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KEEPING IN TOUCH!

A Newsletter for Parents and Service Providers
of Colorado Children with Visual Impairment, Including Blindness
April—May 2022

A Teacher's Hope

It's time to say goodbye;

It's the end of the year.

I think there's something in my eye.

No, it's just a tear.

I've watched you learn and grown and
change from day to day.

I hope you've come to know skills
to guide your way.

So I'll treasure happy memories,
as I send you out the door.

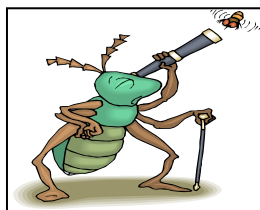
Hoping you have the wisdom for what
life may hold in store.



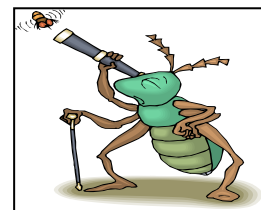
Thank you, everyone, for another great school year. In gratitude for each and everyone of you in all your many roles of supporting our kids! Every parent, TVI, O&M Specialist, brailist, and VI paraeducator has contributed to the success of our students. It has been another year touched by the pandemic, but also one touched by grace, commitment, compassion, and love. You are all the very best!

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LOW VISION NEWS



Metro Low Vision Evaluation Clinic

By Debbie Haberkorn

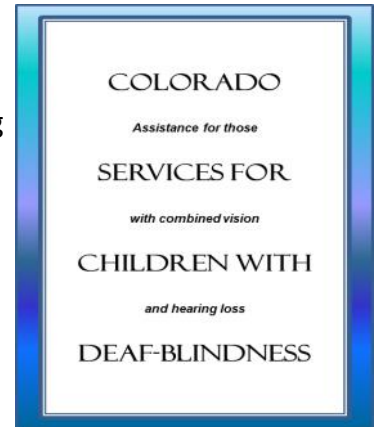
Seventeen students participated in the May Metro Region Low Vision Evaluation Clinic from nine administrative units (Arapahoe County District 5, Arapahoe County District 6, Adams 12, Adams-Arapahoe District 28J, Boulder County RE-1, Denver County District 1, Douglas County, Jefferson County, Summit County) Fourteen TVIs (Carol Jordan, Nancy Knight, Debbie Mendoza, Ann Marie Jansen, Lisa Hebbert, Chris Holmes, Elsa D’Angelo, Jill Bookwalter, Chris Kinney, Nicole Andersen, Karin Hensel, Ashley Ives, and Stephanie Crosen) were in attendance with their students. Jeannie Lei was also bringing a student, but the family was forced to cancel at the last minute.

We are very appreciative to Anchor Center for Blind Children for hosting us. Meghan Klassen, Executive Director personally greeted us and took time to learn more about what we do. A special thanks to Clinic Site Coordinator Karin Hensel for all of her organizational and hosting efforts! Karin did a fabulous job of getting everything ready so the clinic could run smoothly. Thanks also to our LVE Team Dr. Tom Theune, Wendy Stoltman, and Debbie Haberkorn.

Colorado Deaf-Blind Project News

Project Purpose and Staff

The Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project (aka the Colorado Deaf-Blind Grant) is in the fourth year of its federally-funded five-year grant cycle. We started the new grant award on October 15, 2018, and it will be completed on October 14, 2023. The grant project has been housed within the Colorado Department of Education's Exceptional Student Services Unit for over 30 years. The purpose of the project, awarded to every state and US territory, is to identify children and youth with deaf-blindness and provide free technical assistance (TA) to the identified children, their families, and service providers.



Key project activities are to maintain an annual Child Count process, host professional learning events, and provide universal and customized technical assistance. The current project has three broad goals: (1) identification, (2) family networking, training, and TA support, and (3) professional training and TA support. Key events have been the annual Summer Institute and Parent Workshop. New projects have recently included a formal intervener training and coaching model, an inventory of online early childhood training modules now posted on the project's website, and an annual webinar series. The project has an active website, lending library, and Deaf-Blind Advisory Task Force. We have five CDE employees (**Tanni Anthony, Gina Herrera, Roberta Curtis, Jessica Meisel, and Wendy Stoltman**) and one specialized Family Specialist contractor (**Cindy Colwell**) on board with the project.

Check out our website at: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-db>

Child Find Count of Colorado Children and Youth with Deaf-Blindness

Thanks to everyone who took the time to send in the Child Count forms to identify all learners, ages birth through 21 years with combined vision and hearing loss. Your time, and attention to detail is most appreciated! The count was submitted just a week ago to the National Center on Deaf-Blindness. A big thanks to Gina Herrera and Roberta Curtis for all of their work to enter in all the data in our database and prepare the report to NCDB.

Children on the Child Count are eligible for free technical assistance from the project. As you identify new learners with deaf-blindness, please reach out to Tanni Anthony (anthony_t@cde.state.co.us) or Gina Herrera (herrera_g@cde.state.co.us) to complete the Child Count Form at any time of the calendar year. We count on you!

APR—DONE!

Tanni and Gina completed and submitted the Annual Performance Report to the federal government. This report details the accomplishments of the last reporting period, which were many! Highlights were our second annual webinar series and continued virtual and back to in-person technical assistance visits!

Colorado Deaf-Blind Project News

Community Intervener Project

The Community Intervener Pilot has been fully operating for several months now. We are seeing the progress in these children and the power of meaningful community integration. As we wind down the school year and head into the summer months, we are excited to hear many more success stories like the one below as both the children and the interveners have more time to spend together.

“I have been working with Anneliese as an educational intervener for the past 2.5 years. Since covid she has been attending school online; she is low immunity due to CHARGE Syndrome. However, thanks to her amazingly supportive Grandma and Dad at home, she has made great improvements using her communication and schedule tools. She has cards to express more and all done & a 3-piece schedule box. Before we started our community intervener program with Family Voices, these tools were only used in a structured academic setting. Working with Anneliese now as a community intervener has given us the opportunity to practice using her communication tools in the real world.

For our first outing, Anneliese's grandmother and I set up her schedule boxes in the trunk of the car. They were filled with objects that represented our plans for the day: 1. Mulch 2. Dried seed pod 3. Plastic fish = 1. Playground 2. Sensory nature walk 3. Fish store. We touched the mulch as we arrived at the playground. Soon we found the swing, her favorite. She pulled the "more" card, and handed it to me to get more pushes on the swing. Then she imitated me as I climbed up and she found the perfect bar to hold onto. She seemed pleased with herself.

On our sensory nature walk along Boulder creek we handed her interesting things like a dried yarrow stalk, an ivy vine, and a shaky seed pod off a tree. She sat in the wagon tactually exploring the new objects, as we walked along the snowy path.

Finally we went to the fish store. It was dark and the tanks were lit up, perfect for Anneliese's vision. Every now and then a fish caught her eye. Then she realized they were in water and within reach! She responded to my guiding touch not to put her hands too deep in the water but to rest her fingertips on the water's surface. As she looked down into one tank, her hair fell into the water and the little fish nibbled at her hair, thinking it was food. Anneliