu/coffeehour —a month out of training
May 5	BVI Office Hours —Topic: TBD Registration: https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/7fe265f3864a434b8cf075d1862a98fa
May 5	SSN Office Hours —Topic: Collaboration—General/Special Educators w/focus on students w/SSN Registration: https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/fa6c3780757a4fb395c41b8a5b68e760
May 6	Putting Your Best Foot Forward —Registration for Virtual Training for Students Contact: Michelle Reed at michele.reed@state.co.us
May 6-7	CDE O&M Virtual Seminar with Dr. Penny Rosenblum on Finding Wheels Contact: Tanni Anthony at Anthony_T@cde.state.co.us
May 7	CAER Annual Meeting —Virtual Breakfast Contact: Heather Solberg at Heather.solberg@va.gov
May 7	CIMC First Friday Training Session —9:00—10:00 a.m. and 2:30—3:30 p.m.- Zoom Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@cldb.org
May 13	WRIEC —Early Intervention Face to Face and Virtual: EI Experiences from New Mexico and Utah Registration: https://www.tsbvi.edu/coffeehour —a month out of training
May 13	CAER Chapter Meetings —5:45 to 7:15 p.m. – Google Meet - meet.google.com/mnx-zkdz-juu Contact: Nancy Cozart – ncozart@lps.k12.co.us
May 16	BVI Office Hours —Topic: TBD Registration: https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/7fe265f3864a434b8cf075d1862a98fa
May 18	Tactile Art Club —5:00 p.m. - Guest Artist Valerie Alcaraz Contact: Rishika at rishikakartik@gmail.com
May 19	CSDB Parent Workshop —Recreation and Leisure—11:30 a.m. Contact: Jamie Lugo at jlugo@cldb.org
May 20	CSDB Parent Workshop —Recreation and Leisure—5:30 p.m. Contact: Jamie Lugo at jlugo@cldb.org
May 20	Putting Your Best Foot Forward —Registration for Virtual Training for Students Contact: Michelle Reed at michele.reed@state.co.us




Calendar of Events

2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021 2021

- May 21** **Southern Region TVI/DVR Meeting** - 2:30 to 3:30 p.m.
 Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@csdb.org
- May 26** **Colorado Center for the Blind Fun Activities and Skills Training** - 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.
 Contact: Martin Becerra- Miranda at mbecerra@cocenter.org
- May 27** **Putting Your Best Foot Forward—Registration for Virtual Training for Students**
 Contact: Michelle Reed at michele.reed@state.co.us
- June 2** **CSDB Parent Workshop—Orientation and Mobility—11:30 a.m.**
 Contact: Jamie Lugo at jlugo@csdb.org
- June 3** **CSDB Parent Workshop—Orientation and Mobility—5:30 p.m.**
 Contact: Jamie Lugo at jlugo@csdb.org
- June 3** **WRIEC —Unilateral Hearing Loss in Children: What Do We Know and Where Do We Go?**
 Registration: <https://www.tsbvi.edu/coffeehour>—a month out of training
- June 4** **CIMC First Friday Training Session—9:00—10:00 a.m. and 2:30—3:30 p.m.** - Zoom
 Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@csdb.org
- June 7 - 17** **Colorado Center for the Blind Summer Program – World of Work**
 Contact: Martin Becerra- Miranda at mbecerra@cocenter.org
- June 10** **CAER Chapter Meetings—5:45 to 7:15 p.m.** – Google Meet - meet.google.com/mnx-zkdz-juu
 Contact: Nancy Cozart – ncozart@lps.k12.co.us
- June 15** **Tactile Art Club—5:00 p.m.** - Guest Artist Elizabeth Sheeler
 Contact: Rishika at rishikakartik@gmail.com
- June 21- July 1** **Colorado Center for the Blind Summer Program – Cracking the College Code**
 Contact: Martin Becerra- Miranda at mbecerra@cocenter.org
- June 30** **CIMC book returns due—** more info on returning materials at <https://csdb.colorado.gov/cimc>
 Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@CSDB.ORG
- June 21- July 1** **Colorado Center for the Blind Summer Program – Mo Limits to Learning**
 Contact: Martin Becerra- Miranda at mbecerra@cocenter.org
- July 20** **Tactile Art Club—5:00 p.m.**
 Contact: Rishika at rishikakartik@gmail.com
- August 10** **2021 Typhlo & Tactus Contest DUE**
 Contact: Rob Guillen rguillen@aph.org
- August 17** **Tactile Art Club—5:00 p.m.**
 Contact: Rishika at rishikakartik@gmail.com



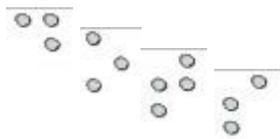

Calendar of Events

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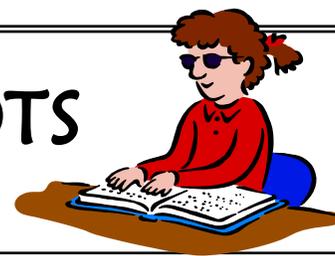
August 19	<p>WRIEC —Assessment, Intervention and Outcomes of Young Children with Unilateral Hearing Loss: A Multi-State Perspective Registration: https://www.tsbvi.edu/coffeehour</p>
August 19	<p>WRIEC —Academic Outcomes and Predictors of Performance in School-Age Children with Unilateral Hearing Loss Registration: https://www.tsbvi.edu/coffeehour</p>
September	<p>WRIEC —Closing Keynote (more information to come) Registration: https://www.tsbvi.edu/coffeehour</p>
September 21	<p>Tactile Art Club—5:00 p.m. Contact: Rishika at rishikakartik@gmail.com</p>
September 22	<p>Vision Coalition Contact: Tanni Anthony at Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us</p>
October 19	<p>Tactile Art Club—5:00 p.m. Contact: Rishika at rishikakartik@gmail.com</p>
November 16	<p>Tactile Art Club—5:00 p.m. Contact: Rishika at rishikakartik@gmail.com</p>
December 1-4	<p>Getting in Touch with Literacy Conference—in person St/ Pete Beach, FL For more information: http://www.gettingintouchwithliteracy.org/</p>
December 21	<p>Tactile Art Club—5:00 p.m. Contact: Rishika at rishikakartik@gmail.com</p>

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January 26-28	<p>Orientation and Mobility Online Seminar For more information: https://orientationandmobilitysymposium.com/</p>
January 31	<p>End Date of READ Act Teacher Training Requirement For training options, go to: http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/teacher-training</p>



CONNECTING THE DOTS



Colorado Braille Competency Committee

Please keep this information handy if you are in the process of earning your initial Colorado Braille Competency Certificate or working on your renewal modules. The CDE Braille Competency Committee members serve as part-time employees of the Colorado Department of Education's Exceptional Student Services Unit for their important role in: (a) developing, refining, and reviewing braille competency testing and support materials, (b) proctoring test sessions for initial braille competency and renewal modules, (c) providing approved mentoring to test candidates, and (d) other duties as needed to support our UEB competency process across the state.

The committee consists currently of the following individuals:

Tanni Anthony	(303) 866-6681	Anthony_T@cde.state.co.us
Nancy Cozart	(303) 905-4074	Cozart_N@cde.state.co.us
Christine Maynard	(719) 229-4981	Maynard_C@cde.state.co.us
Brenda Shepard	(303) 995-7913	Shepard_B@cde.state.co.us
Sarah Sonnier	(970) 245-5228	Sonnier_S@cde.state.co.us
Julie Wetzstein	(303) 819-7887	Wetzstein_J@cde.state.co.us

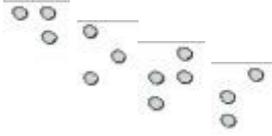
As far as regional representation for initial testing and renewal modules, Christine Maynard is our southern region proctor/mentor and Sarah Sonnier is the western region proctor/mentor. Nancy Cozart, Brenda Shepard, and Julie Wetzstein are metro proctors for the renewal modules. Brenda Shepard is our northern proctor for renewal modules. Tanni Anthony is the proctor for initial braille competency testing for the greater metro area.

The Practice Test items have been posted on the braille competency webpage—that information and other resources can be found at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-vision_guidedocs.

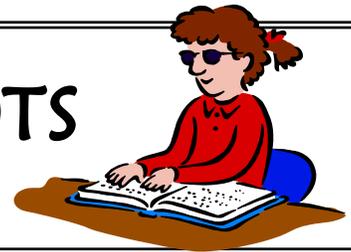
Braillewriter Repair

Mark Carpenter is available for braillewriter repair. His contact information is: 719-634-8720 (phone) and Email: carpdiane@yahoo.com





CONNECTING THE DOTS



International Council on English Braille News



The purpose of the International Council on English Braille (ICEB) is to coordinate and improve standards for braille usage for all English-speaking users of braille. On October 18–22, 2020, ICEB held its seventh General Assembly via Zoom, hosted jointly by the UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF) and the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB). Papers were presented on the topics of braille learning and literacy, braille technology, and braille music. APH is proud to recognize braille literacy and technology product manager, Cathy Senft-Graves, and Professor Cay Holbrook from the University of British Columbia for their work on the paper “Inspiring Literacy: Using Balanced, Comprehensive Reading and Writing Instruction within an Inclusive Environment to Support Braille-Reading Students.” Visit the [ICEB 2020 General Assembly webpage](#) to watch all of the paper presentation videos and download print and braille files of the papers.

[Resolutions approved by the 7th General Assembly](#) included the topics of “UEB Support in Digital Braille Tools” and “Availability of Braille during Times of National and International Crises.”

ICEB has seven member countries: Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom, and the United States. Multiple resources on UEB and other braille topics are available on the [ICEB website](#).

APH Change Makers

Change Makers: A Podcast from the American Printing House for the Blind highlights the people who are making the biggest difference in the blindness field. In honor of braille literacy month, our latest episode is titled “Is Braille Still Relevant.” Join us for a fascinating discussion as we talk with experts and leaders to get their thoughts on braille and if it can survive this new era.

Missed one? Don’t worry. Find [all episodes of Change Makers](#) on our website.

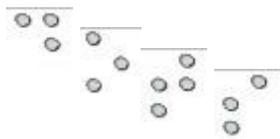


The Buzz News from the APH Hive

The Buzz: News from the APH Hive

Teachers, start braille literacy month off right by enrolling in the Early Childhood course Reinforcing Early Braille Literacy Skills. Discover how to enhance traditional braille instruction when working with emergent braille readers and learn all about the APH product [BrailleBuzz](#). Participants can earn one ACVREP credit hour upon completion of the course.

[Sign up for the APH Hive today!](#)



CONNECTING THE DOTS



Educational Corner



Developing Pre-Braille Skills with Reach & Match in a Fun Way



The [Reach & Match® Learning Kit](#) helps support tactile awareness and early braille development among preschoolers with visual impairments. Check out our latest blog post, written by developer Mandy Lau, to [discover how you can incorporate the Reach & Match® Learning Kit into your curriculum](#).

Order of Letter Introduction in BOP Prekindergarten

In [BOP \(Building on Patterns\) Prekindergarten](#), learning the dot configurations and rules governing braille are positioned in the larger context of learning to read and write. A new addition to the [frequently asked questions about BOP Pre-K](#) explains how the order of letter introduction in BOP Pre-K is designed to facilitate tactile discrimination and to promote other early literacy skills. The FAQ list is one of many [teacher resources](#) available on the [BOP website](#).



Building Your Braille Literacy Kit

Reading and writing are the foundations of a successful education and lifelong learning. Finding the right tools for each student's needs is important – that's why the American Printing House for the Blind has put together a list of some of their most popular braille literacy products and resources. Check it out at: <https://www.aph.org/building-your-braille-literacy-toolkit/>

New NLS Eligibility Guidelines Published!

The National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) has issued new eligibility guidelines for their services. The guidelines have been revised to align them with changes to copyright made by the Marrakesh Treaty Implementation Act (MTIA). Check out the new guidelines at the [Federal Register webpage](#).

While the new guidelines are important for NSL users, they also have an impact on NIMAS eligibility criteria. IDEA 2004 requires that students have an IEP **and** a qualifying disability in order to be eligible for materials produced from NIMAS. For the qualifying disability criterion, the legislation points to the NLS guidelines. For this reason, we recommend that all NIMAC users review the new guidelines.

A significant and positive change for NIMAS that I particularly wanted to note is that the pool of professionals that qualify to certify eligibility has been expanded:

- (2) Eligibility must be certified by one of the following: doctor of medicine, doctor of osteopathy, ophthalmologist, optometrist, psychologist, registered nurse, therapist, and professional staff of hospitals, institutions, and public or welfare agencies (such as an educator, a social worker, case worker, counselor, rehabilitation teacher, certified reading specialist, school psychologist, superintendent, or librarian).

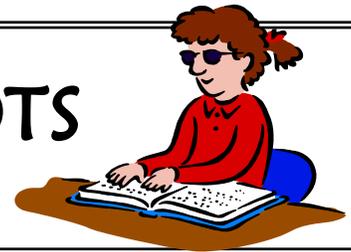
The NIMAC will soon be updating its Limitation of Use Agreements and Coordination Agreements to incorporate the updated language, and providing additional guidance related to the change.



That All May Read

NLS NATIONAL LIBRARY SERVICE FOR THE BLIND AND PRINT DISABLED LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

CONNECTING THE DOTS



Mattel Releases a Braille Version of UNO

Mattel and the National Federation of the Blind have partnered together to create a Braille edition of UNO®, the iconic family card game. UNO® has always prided itself on being a card game for everyone, but often blind and low-vision people found it difficult to participate. Now, with easily readable Braille dots on every card, blind and low-vision players can participate in the fun.

All players call out the cards they play during the game, and blind players may touch the discard pile to verify the card in play or call for a “Card Check” to determine how many cards are in each player’s hands. It all adds up to an inclusive experience for everyone!

For more information on where to purchase, check out the [Mattel Games website](#).



Braille Basics Webinar Series Beginning Braille

Beginning Braille is a 6-part webinar series developed by Stephanie Herlich, MA (CSB Assessment Center Coordinator; Teacher of the Visually Impaired/Orientation & Mobility Specialist) and provided by California School for the Blind. *Beginning Braille* is designed to introduce parents, caregivers, and paraprofessionals to the Unified English Braille Code. Participants in this course will learn alphabetic braille, numbers, basic punctuation, alphabetic word signs, and some of the most common short form words and initial letter contractions. Each lesson includes a description, examples, and independent practices with answers.

All that is required to complete these tutorials are motivation, internet connection, PC or Apple computer, the free [Perky Duck download](#), and the lesson materials.

** You can watch the full series at: <https://bit.ly/2ErNdUN>

2021 NFB BELL® Academy In-Home Edition: Applications Now Open!

The National Federation of the Blind is offering three virtual programs of the NFB BELL Academy this summer to prepare blind and low-vision children to grow into confident and independent blind people by enhancing their education. Options are available for beginner, intermediate, and advanced students for the following dates:

* Session 1 - June 7-18, 2021 * Session 2 - July 19-30, 2021 * Session 3 - August 9-20, 2021

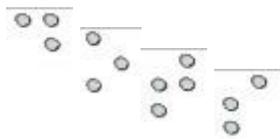
Receive Braille and other fun materials for lessons. Connect with experienced teachers. Build relationships with other blind students and mentors.

NFB BELL Academy, an annual summer program, is appropriate for blind and low-vision children, ages 4-12, who could benefit from more Braille exposure over the summer and would enjoy connecting with blind role models. While the program is typically in person across the country, we are excited to offer it virtually in 2021.

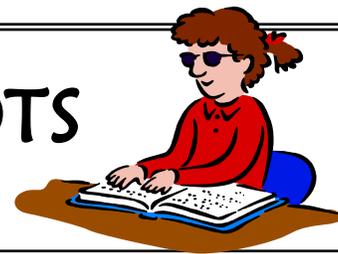
Apply Today

Take advantage of this opportunity for your child to connect with blind role models.

Limited space is available. Learn more and apply now! [English application](#) [Spanish application](#)



CONNECTING THE DOTS



LEGO® Braille Bricks

By Amy Gunning

Earlier this school year, the School for the Blind received a new, highly anticipated, fun braille-learning tool: LEGO® Braille Bricks, from the LEGO Foundation. As described on the LEGO Foundation's website, the LEGO® Braille Bricks concept is a play-based methodology that teaches braille to children who are blind or have a visual impairment. Each brick in the LEGO® Braille Bricks toolkit retains its iconic form, but unlike a regular LEGO® brick, the studs are arranged to correspond to numbers and letters in the Braille alphabet. Each brick shows the printed version of the symbol or letter, allowing sighted and blind children to play and learn together on equal terms. This ingenious combination of features opens up a whole new world of playful learning that teaches children Braille in an enjoyable and tactile environment. The LEGO Foundation and LEGO Group are behind this pioneering project that will help children with blindness or visual impairment learn Braille in a playful and engaging way using moderated LEGO bricks. We have teamed up with blind associations to develop, test and launch the concept known as LEGO® Braille Bricks. Retrieved from <https://www.LEGOFoundation.com>

Students learning print are surrounded by vast amounts of toys, games, puzzles, books and many other materials that make learning print very fun, engaging, and meaningful. The equivalent types of materials for students learning braille have not always been so readily available. One of the reasons these LEGO Braille Bricks have been so highly anticipated is because of their "learning through play" benefit. Each LEGO Braille Brick kit contains braille bricks with letters, basic punctuation symbols, number signs for creating numbers, and signs of operation math symbols so these LEGOS can be used across a variety of subject areas.

What makes these LEGO Braille Bricks so exciting is that they are designed to support tactile learning skills while being fun, interesting, motivating, engaging, and meaningful materials students can use to build and play. When learning visually, we receive whole-picture information instantaneously; learning tactually initially takes more time to explore/figure out individual pieces of information and then putting all those pieces together to form the whole-picture concept. Braille is an amazing literacy code based on a set of six dots presented in individual braille cells or in combination with two or more braille cells but learning it can be tricky. What makes learning braille tricky is figuring out which dots of each braille cell are there, which dots are not there, and where each dot is located within each braille cell and in relation to the adjoining braille cells. Developing the tactile perception skills to figure this all out is often challenging and time-consuming. These braille LEGOS have very enlarged braille dots that provide more tactually distinct patterns, which in turn provide more tactual information for figuring out each braille symbol.

Students of various ages, abilities, and stages of braille-learning in the School for the Blind have been enjoying playing with the LEGOS since being introduced to them earlier in the school year. Students have given us positive feedback about how much easier it is for them to figure out the braille on the LEGOS. Students who have had a hard time with learning braille despite being provided with a wide variety of braille-learning activities, strategies, and techniques are already showing more success with using these braille LEGOS and are expressing more interest in and excitement about learning braille. We have a whole lot more playing and learning to do, but for now these initial successes are sure making our teacher-hearts smile!



TRANSITION INFORMATION ABOUT MOVING ON!

Putting Your Best Foot Forward Weekly Job Search Skills Training Beginning January 2021

By Michele Reed

Knowing how to find a job is an important skill that you will likely use often over your lifetime. Research shows that youth and young adults with visual impairments who find jobs on their own are more likely to have a job in the future, so it is important to learn how to find your own job now!

The purpose of the *Putting Your Best Foot Forward* program is to develop your job search skills so you can use these skills to find a job.

During the *Putting Your Best Foot Forward* program, we practice things such as:

- how to interview for a job,
- how to write an effective cover letter and resume,
- how to find information about job openings, and
- how to contact employers.

We also cover issues related to starting a new job. This program can help you prepare for transition from school to work and find jobs that correspond to your professional goals, interests and abilities.

Starting January 7, students 15-21 are invited to join the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Blind and Low Vision services unit every Thursday 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. for *Putting Your Best Foot Forward*. The goals are to:

- Develop the job search skills for youth with visual impairments
- Strengthen youths' job search self-efficacy and confidence
- Encourage a proactive approach to finding employment
- Develop strategies to overcome barriers to employment

If you are interested in participating in this program, please complete the google registration form and return to Michele Reed at michele.reed@state.co.us.

[Putting Your Best Foot Forward- Job Search Skills Training for Youth with Visual Impairments Registration Link](#)

The Colorado Office of Employment First, in conjunction with the **Colorado Department of Education (ESSU/ Secondary Transition Team)** and the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation have published resources to share information to help create a reality of meaningful and competitive integrated employment for students with disabilities and their families.

Check out English and Spanish versions of at <https://employmentfirstcolorado.org/youth-families-educators/> :

- How to Get Employed
- Preparing for Employment During COVID-19
- Talking About Employment in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Process

Benefits Counseling: Unlock Your Potential

Additional resource: Transition Planning Checklist for Employment provides action steps for working with students with disabilities.



TRANSITION INFORMATION ABOUT MOVING ON!

2021 Summer Programs for Colorado Youth Who are Blind/Visually Impaired

World of Work: The Colorado Center for the Blind is offering a two week-long virtual program to students ages 13 - 21 from across the country. Before the first day of the program, students will receive a materials box that will include a slate, stylus, Braille instructional book, long white cane, sleep shades, tactile graphics, and more. Students will receive instruction in our four core subject areas of braille, technology, home management, and cane travel. In addition to this, we will hold workshops and activities that focus on career exploration and developing strong employment skills. These workshops include an employer panel, career interest assessment, mock interviews, and one-on-one informational interviews with professionals in your field of interest. The program will be held Monday through Thursday June 7 - June 17, 2021; we will meet on the Zoom Meeting platform from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. and from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Mountain Standard Time. The cost of the program is \$1,500 and includes tuition and the materials that will be shipped to students.

Cracking the College Code: This two week-long virtual program is being offered to students ages 13 - 21 from across the country. Before the first day of the program, students will receive a materials box that will include a slate, stylus, braille instructional book, long white cane, sleep shades, tactile graphics, and much more. Students will receive instruction in our four core subject areas of braille, technology, home management, & cane travel. In addition to this, we will hold workshops that focus on preparing for college, student life, and participating in hands-on STEM activities. These workshops include a college student panel, hands-on chemistry project, ADA workshop, conversation with a Disability Resource Office counselor, introductory robotics lesson, and more! The program will be held Monday through Thursday June 21 - July 1, 2021; we will meet on the Zoom Meeting platform from 9:00 to 11:00 AM and from 1:30 to 3:30 PM Mountain Standard Time. The cost of the program is \$1,500 and includes tuition and the materials that will be shipped to students.

No Limits to Learning: The Colorado Center for the Blind is offering a two week-long day program to students in the Denver Metro Area between ages 13 - 21. Space is limited to 12 students and we will take applicants on a first-come first-serve basis. In this program, students will receive instruction in our four core subject areas of Braille, Technology, Home Management, & Cane Travel in a maximum of 3-to-1 student/staff ratio. On the first day of classes, students will receive a slate, stylus, Braille instructional book, long white cane, and a pair of sleep shades. We know that using non-visual skills is the most effective and efficient way for a blind person to live a successful and independent life. This is why our blind staff fully implement the Structured Discovery teaching method, which allows our students to learn through their own experiences and problem-solving techniques. In addition to the classes mentioned above, we will hold a daily philosophy class in which staff and students will discuss a variety of topics that focus on developing a positive attitude on blindness. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in challenge recreation activities that will establish and grow their self-confidence. Local health department guidelines permitting, the program will be held Monday through Friday July 19 - July 30, 2021 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Mountain Standard Time. The cost of this program is \$2,000 and includes tuition, materials, local bus fare, and participation in all program activities.

For information on any of these Programs, please contact Martin Becerra-Miranda by emailing mbecerra@cocenter.org or by calling (303) 778-1130 Extension 253

just for PARENTS

National Family Association for Deaf-Blind

NFADB is the largest nonprofit organization serving families of individuals who are deaf-blind (combined vision and hearing loss). [Check out the NFADB website](#)

The organization provides information on deaf-blindness, hosts webinars on a variety of topics, and is very involved in national conferences to support families of children with deaf blindness.



Center for Parent Information and Resource Library

Find webinars, articles, stand-alone pages, publications. **Share** with families, professional support providers, staff. **Focus** searches with multiple filters on the results pages.

[Search the Parent Resource library for important resources.](#)



CSDB is offering Parent ECC Workshops

Hello Parents of Children/Students Who are Blind / Visually Impaired,

The Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind (CSDB) is offering Parent Expanded Core Curriculum Workshops beginning in February and continuing through June. We would love to see you on Zoom! [Please click to sign up for one or more of the workshops.](#) A zoom link will be emailed to you the week of the workshop!

Summary of Workshops:

- Independent Living Skills —Wednesday, March 17th 11:30am-12:30pm and Thursday, March 18th 5:30pm-6:30pm
- Assistive Technology - Wednesday, April 21st 11:30am-12:30pm and Thursday, April 22nd 5:30pm-6:30pm
- Recreation and Leisure—Wednesday, May 19th 11:30am-12:30pm and Thursday, May 20th 5:30pm-6:30pm
- Orientation and Mobility—Wednesday, June 2nd 11:30am-12:30pm and Thursday, June 3rd 5:30pm-6: 30pm

National Organization of Parents of Blind Children

Founded in 1983, the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children (NOPBC) is a membership organization of parents, educators, and friends of blind children reaching out to give each other vital support, encouragement, and information. They have thousands of members in all fifty states plus Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico.

The NOPBC offers hope, encouragement, information, and resources for parents of blind or low-vision children. NOPBC provides emotional support and a network for families. They also provide information, training, and resources to empower families to take an active role in guiding their child's development and education.

Their status is as a division of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), an important organization of blind people in the world, provides many benefits. NFB provides its members information about the societal, legislative, and technological issues that affect blind people. One of their most exciting activities is our annual conference. Every year since it was established, the NOPBC has conducted an annual conference for parents and teachers of blind children as part of the national convention of the NFB. The program has grown to include five exciting days of workshops, training sessions, activities for all family members, including sighted siblings, and countless opportunities to meet blind adults and other families and children from around the country.

Most states have an NOPBC affiliate chapter. Colorado has one!

For more information, call the Colorado Center for the Blind at (303) 778-1130.



just for PARENTS

Parent Modules from the IRIS Center

The IRIS Center has a host of excellent training materials. Check out these two items that have been created specifically for parents: <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/>

Family Engagement: Collaborating with Families of Students with Disabilities

This updated IRIS module addresses the importance of engaging the families of students with disabilities in their child's education. It highlights some of the key factors that affect these families and outlines some practical ways to build relationships and create opportunities for involvement.

Parents: Supporting Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

(Also available in [Spanish](#))

This resource offers tips to support your child's learning at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Blind Jazz Pianist Whitaker To Commemorate NLS Anniversary

The National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) commemorates its 90th anniversary with a virtual concert March 3 at 8:00pm Eastern Standard Time. The concert will be accessible via the [NLS YouTube page](#) and will remain available on that platform for two years.

The event will feature 19-year-old Jazz pianist Matthew Whitaker, blind since birth and an NLS patron who has used the Music Section's accessible scores and reading materials, the largest collection of its kind in the world, on his rise to fame. Whitaker has been featured on stages around the world, including Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, and the Lincoln Center.

For more information, follow [NLS on Facebook](#), check out the Library of Congress [Events](#) page, or visit the [NLS Music Notes](#) blog.

Survey Says!



The University of Nebraska—Lincoln is conducting a survey about how writing is used and taught to students with visual impairments. The survey will take 15-20 minutes to complete. The survey asks questions about the kinds of writing activities might be used with our students. TVIs completing the survey will receive a \$5 Amazon e-gift card for their time.

If you agree to help, click on the following link to participate in the survey: https://unlcba.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9nlzu82gT1zjKsZ

If you have any questions, you can contact Mackenzie Savaiano at msavaiano2@unl.edu or Michael Hebert at michael.hebert@unl.edu.

just for PARENTS

Parent Training Opportunities in Colorado Department Of Education

Dear Families,

Are you looking for a way to help your blind or low vision child get more? Whether you are looking with more time with a certified teacher of the visually impaired, more peer interaction with blind/low vision students, or more access to non-visual learning provided by blind people who learn non-visually every day, check out our new Supplemental Support Program designed with you and your child in mind. This program is developed to support pre K through 12 students who are blind or low vision and their parents in both academics and activities of daily life.

Beginning in March, the second Sunday of the month, parents are invited to join us for an interactive Zoom webinar where Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI's), Professional educators and other successful blind adults discuss and answer questions related to assistive technology, remote learning, daily living skills, and much more. We will continue with the Learning Box in February. The fourth Sunday of each month, students will have an opportunity to participate in a Learning Box project. Each box is designed with engaging and challenging projects/activities related to math, science, literacy, and social studies. Students will receive everything necessary to participate in each activity right inside their learning box. They will join together with other blind students for a dynamic and interactive learning experience.

Cost:

The first lesson is free!

The monthly fee for a Learning Box activity is \$25.

You can subscribe by paying for six months at \$125.

You can subscribe for a year at \$250.

If you need financial assistance, you can email us at oloradoparentsofblindchildren@gmail.com.

February Learning Box Lesson:

The activity will be on February 28, 2021 from 2:00 to 3:00 pm

Elementary students will be making eatable dirt or sand with gummy worms. Middle/high school students will be making a cake in a mug. They will also receive measuring cups, measuring spoons, and some labelling materials.

Please register by February 19, 2021, so we have enough time to get materials to you.

Please include whether your student has any food allergies.

Please register your student [here](#).

The Zoom information for the Learning Box activity is:

National Federation of the Blind of Colorado is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting about the Learning Box.

Join Zoom Meeting <https://zoom.us/j/96651797524?pwd=N2h6SDVrSURJaU12UXY5SjFaMkZnQT09>

Meeting ID: 966 5179 7524; Passcode: 111111

Dial by your location: +1 646 876 9923

Meeting ID: 966 5179 7524

We look forward to working with you and your students! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at coloradoparentsofblindchildren@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Michelle Chacon, Committee Chair / Certified Teacher of Students with a Visual Impairment

Amira Lucas, President of Colorado Parents of Blind Children



Winter 2021 Online PEP Academy

Friday, January 29
Saturday, January 30
Saturday, February 6
Saturday, February 13

Spring 2021 Online PEP Academy

Friday, March 19
Saturday, March 20
Saturday, March 27
Saturday, April 3

Live Sessions:

- Opening Session
- Parenting a Child with a Disability and Rebuilding Dreams
- Living with a Disability
- Positive Behavior Supports
- Panel for Questions and Answers
- Three Facilitated Small Group Discussions

Self-Paced Content Sessions:

- The Law and the Education of Children with Disabilities
- Early Childhood Supports and Services
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Transition IEP
- Facilitated IEPs
- Significant Support Needs
- Executive Function Skills
- Advocating with Your Child/Teen
- Mental Health



COLORADO
Department of Education

2020-2021 PEP Academy

Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP) Conferences is offering an Online PEP Academy in 2021. PEP brings families and professionals together by sharing ideas, discussing concerns, celebrating successes and obtaining information related to parenting, educating and partnering to support student learning. PEP is a non-specific disability conference that focuses on commonalities.

Who is encouraged to participate

- Colorado families who have a child with a disability birth-21
- Directors of special education, principals, special education teachers, general education teachers, related service providers
- Health care and Colorado professionals interested in the family and school partnership and who work with children or youth with disabilities

What to expect

Live and self-paced sessions that help promote family and school partnerships which are essential in supporting students with disabilities. Participants will have two weeks to complete the online PEP Academy program. Of no cost to attendees.

When

The PEP Academy opens on a Friday evening and continues for two to four hours live on three Saturdays. Live and self-paced sessions will be available to confirmed participants.

Where

Confirmed participants will be sent directions with links to access PEP Academy online from a desktop computer, laptop or other mobile device.

Apply Now!

www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/pep

Or contact the PEP Hotline: (303) 866-6846

Sign language and other language interpretations are available. If you need an accommodation, please request it on your application.

Colorado Department of Education
1560 Broadway, Suite 1100, Denver, CO 80202 • 303-866-6943 • ramer_d@cde.state.co.us



**Está
invitado**

Academia PEP en línea de invierno 2021

Viernes, 29 de enero
Sábado, 30 de enero
Sábado, 6 de febrero
Sábado, 13 de febrero

Academia PEP en línea de primavera 2021

Viernes, 19 de marzo
Sábado, 20 de marzo
Sábado, 27 de marzo
Sábado, 3 de abril

Sesiones en vivo:

- Sesión de apertura
- Cómo educar a un niño con una discapacidad y reconstruir los sueños
- Viviendo con una discapacidad
- Apoyos a la conducta positiva
- Panel de preguntas y respuestas
- Tres debates facilitados en pequeños grupos

Sesiones de contenido a ritmo propio:

- La ley y la educación para niños con discapacidades
- Apoyos y servicios para la primera infancia
- Programa de Educación Individualizada (IEP)
- IEP de transición
- IEP facilitados
- Necesidades de apoyo significativas
- Habilidades de la función ejecutiva
- Abogar con su hijo/adolescente
- Salud mental



COLORADO
Department of Education

Academia PEP 2020-2021

Las Conferencias de Padres Alentando a Padres (PEP) está ofreciendo una Academia PEP en línea en 2021. PEP reúne a las familias y a los profesionales compartiendo ideas, discutiendo preocupaciones, celebrando los éxitos y obteniendo información relacionada con la crianza, la educación y la asociación para apoyar el aprendizaje de los estudiantes. PEP es una conferencia sobre discapacidad no específica que se centra en los puntos comunes.

A quién se anima a participar

- Las familias de Colorado que tienen un niño con una discapacidad desde el nacimiento hasta los 21 años
- Directores de educación especial, directores, maestros de educación especial, maestros de educación general, proveedores de servicios relacionados
- Profesionales del cuidado de la salud y de Colorado interesados en la asociación entre la familia y la escuela y que trabajan con niños o jóvenes con discapacidades

Qué debe esperar

Sesiones en vivo y a su ritmo propio que ayudan a promover las asociaciones familiares y escolares que son esenciales para apoyar a los estudiantes con discapacidades. Los participantes tendrán dos semanas para completar el programa de la Academia PEP en línea. Sin costo alguno para los asistentes.

Cuándo

La Academia PEP abre un viernes por la noche y continúa de dos a cuatro horas en vivo los tres sábados. Se ofrecerán sesiones en vivo y a ritmo propio a los participantes confirmados.

Dónde

A los participantes confirmados se les enviarán direcciones con enlaces para acceder a la Academia PEP en línea desde una computadora de escritorio, portátil u otro dispositivo móvil.

¡Aplique ahora!

www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/pep

O contacte con la línea directa de PEP: (303) 866-6846

Se dispone de interpretaciones en lenguaje de señas y otros idiomas. Si necesita un alojamiento, por favor solicítelo en su aplicación.

Colorado Department of Education
1560 Broadway, Suite 1100, Denver, CO 80202 • 303-866-6943 • ramer_d@cde.state.co.us

jobs

IMPORTANT! We have JOB OPENINGS!!

Please be proactive with current vacancies for the current school year. Please keep in touch with Tanni about your job openings. If you know of an anticipated opening in your part of the state, please begin working to recruit someone into our field by ensuring he or she has an opportunity to learn about being a TVI and/or an O&M Specialist. This may be a para-educator, a brailist, and/or a colleague already in the teaching profession.

Please work with Dr. Paula Conroy to learn more about the UNC distance education / graduate program to prepare TVIs and O&M Specialists in Colorado! TVI = teacher of students with visual impairments and O&M Specialist = orientation and mobility specialist.

Metro Region—Jobs

- ◆ **TVI/O&M Specialist** (1 FTE) Jefferson County School District. Please contact Travis Durocher at Travis.Durocher@jeffco.k12.co.us

Southern Region —Jobs

- ◆ **TVI / O&M Specialist** (1 FTE) Academy 20 School District. Please contact Belinda Lujan-Lindsey at Belinda.lujan@asd20.org or (719) 234-1328
- ◆ **TVI** (1FTE) El Paso 11 School District. Please contact Nancy Maresh Melo at Nancy.Mareshmelo@d11.org for more information.

TVIs and O&M Specialists—If you are getting ready to retire, please do not let your CDE teaching and/or support services licenses expire, as you are in a great position to keep contributing in the future with part-time or substitute work.

Please keep in touch with Tanni, if you are interested in this type of work after your retirement! We are seeing many retired TVIs and O&M Specialists come back to contribute as subs for maternity leave, do contract work, and/or work at A Shared Vision. If you are interested in working with A Shared Vision on a part time basis, please reach out to Steven Lindauer at slindauer@asharedvision.org You can work at your pace and needs! Magic!

If you want to be added to CDE's contract list, please be in touch with Tanni at Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us



VISION COALITION MEETING MINUTES

February 18, 2021

Persons in Attendance: Tanni Anthony, Martin Becerra, Melinda Carter, Nancy Cozart, Jayme Cusimano, Melissa French, Julie King, Paula Landry, Jamie Lugo, Jim Olson, and Michele Reed

Absent: Deb Andrews

MISSION OF THE VISION COALITION: The purpose of the Vision Coalition is to bring the collective resources of the group together to address state priorities improving services to students who are blind/visually impaired. (April 1998)

ACRONYM LEGEND

ASV	A Shared Vision
BVI	Blind / Visually Impaired
CAER	CO Chapter of the Association of the Education/Rehabilitation of the Blind/Visually Impaired
CCB	Colorado Center for the Blind
CDE	Colorado Department of Education
CIMC	Colorado Instructional Materials Center
COMS	certified orientation and mobility specialist
CSDB	Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind
DVR	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
ESSU	Exceptional Student Services Unit
O&M	Orientation and Mobility
TVI/TSVI	Teacher of students with blindness/visual impairments

MEMBERS OF VISION COALITION FOR THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR

- A Shared Vision – Paula Landry
- Anchor Center for Blind Children – Melinda Carter
- Colorado AER Chapter – Nancy Cozart
- Colorado Center for the Blind Youth Program – Martin Becerra-Miranda
- Colorado Department of Education – Tanni Anthony
- Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation – Michele Reed
- Colorado Instructional Materials Center – Jim Olson
- Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind – Jamie Lugo
- Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind Outreach – Jayme Cusimano
- Metro TVI / COMS– Nancy Cozart
- Northern TVI / COMS – Melissa French
- Southern TVI / COMS – Deb Andrews
- University of Northern Colorado – no representative for school year 2020-21
- Western TVI / COMS - Julie King

Norms of the Vision Coalition: Stay present. Verbally identify yourself before you speak. If we get into a serious discussion, please wait for your turn (we will assign someone to take stock of who is next in the discussion). Vision Coalition meetings are a confidential environment. We are here for the common good of students, families, and our profession. In the spirit of improvement, we will bring important issues to the table.

Decision Protocol: In instances where a vote may be taken to decide of the Vision Coalition membership, a fist of 5, 3, or 1 will be used. 5 = agreement / can live with the decision; 3 = need more information to decide; and 1 = cannot approve the decision. A majority vote of 5 will indicate that the decision will move forward.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We say farewell to Julie Hutchinson, who has moved to Oregon to start a new job. Welcome to Melissa French, our new northern Vision Coalition representative!

PROGRAM UPDATES

Metro Region (Nancy Cozart)

On February 11th, metro TVIs had a virtual meeting on the topic of interpreting eye reports with Jim Olson. Jim threaded this information from the base of information provided at a recent BVI office hour. Jim addressed the 6 Takeaways from an Eye Report. He then included ideas to pre-teach and post-teach students based on his/her eye exam. Ideas were also shared on possible in-service activities for staff working with a particular student that is new, has had changes to visual function, etc. Jim has offered to talk with TVIs who have a question about an eye report, to address what an atypical acronym means or similar questions. This would be offered for students that have current eye reports and parent/guardian has signed paperwork with the CIMC.

Other info shared:

- √ Jim shared a new CIMC Reference Sheet regarding eye reports online.
- √ Rishika Kartik, President of CCB Tactile Art Club, wants to be sure word is getting out each month to all who want to participate. Also, she is running a grant, Vision of the Artist's Soul. She has invited artists to lead evening events for those with vision loss of all ages. If signed up in time, all needed materials are sent to the person in advance of each event. In addition, Rishika is on a development team for the CLEW app. "Clew is an iOS app that records a user's path and then guides the user back to his starting point. Clew was created to help travelers who are visually impaired to remember a location such as returning to a seat in a room. Designed to work indoors, Clew uses augmented reality to record landmarks along your route." She is hoping to connect with COMS who have used it or would like to try it out with students/clients and get feedback.
- √ Cerebral / cortical visual impairment continues to be an area of significant importance to address with TVIs across the state. Colorado TVIs have had several opportunities to gain more knowledge about this unique condition for many of our students. A bit of discussion occurred at the beginning of our meeting that included: (a) Ensuring CVI is diagnosed by medical professionals, not all kids with significant disabilities that have vision issues/questions have CVI; (b) ideas have been shared on assessment, including it is important to assess in natural, familiar environments over several sessions; (c) there has been more training on Phase I and early Phase II (Roman-Lantzy) than on later Phase II and Phase III. This is a specific request for further training beyond bubbling letters.

Discussion Items:

- *How/Who could we receive training on literacy for older students with CVI? What are resources for late stage 2 and 3 phases?* Tanni shared that the CO Deaf-Blind Project can support both material development, as well as additional training. Diane Sheline was such a strong resource, and it was great to have the Make and Takes. It may be a good idea to check with CVI experts about next steps with reading strategies. If anyone has any ideas for presentations, please be in touch with Tanni.
- *Letters from pediatricians noting vision concerns, diagnosis, and/or should receive vision services in school.*
Assignments: Tanni can check to see if CDE has any guidance on educational recommendations coming from medical practitioners. In the interim, TVIs are encouraged to seek guidance from their special education directors.
- *Out-of-date eye exams- continue services, only provide accommodations, drop?* There are always individual circumstances such as funding, family priority, etc. This seems to be an area of variability for continued special education services. Some districts may discontinue services until an updated eye exam can occur. We know that there are eye conditions that are at risk for secondary complications of glaucoma or cataracts, as well as children who will have changing refractive error – and, as such, the child would benefit from regularly scheduled eye exams. It is recommended that if a child is due for eye care follow-up due to secondary concerns and/or refractive needs, that it is documented that the parent was given information about the need for eye care follow-up.

- *Teller acuity cards- Sometimes used as a visual acuity rather than actual purpose; Have docs used these to determine eligibility as legally blind?* Teller preferential looking cards provide acuity resolution information and not acuity recognition. For some learners preferential looking materials provide important information for a child who cannot verbally identify a symbol or match symbols. TVIs are encouraged to work with the eye care specialist to interpret results. Follow-up FVA and LMA will provide more detail on the educational impact of the vision condition and need for specially designed instruction.
- *Following up again on dual licensure TVI/COMS- concern for longer hours without pay to do 2 jobs; stipends? Can we develop more awareness documents to provide clarification on the two roles for district administrators?*
Assignment: Regional reps, please see who might be interested in working together on this topic over the summer.
- *Resources needed for mental health specific to students with vision loss and remote learning; staff.* TVIs are encouraged to work within their school districts for counseling services. If this might be a good topic of the BVI Office Hours for securing such supports, let Tanni know.

The last Metro Meeting of the year is on April 22 from 3:30-5:00

Northern Region (Melissa French)

On February 12th we held our Northern Colorado Region TVI meeting virtually. Our discussion items included goal ball, eye reports, testing accommodations, braille competency testing, and the Colorado READ Act.

Goal ball is coming to the Northern Colorado region! If you have students interested in goal ball, Michael Wright is taking the lead on putting a league together. He can be contacted at michael.wright@weldre5j.org

Our next meeting will be scheduled for April.

Discussion items:

- *The region is specifically looking for guidance around eye reports. One question that was asked is what you do when you get a referral and no eye report, an old eye report, or a verbal diagnosis from parent?* A visual examination is a part of eligibility determination process for children with visual impairment, including blindness. It is important to work within your IEP team structure to address the need for this information. The TVI should always document the date of the most recent eye report and make a note of information that is not current. If there is not sufficient information to move forward with continued eligibility, the IEP team should work with the family to have an updated eye examination of the child. This recommendation should be documented.
- *The discussion also included conversations about The Children’s Hospital as it relates to eye reports. Can the Children’s Hospital include acuities or meets definition of blindness or functions at a definition of blindness on the report? Fixes and follows and central study maintained are not accepted acuity’s for federal quota count.* It is likely that this language is used with children who cannot participate in a visual acuity test during the eye examination. We are hopeful that we can encourage doctors to use the state template form. TVIs are encouraged to give the form to the parents ahead of the eye examination. It may be time to reach out to the eye doctors to revisit this issue. Regions can also take up this as a problem-solving activity. It may be helpful to highlight the section of the form that details “meets definition or functions at a definition of blindness” on the form with a note requesting that this information be addressed during the exam.

Southern Region (Jim Olson)

We hosted the Southern Region TVI-DVR Meeting virtually on January 15th using the Zoom platform. 20 attendees from San Juan BOCES, San Luis Valley BOCES, South Central BOCES, Pikes Peak BOCES, DVR, El Paso County District 49, CSDB School for the Blind, CSDB Outreach Programs and Services, and the CIMC.

Agenda topics included: A review of DVR services from the CDE Office Hours meeting with Michel Reed. Group discussions about (1) retention of braille readers; (2) TVI role/responsibilities for working with a student with optic nerve hypoplasia who demonstrates significant behavior issues; (3) which formal assessments does everyone use for triennial re-evaluations? Who administers them to braille readers? (a school psychologist, administration by someone licensed); and (4) the new “Braille Authority of North America Guidelines for the Transcription of Early Educational Materials from Print to Braille” publication; (5) a review of student’s eye reports submitted by local TVIs (with student

information redacted); (6) Updates for JAWS, ZoomText, and Fusion software for 2021; (7) Braille Challenge contests. (8) SeeTheFuture.org scholarship deadline March 1st. (9) Braille book orders for next school year are due to the CIMC no later than April 1, 2021 but districts are encouraged to place orders sooner.

Upcoming meeting dates: February 19 (7:30-8:30 am); March 19 (2:30-3:30pm); April 16 (7:30-8:30am); and May 21 (2:30-3:30pm). Email agenda items and discussion items to Jim Olson at jolson@cscdb.org.

Discussion item:

- *ESY for students with visual impairments, including blindness. Please see the CDE guidance on this topic (see below):*

ESY: How do TVIs handle Extended School Year? CDE has ESY guidance on their website. Extended School Year Services (ESY)

Q1: What are extended school year services?

Extended school year services are defined as special education and related services that are provided beyond the normal school year and in accordance with the student's IEP, at no cost to the parents. ESY services are only provided when a student's IEP Team makes an individualized determination that the services are necessary for the provision of FAPE. ESY services are appropriate when the body of evidence demonstrates that the student will experience a severe loss of skills or knowledge that will significantly jeopardize the educational benefit gained during the regular school year .

Q2: How might the suspension of in-person instruction due to COVID-19 impact extended school year Extended School Year (ESY) services?

For students who have already been determined eligible for ESY, the school district should—to the greatest extent possible— provide the ESY services identified in the student's IEP. Recognizing that exceptional circumstances may affect how ESY services are provided, FAPE may include special education and related services provided through distance instruction deemed reasonable and appropriate for a specific student, in consultation with parents, which may include services that are provided virtually, online, telephonically, and through paper and pencil tasks.

For students who have not yet been determined eligible for ESY, the school district should make a good faith effort to proceed with making the annual determination as to whether a specific student is eligible for ESY services. Recognizing that exceptional circumstances may affect the data normally used to make this determination, the CDE encourages school districts to use available and existing data, including prior eligibility for ESY, to answer the guiding questions and address the predictive factors described in CDE's ESY Guidelines Manual when determining eligibility.

Specific to COVID-related circumstances, the IEP Team should also examine the effect of the suspension of in-person learning on the student's progress toward their IEP goals. Providing appropriate ESY services may reduce the need for compensatory education services when schools return to normal operations, particularly for students for whom the suspension of in-person instruction has had a significant impact.

Western Region (Julie King)

The western slope team met virtually February 4th. Congratulations to Stephanie and Derek Crosen expecting their first child in April and Brooke and Chris Miller expecting their sixth child in May. Two students from Grand Junction and one of Brooke Miller's students will be participating in the Braille Challenge. The annual Telluride ski trip with Meghan's students has been cancelled this year.

Topics of discussion included virtual instruction, assessing students with significant support needs virtually, reorganization in San Juan BOCES, helpful webinars and options regarding the Read Act. First, some students are not attending scheduled virtual lessons. Besides documenting absences and continuing to schedule future sessions, are there other suggestions to encourage participation? Second, are there specific strategies for virtually assessing students with significant support needs for initial and triennial evaluations? How can we get accurate assessment results and data in the home learning environment? In addition, if students go back to in person learning are these assessments still valid in the school environment or should additional testing be done? Third, there was discussion

regarding reorganizing TVI and O&M positions in San Juan BOCES.

Currently there are two contract TVIs and one COMS providing services in the region. San Juan BOCES is exploring one full time position who is dually certified. Next, the team discussed webinars. Several members recommended TSBVI coffee hour. They felt it was offered at a good time during the day and provides great information. Finally, the team discussed requirements for the READ Act. Several members have signed up for the CDE class offered online. One person is considering taking the Praxis. There was discussion regarding the timeline to completing the requirements. Some felt the end of this school year was not as realistic as the end of the 2021 calendar year. More clarification was requested. *Discussion:* It was clarified that the updated expectation for completion is January 31, 2022.

The next Western slope meeting is scheduled for March 11th.

Discussion Items:

- *What happens when a student frequently misses virtual lessons due to family circumstances?* It is suggested to work to glean what the root cause(s) are for these missed lessons. Is it tied to platform inaccessibility, family resources, mental health issues, or other issues? Once a cause(s) has been deciphered, what can the district do to address the issue? It was also suggested that lessons be recorded, if possible, for later review. Work within existing school resources and policies.
- *How best to support students with significant support needs with virtual instruction? How best to provide FVA and LMA in virtual environments?* If possible, can students be brought into the school environment for assessments in this environment? Can staff go into the homes? Virtual assessments are complicated and limited. Do what can be done with the goal of completing an assessment update/amendment when they can return to in-person learning. It is important to know what can and cannot be done and have a game plan for updating information when school returns to in-person learning. It may be helpful to read through the CDE Exceptional Student Services Unit Q and A on Contingency Learning Plans. https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/special_education_faqs#contingency

A Shared Vision (Paula Landry)

Our utmost priority continues to be the safety and health of our families and our providers. Per Early Intervention Colorado guidelines, virtual visits remain the primary method of our service delivery. As our teachers continue to provide services through telehealth, we are defining new approaches and often teaming with other early intervention providers.

This month we are welcoming three new teachers to our team – Stephanie Crosen, Morgan Fitzpatrick, and Melissa French – to keep up with the demand for vision services across the state. Even with the challenges of delivering services during the pandemic, the number of children and families served by A Shared Vision’s EI-TVI’s increased 5% in 2020.

We continue to provide training for professionals to conduct vision screening via telehealth. More than 700 early intervention professionals have been trained to date, including Child Find and Early Head Start teams, early intervention professionals, and CCB service coordinators on how to use and score the Vision Screening Parent Questionnaire developed by the Colorado Department of Education. Over 450 EI professionals are now qualified to use the protocol to determine when a referral to a pediatric eye doctor and an EI-TVI is warranted.

This March, A Shared Vision will be conducting a webinar on the vision screening tool for the Colorado chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Familiarity with the new Parent Questionnaire, especially the behaviors, will assist a pediatrician or other pediatric professionals during their examination of very young children. A webinar for the Colorado Optometric Association is also in the works. If you or your team is interested in learning more about vision screening training for children birth to age three, contact Steve Lindauer at slindauer@asharedvision.org

Anchor Center for Blind Children (Melinda Carter)

After Anchor had to be shut down again from mid-November to January 19, we are back in full swing with our Infant/Toddler programs and preschool. Parents have been excited to be back, as are we. We also have a few families who are not comfortable in returning to in-person just yet, and for them we offer virtual programming.

Anchor has started registration for the 2021-22 preschool program and at this time we will have the potential for 35 preschoolers. We are also moving to an inclusive model and hope to have 4 staff children join as “sighted peers” in a couple of our classrooms.

We have started planning for our Anchor’s Away Summer Camp and Summer Sprouts. After having to cancel last summer, we are hopeful these programs will be back this year. Summer Sprouts is for Infants, Toddlers and their siblings and is held on four consecutive Mondays in July. The Anchor’s Away Summer Camp will be held over two weeks, Tuesday-Friday, July 13-16 and 20-23 for current preschoolers, Anchor graduates up to age 6 and their siblings.

Anchor has also started our CVI Initiative with the first step in actively searching for the CVI Director. This person will lead the CVI Team. This new branch of service will include the addition of CVI screening and assessments, research to advance the understanding of CVI and training for parents, caregivers, educators, and healthcare professionals. More information is available on our website www.anchorcenter.org

Currently, we are looking for a Horticultural Therapist to replace Erin Lovely who has been at Anchor for six years. She has decided to take a full-time position with Craig Hospital.

Colorado AER Chapter (Nancy Cozart)

CAER is working hard to provide trainings for its membership. Thanks to Anitha Muthukumaran, TVI, for her wonderful presentation on 3-D printing! Abstract: Children with visual impairments need access to learning materials presented in more than one sensory modality. The current application of three-dimensional (3D) printers in schools has been limited to strengthen science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) experiences of students in mainstream classrooms. Based on the pedagogical needs of non-visual learners, teachers of students with visual impairments (TVIs) can use 3D printers available in schools to create customized tactile models. This paper presents several strategies for TVIs to create accessible learning materials using 3D printing technology that will enhance inclusive practices for students with visual impairments.

Upcoming trainings include:

- March 18, 2021- Use of Androids by Heather Solberg, CAER President
- April 22, 2021- O&M virtual instruction by Karin Hensel, TVI & Rebecca Gardom, COMS at the VA

In the Fall- Dates TBD

- Tactile Maps- information from Trina Boyd Pratt, CAER Mini Grant Recipient 2020
- Head Wearables (magnification tools) - by Michelle Robinson at the VA, Secretary of CAER
- Tai Chi and O&M- by Rebecca Gardom, COMS at the VA

Upcoming Board Meeting Dates and Google Meet Link: All are welcome to attend!

Join with Google Meet - meet.google.com/mnx-zkdz-juu.

Future Meeting Dates: March 11, April 8, May 13, and June 10

CAER Equipment Donations: Currently there is a Merlin CCTV available.

The Annual CAER Banquet will be held virtually as a breakfast on Friday May 7, 2021. Look for more information coming soon! The banquet will be in alignment with the CDE O&M Seminar, which will be held on May 6-7.

Nominations Open for CAER Awards: (Gary Schmidt Award, Ken Neve Award, Community Connections Award, Lifetime Achievement Award) Please send nominations to the CAER board at caerboard@gmail.com.

CAER Board Contacts:

Heather Solberg (president)	hwpersons@hotmail.com	Barbara Galgano	bgalgano@cherrycreekschools.org
Nancy Cozart (treasurer)	ncozart@lps.k12.co.us	Paula Conroy	paula.conroy@unco.edu
Michelle Robinson (Secretary)	blindsign@yahoo.com	Jeannie Lei	jlei@cherrycreekschools.org
Rebecca Gardom	rebecca.gardom@va.gov	Stephanie Crosen	stephanie.crosen@summitk12.org

Upcoming Meeting Dates: Time is 5:45 – 7:00 p.m. - March 11; April 8; May 13; and June 10

meet.google.com/mnx-zkdz-juu Join by phone (US) +1 347-954-0600 (PIN: 769125319)

Colorado DVR (Michele Reed)

Please note that DVR and the Blind Low Vision Services Unit are open and continue to accept referrals, complete intakes, and provide Personal Adjustment Training. If you have a student that needs to complete a DVR referral to participate in our Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), please contact Audrey Wille at audrey.wille@state.co.us. If you have any questions regarding the referral process for Pre-ETS, please contact Michele Reed at michele.reed@state.co.us.

Staff Updates: Our current vacancies include a Field Instructor (O&M/VRT) in Pueblo office and a Rehabilitation Counselor in the Golden office. Starting in February 2021, Nicole Renee Grandberry is our new Rehabilitation Counselor in the Denver Metro Office.

The Personal Adjustment Training Unit continues to provide training in the community. We continue to discuss and examine ways to provide comprehensive services to the people we serve that include remote training, in-person training when essential, outdoor O&M training, and Zoom groups (Reflections, Enrichment Hour, Women's Group, and a Braille Group).

This January, the Blind and Low Vision Services Unit at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation launched a job seeker skills training for students 15-21 called *Putting Your Best Foot Forward*.

Through discussions, group activities, and individual activities, students learn the ins and outs of finding a job, that includes what employers are looking for in employees, how to present his or her skills well, and the best sources for information about jobs.

Students participating in this program will complete such activities as developing a resume, filling out job applications, contacting employers, analyzing a job post, and participating in job interviews.

The curriculum is divided into five units and each unit is divided into 1.5-hour long sessions that are offered on Thursday evenings 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. until the end of May 2021. We offer office hours on Tuesday to work on individual activities that are completed by the student as part of their work portfolio.

Registration is open to interested students. Here is the link to register for the program:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Xuq3fSBetv_O558JqfQCHfieMCuBr4bzB713YZmDw0/edit

Once a student registers for the program, the student will receive a student workbook and the Zoom link to join the club.

Stay tuned for *Creating Connections and Exploring Possibilities*, information sessions regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services available to students 15-21 in March and April 2021.

Attendees will learn about the following:

- o Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
- o Pre-Employment Transition Services Provided by DVR
- o When to Make a Referral to DVR?
- o Youth Programs (Pre-ETS Services) vs. Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- o When to Contact a Counselor?
- o What can DVR offer to you and your student?
- o Upcoming Pre-Employment Transition activities

During these sessions, BLVS will announce summer activities and workshops that will be available to students.

Colorado Center for The Blind Youth Programs (Martin Becerra-Miranda)

Staff News: Brent Batron is no longer with the Colorado Center. We thank him for his time in this role!

CCB/CSDB Mentoring Program: The Colorado Center for the Blind and the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind are once again holding our mentoring program. It is virtual and will be taking place monthly, on the third Tuesday of each month from 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. Topics that will be covered include Professions & Career Development, Identifying & Managing Stress, Mindfulness, and Cultural Trivia.

FAST Program (Fun Activities and Skills Training): Our monthly FAST Zoom meetings are taking place monthly on the fourth Wednesday of each month from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. During our January meeting, we discussed setting reasonable and obtainable goals for the New Year and finding ways to set short-term goals that will help us reach our long-term goals. Topics that will be covered in upcoming meetings include Technology that students have found helpful or difficult to use during virtual learning, All Topics Welcomed, Social Hour, and sharing details for our Colorado Center for the Blind Summer Programs.

2021 Summer Programs:

World of Work: The Colorado Center for the Blind is offering a two week-long virtual program to students ages 13 - 21 from across the country. Before the first day of the program, students will receive a materials box that will include a slate, stylus, Braille instructional book, long white cane, sleep shades, tactile graphics, and more. Students will receive instruction in our four core subject areas of braille, technology, home management, and cane travel. In addition to this, we will hold workshops and activities that focus on career exploration and developing strong employment skills. These workshops include an employer panel, career interest assessment, mock interviews, and one-on-one informational interviews with professionals in your field of interest. The program will be held Monday through Thursday June 7 - June 17, 2021; we will meet on the Zoom Meeting platform from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. and from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Mountain Standard Time. The cost of the program is \$1,500 and includes tuition and the materials that will be shipped to students.

Cracking the College Code: This two week-long virtual program is being offered to students ages 13 - 21 from across the country. Before the first day of the program, students will receive a materials box that will include a slate, stylus, braille instructional book, long white cane, sleep shades, tactile graphics, and much more. Students will receive instruction in our four core subject areas of braille, technology, home management, & cane travel. In addition to this, we will hold workshops that focus on preparing for college, student life, and participating in hands-on STEM activities. These workshops include a college student panel, hands-on chemistry project, ADA workshop, conversation with a Disability Resource Office counselor, introductory robotics lesson, and more! The program will be held Monday through Thursday June 21 - July 1, 2021; we will meet on the Zoom Meeting platform from 9:00 to 11:00 AM and from 1:30 to 3:30 PM Mountain Standard Time. The cost of the program is \$1,500 and includes tuition and the materials that will be shipped to students

No Limits to Learning: The Colorado Center for the Blind is offering a two week-long day program to students in the Denver Metro Area between ages 13 - 21. Space is limited to 12 students and we will take applicants on a first-come first-serve basis. In this program, students will receive instruction in our four core subject areas of Braille, Technology, Home Management, & Cane Travel in a maximum of 3-to-1 student/staff ratio. On the first day of classes, students will receive a slate, stylus, Braille instructional book, long white cane, and a pair of sleep shades. We know that using non-visual skills is the most effective and efficient way for a blind person to live a successful and independent life. This is why our blind staff fully implement the Structured Discovery teaching method, which allows our students to learn through their own experiences and problem-solving techniques. In addition to the classes mentioned above, we will hold a daily philosophy class in which staff and students will discuss a variety of topics that focus on developing a positive attitude on blindness. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in challenge recreation activities that will establish and grow their self-confidence. Local health department guidelines permitting, the program will be held Monday through Friday July 19 - July 30, 2021 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Mountain Standard Time. The cost of this program is \$2,000 and includes tuition, materials, local bus fare, and participation in all program activities.

Confidence Camps may occur in a couple of locations in late June and July. This is ages 4-12. Details will be forthcoming. For information on any of our Youth Programs, please contact Martin Becerra-Miranda by emailing mbecerra@cocenter.org or by calling (303) 778-1130 Extension 253.

Colorado Instructional Material Center (Jim Olson)

PLEASE TURN IN YOUR COUNT INFORMATION!

Statewide Registration Database Count: Due date to return completed database edits: Friday, February 26th. Only students with signed Parent Consent Forms (the most current version has a Part I & Part II) are eligible to receive products & services from the CIMC. You need a cover sheet signed by your Director of Special Education (or designee), the count sheets with edits, along with any new Registration Forms, Exit Forms, signed Parent Consent Forms, and the optional MDB-FDB Forms. Email questions to cimcregistrations@csdb.org. Additional information is available on the CIMC webpage: www.csdb.colorado.gov/cimc.

Federal Quota Census (count): Due date to return completed federal quota paperwork: Friday, February 26th. Email questions to cimcregistrations@csdb.org

The Parent Consent Form is a onetime requirement for both counts. It now includes the CIMC Count. It can be done in a variety of ways. The form can be signed by the parents. The form can be signed by the TVI with parent verbal / email permission. Parents can take a picture of the form and send it to the district. If verbal consent is given, there should be two witnesses. The signed form should be sent to the parent showing the two witnesses. The TVI should send an email to the parent as documentation that he or she has signed the form per the parents' verbal consent.

The CIMC holds two "First Friday CIMC meetings" using the Zoom on the first Friday of each month. The morning session runs from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. and an afternoon session is available from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. Assignment: The regional reps should talk to their groups about interest for a month meetings. Upcoming dates: March 5, April 2, May 7, and June 4.

Zoom meetings available for your school district/agency staff and the CIMC staff. Contact cimcregistrations@csdb.org with your requests.

Duxbury update: <https://durburysystems.com/> An update to the Duxbury Braille Translator software was released on February 2, 2021. Duxbury DBT Win 12.5 SR1; and DBT for Mac 12.5 SR1 are now available.

Braille Authority of North America (BANA): New publication posted: BANA Guidelines for the Transcription of Early Education Materials from Print to Braille. Link: http://brailleauthority.org/early_learning/index.html

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide directions for the transcription and formatting of early literacy materials (kindergarten through third grade), including materials to be discarded after use, for primary readers. These guidelines apply to the transcription of both contracted and uncontracted braille. This document was authored by the BANA Ad Hoc Committee on Early literacy Materials Production and approved by the BANA Board. It is provided as an accessible PDF and a BRF.

APH Access Academy (formerly #AtHomeWithAPH) is your one-stop resource for the meaningful education and training webinars you need to get the most out of APH products and services. From tutorials on new products and hacks on how to get the most from your beloved tech to information on resources, services, and programs: our goal is to give you the info you need for home, the classroom, and the workplace.

Upcoming Webinar Listing: <https://www.aph.org/educational-resources/training/access-academy/>

Watch Access Academy Archives: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUj6DcM1nN3ETBrf17n6IKlxSihSU-gx0>

Access Academy Handouts: <https://www.aph.org/access-academy-handouts/>

Price Increases for JAWS, ZoomText, Fusion, etc.: <https://support.freedomscientific.com/About/News/Article/214>

What's New in JAWS 2021 screen reading software:

<https://support.freedomscientific.com/Downloads/JAWS/JAWSWhatsNew#Enhancements>

What's New in ZoomText 2021:

<https://support.freedomscientific.com/Downloads/ZoomText/ZoomTextWhatsNew#enhancements>

CSDB – School for The Blind (Jamie Lugo)

Students and staff returned to in person learning. About 25% of families are still choosing online. The teachers are doing a phenomenal job juggling both. This is taking extra time, creativity, proactive thinking, and constant communication. CSDB is teaching the social emotional curriculum, Zones of Regulation, preschool – 21 years of age. Report cards and progress reports were sent to conclude our 1st semester in late January. We celebrated our students during a 1st semester awards ceremony, via zoom for parents and online students this past Friday, February 12th. Our winter parent teacher conferences will be held the week of Feb 22nd - all through various virtual formats depending on programs.

The Braille Challenge was postponed to February due to COVID-19 and students eLearning through January 22nd. Students will participate virtually and in person on February 18th. A special thanks for CSDB Outreach for their collaboration to put on this event.

Eight students competed in the annual Optimist Club Oratorical Contest. Three of these students are advancing to the next level of competition. A survey was sent to parents to gather input regarding desired topics for virtual expanded core curriculum parent workshops. The most popular areas of the ECC identified were assistive tech, social skills, orientation and mobility, recreation and leisure, and independent living skills. We will begin offering one topic per month at two different times in late February. Jamie is happy to share the dates and times with the state if parents/TVIs are interested in attending. *Special Note: This information is now on the KIT Calendar of Events.*

We now have several staff members trained in The Wilson Reading Intervention System. We are now scheduling tier II and III interventions for all students in need of these supports according to our assessment data. *Discussion:* This knowledge would be a great topic for BVI Office Hours!

Rishika Kartik has been working with a group of students, via zoom, for 45 minutes a week on art projects. She has been a fabulous mentor to our students and has a strong passion for bringing accessible art to students who are blind. Rishika applied for a grant to fund the materials for these classes and other after school classes that she offers to students across the state. She entitled her project Vision of the Artist's Soul. Here is the link if you are interested in learning more. ["Vision of the Artist's Soul"](#)

CSDB Outreach Services (Jayme Cusimano)

Due to the pandemic, Outreach will not be holding the iAdvocate Camp for 2021. We are hopeful it will be possible to offer this camp in 2022.

CSDB Outreach Programs are partnering with Steamboat Adaptive Recreational Sport (STARS) to provide a Ski Adventure Camp from February 28 to March 4. Ten students with a variety of vision impairments will head to Steamboat for a week of skiing fun. Ages of participants range from 8-18. Participants and their families are from Metro Denver, El Paso County, and Northern Colorado.

Denver Metro Braille Challenge Updates: Taken from the Braille Challenge website: "The Braille Challenge is the only academic competition of its kind in North America for students who are blind or visually impaired. Braille Institute developed The Braille Challenge to motivate students to practice and hone their braille literacy skills, which are essential to academic and employment success. All students can compete in the preliminary Braille Challenge events, which are held from January through the end of March throughout the United States and Canada, but only the top 50 students (10 in each category) with the highest scores are invited to Los Angeles for the final round – two days of competition, camaraderie and fun!"

Our Denver Metro Braille Challenge contest is virtual this year. The CIMC shipped each TVI a box of test materials, and Braille Challenge branded gifts for each participant. All tests will be proctored by TVIs in the student's home district. Teachers have a test window of the month of February to proctor their student's test and return them to the CIMC by February 26th for scoring. Contact Debbie Haberkorn, dhaberkorn@csdb.org, in the CIMC for more information about the Denver Metro Braille Challenge. In addition to the Denver Metro contest, CSDB also hosts a second contest (contact Jamie Lugo, jlugo@csdb.org).

Updated totals for the Denver Metro Braille Challenge (as of 1/29/2021):

- 29 total participants: 10 for the "Rookie" category; 19 competitors, broken down by category and CDE regions:
- Rookie Group total: 10: 3 Pikes Peak Region; 1 Southwest Region; 6 Metro Region
- (plus 3 additional competition-level students are also participating in Rookie activities)
- Apprentice Level (grades 1-2) total: 5: 4 metro region; 1 Pikes Peak region
- Freshman Level (grades 3-4) total: 7: 5 metro region; 1 Pikes Peak region; 1 west central region
- Sophomore level (grades 5-6) total: 0
- Junior Varsity Level (grades 7-9) total: 6: 4 metro region; 1 northwest region; 1 west central region
- Varsity Level (grades 10-12) total: 1: 1 Metro region

Discussion Item

- *We would like to gauge interest in participation for facilitating monthly blind/VI social club virtual meetings. They would like buy-in from the state to have enough students participating. Topics could be about IEP meetings, current event discussion, accommodations, where do braille books come from, etc. The goal would be different facilitators across the sessions. A question came about our age groups. It could be that the grades can be differentiated by breakout groups. This keeps it open to all students, but they could be categorized by age groups. A suggestion was to open it up to states within a region. Jamie is willing to share information with the POSB listserv to see about other states. There was discussion about current zoom fatigue and low interest by some of the people who were asked about this opportunity. **Assignment:** The regional reps have been asked to talk about this opportunity at their next regional meetings to learn more about student interest for monthly or quarterly meetings. Please let Jayme know about interested parties.*

Colorado Department of Education (Tanni Anthony)

Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project: We are in the third year of our five-year grant cycle. The project's mission is free technical assistance to parents and service providers of children and youth, ages birth through 21, who are deaf-blind or who have both a vision and a hearing loss. The project has a lending library and a website with a multitude of electronic resources that are available to families and educational personnel.

Project Goals: Goal One: To collaborate with State, Local Education, Agencies, and Local Agencies to implement a statewide system to identify Colorado children and youth, 0-21 years, of age, who are deaf-blind, and to heighten awareness of deaf-blindness. Goal Two: To ensure family members of children who are deaf-blind have the training and information needed to maintain and improve productive partnerships with service providers and contribute to the academic and functioning outcomes of their children. Goal Three: To increase awareness, knowledge, and skills of EIS providers, general / special educators, and related service providers regarding evidence-based practices that will promote academic achievement and improve results for children and youth with deaf-blindness.

Project Staff: Tanni Anthony and Gina Herrera are Co-Directors on the grant project. Wendy Stoltman and Shelley Moats are our Technical Assistance (TA) Specialists for the project. Both provide onsite consultation and customized training to the educational teams of the children with deaf-blindness. We are thrilled that they have resumed active TA per family and field requests. That is excellent news! Shannon Cannizzaro is our Family Specialist. Jessica Meisel is our new Intervener Specialist and Cindy Cowell has been hired as a second Family Specialist. To request FREE technical assistance, please contact Gina Herrera at (303) 866-6681 or Herrera_g@cde.state.co.us

Annual Deaf-Blind Count: The Child Count Data for December 1, 2020 is being collected. Thank you so much to all who have returned the agency's or administrative unit's forms on time. Thank you, thank you!

Please note that a child can be registered at any time in the school year. If you work with a learner with both vision and hearing loss, please be sure to work with Tanni to register the child. All learners identified as having combined vision and hearing loss are eligible for free technical assistance. This can be child-specific consultation and customized staff training.

Project Webpage: The [CDE DeafBlind](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/SD-DB.asp) webpage URL is <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/SD-DB.asp>

Project Trainings: We have had a successful run of our 2020-21 Deaf-Blind Webinar series with Phil Schweigert, David Brown, and Kathy Scoggins. We are in the process of booking the final two webinars for the school year.

BVI State Funded Activities: The CDE has a strong commitment to services and supports to our students and the staff who serve them. We **are** pleased to offer training and TA supports to the field serving children who are blind/visually impaired.

BVI Office Hours: Tanni is offering CDE BVI Office Hours every other Wednesday from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. via Zoom. The purpose is to have a dedicated time for people to share how it is going in this time of remote instruction. There will also be sessions with colleagues on key topics. Attendance is optional. All participants must register ahead of each BVI Office Hours. The sessions are open to sharing ideas of what is working and problem-solving challenge areas. Thank you to our recent guests: Michele Reed, Melinda Carter, Tammy Miller, Dr. Tom Theune, Jim Olson, and Wendy Stoltman. The topics in January – February have included DVR Services with a focus on secondary transition, Visual Field and O&M, CVI Assessments offered by the Anchor Center for Blind Children, and Accommodation and Visual Fatigue. More topics are on the docket for March – May.

CDE/CSDB Regional Low Vision Evaluation Clinics: We are on hold for in-person Low Vision Evaluation clinics for this school year. We have postponed all in-person clinics until Fall 2021. We thank our wonderful LVE team for their BVI Webinar topics.

CDE O&M Seminar: Dr. Penny Rosenblum has been booked for a two-day training on her revised book with Dr. Anne Corn. *Finding Wheels* is the name of our training. It will be offered on May 6-7, 2021 in two morning sessions from 9:00 – noon. Registration information will be sent to Colorado O&M Specialists in early March.

Recruitment and Retention: We have very few TVI / O&M Specialist openings: 1 FTE in Academy 20. School District and it looks like openings will occur in El Paso 11 in the next year. Thanks to Karen Wood for her work with El Paso 11 this school year and we are thrilled to hear about the new hire in St. Vrain with the departure of Julie Hutchison. Sam Thuis is now on board part-time! There may also be a need for contract work up north. CDE has an active job posting for Colorado TVI / COMS jobs with AERBVI and specific to COMS jobs with ACVREP.

Listserves: The CDE ESSU maintains three separate listservs specific to personnel working in BVI programs in Colorado school districts. One is specific to Colorado TVIs and COMSs. The second one is specific to Colorado braillists. The third is specific to Colorado TVIs and braillists. It is important to remind all users of these listservs that personally identifiable information (PII) on students and parents should never be posted in any listserv messages. If anyone has questions about the listservs, please be in touch with Tanni.

Parent Database: We currently have about 226 parents registered on the CDE Parent Database. This is out of over 1,200 families across the state. The database is used to mail out the *Keeping in Touch* newsletter and, on rare occasion, other mailings. It is important to keep it maintained with accurate names and addresses of families of children with visual impairment, including blindness who are currently enrolled in our Colorado early intervention or public-school programs. As children graduate or families move out of state, we need to ensure that we remove those families. As new families come into the system, please help Tanni to be proactive with getting families registered on the database. This is a voluntary process – so families need to complete and sign their registration forms.

Braille Competency: We are doing so well with addressing braille competency across Colorado! Tanni is working with veteran and new TVIs to demonstrate initial braille competency. All TVIs who are new to the field are expected to demonstrate braille competency in their first year of employment in this role. If a TVI extends this date, the administrative unit of employment is at risk for a citation of noncompliance. A Practice Test is posted on the Visual Impairment, Including Blindness website. It includes practice multiple choice items and braille samples.

BVI Coach/Mentor Project: We have two amazing veteran TVIs/O&M Specialists who can provide free technical assistance to school-based TVIs/Orientation and Mobility Specialists. They are Shelley Moats and Wendy Stoltman. We have had a few requests over the course of this school year for both in-person and virtual assistance. To request a coach / mentor, contact Tanni at (303) 866-6681 or anthony_t@cde.state.co.us

DISCUSSION ITEMS

CDE BVI Budget for 2020-21

The following activities have been approved for the new school year ahead!

- √ Braille Competency Testing / Mentor Support
- √ CIMC (Interagency Agreement with CSDB)
- √ Vision Coalition
- √ Regional Low Vision Evaluation Clinics
- √ BVI Coach / Mentor Project
- √ CDE O&M Seminar
- √ UEB Math Training – on hold until face to face
- √ Keeping *in Touch* Newsletter

Two topics were discussed for the state conference: (a) reading strategies for children with blindness/visual impairment OR (b) late phase CVI strategies. Assignment: VC members will seek out the vote! The goal is a face-to-face conference in January 2022.

READ Act Requirement for the 45 Hours of Science of Reading.

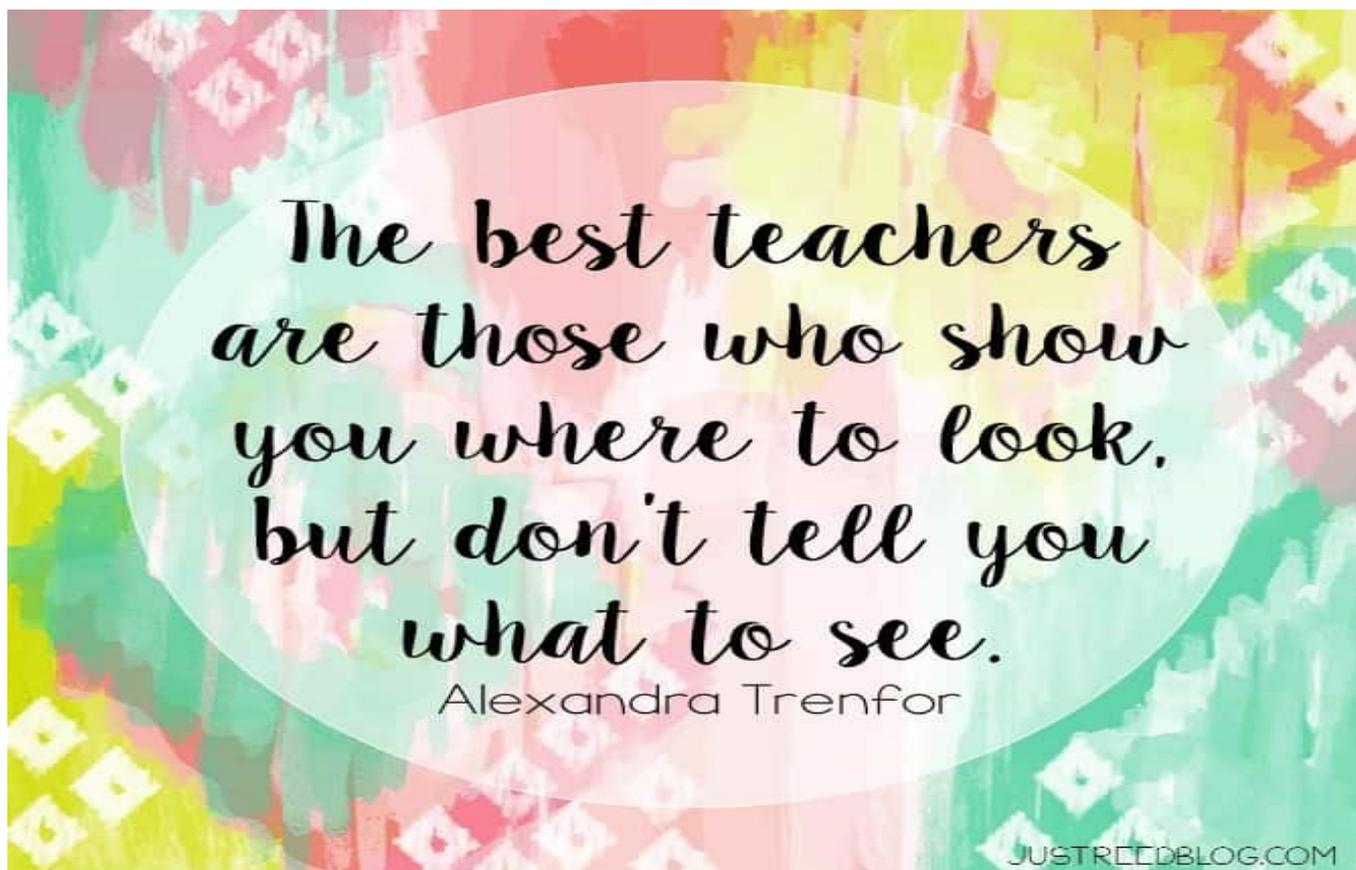
Learn more about this requirement and the seven options to meet this requirement at, <https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/teacher-training> There are also updates in each *Keeping in Touch* newsletter. If you have any questions, reach out to Tanni.

ECC Resources for CDE BVI Website

Tanni asked who might be interested in coming together this summer to pool resources for the website. Volunteers, thus far, include Nancy Cozart, Melissa French, and Julie King. Assignment: VC reps will ask if others might be interested.

Next Meeting Dates for School Year 2021-22:

September 22, 2021 from 9 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. we will plan on in-person and be ready for virtual based on the needs / preferences of the group.





colorado connections

- Thank you three times to **Nancy Cozart, Michelle Chacon, and Anitha Muthukumaran** for their incredible contributions to review the 2021 CMAS braille tests. This team met with the test publishers and the CDE Office of Assessment over a four day period in January to review the quality and efficacy of the test items and corresponding tactile graphics. This review was done virtually this year and it was impressive to observe the preparation of each reviewer and the rich conversations. Many, many, and many thanks!
- A big thanks to our Vision Coalition members for School Year 2020-21: **Deb Andrews, Tanni Anthony, Martin Becerra, Melinda Carter, Nancy Cozart, Jamie Cusimano, Melissa French, Julie Hutchison, Julie King, Paula Landry, Jamie Lugo, Lori Mattick, Jim Olson, and Michele Reed**. Our last meeting for this school year was February 18th. The Vision Coalition is so pleased to have Melissa French join us as the new northern region representative!
- A special acknowledgement to **Sara Noel**, who was on the planning committee of the February 2021 International O&M Online Symposium. The virtual training was well attended by many CO O&M Specialists and others: **Deb Andrews, Karin Hensel, Donna Keale, Sara Noel, Melissa Shular, Robin Tuetting, and Lisa VanDam**. **Dr. Tanni Anthony** provided a session on *O&M in the Early Years: Developmental Considerations*.
- Hats off to the following people who have earned their initial CDE Certificate of Braille Competency: **Colleen Lydon** TVI from Cherry Creek School District, **Grace Gunel** and **Jerred Sonneborn**, TVIs from CSDB and **Hanna Waldman**, brailist from Boulder Valley School District. Also a big shout out to **Abby Horner, Vicki Chinski, and Sarah Goodfellow** for earning CDE Braille Renewal Hours. Thanks to CDE braille proctors **Nancy Cozart, Brenda Shepard** and **Chris Maynard** for their recent braille proctoring and mentoring work!
- Wow, wow, and wow! We are so proud of **Caitlin Geoffrion**, TVI in Adams 12 and A Shared Vision, for winning the Colorado Avalanche's Most Valuable Teacher Award this past January. The MVT program encourages teachers to continually strive for excellence and leadership by offering a unique experience in their classrooms. Caitlin received a \$1,000 Classroom Improvement Grant and an Avalanche gift bag full of other goodies hand-delivered by Bernie the Mascot. Check out this link: [Facebook](#)

BVI Office Hours Super Stars!

- ◆ A huge shout out to the follow people who provided their time and expertise at the BVI Office Hours in January and February 2021: **Michele Reed** (DVR and Secondary Transition), **Jim Olson** and **Tom Theune** (visual field and O&M); **Melinda Carter** and **Tammy Miller** (Anchor CVI Assessments), and **Jim Olson, Tom Theune, and Wendy Stoltman** (Accommodation and Visual Fatigue). We have enjoyed a pretty strong turn-out with 40 or more attendees per session.





colorado connections

- CSDB has replaced three board members whose terms had expired. Welcome to **Meghan Klassen, Michael Merrifield,** and **Martin Becerra-Miranda.**
- Praise to **Dr. Kay Ferrell** who is a contributing author to the recently published *Barraga Visual Efficiency Program*. This is a product of the American Printing House for the Blind. Kay wrote the section on visual development.
- Hats off to **Dr. Cathy Smyth** for her live webinar on the topic of *From Hospital to Home: Using Early Visual Functioning to Support Families* with the Perkins School for the Blind. Check out this presentation at: <https://www.perkinselearning.org/videos/webinar/hospital-home-using-early-visual-functioning-support-families>
- So proud of the Anchor Center for Blind Children staff who are collaborating with the State of Utah's Parent Infant Program to use the *Neonatal Assessment Visual European Grid (NAVEG)* in identifying neurological risk that may lead to CVI. **Dr. Cathy Smyth, Callie Robinson,** and **Tammy Miller** have provided two online trainings and will provide a full-day in-person training to the PIP staff in early March. PIP's goal is for every child discharged from the NICU to be screened before they are a year old.



In Memoriam and with Gratitude



We recently lost a very special person in our community of personnel serving learners who are blind/visually impaired. **Dr. Grace Napier** passed away peacefully on December 31, 2020 in Fort Collins, Colorado. She was born on June 29, 1922 in Clifton, New Jersey. Blind since birth, her focus during her early years was always to attain the educational goals she set for herself. Grace earned four degrees and taught at various universities throughout the United States.

Dr. Napier was a professor with the UNC Visual Impairment Program for many years. Many a Colorado-trained TVI had her as one of their professors in this time span. She ended her career at UNC as a Professor of Special Education in 1986. Throughout her professional life she contributed greatly to the education of the blind and visually impaired.

Over the years **Grace** enjoyed belonging to and participating in a number of women's organizations. After retiring Grace wrote six books, the last one being written and published in 2017 when she was 95.

For 75 years **Grace** had ten Seeing Eye dogs which she said gave her, her independence. When her last dog, Esma, died in 2015, Grace said that she not only had lost her independence but now she was truly blind. A Memorial/ Celebration of Life service will be held at a later date.



MAIL TO:

25-43E-3401

Katy Anthes
Commissioner of Education



COLORADO
Department of Education

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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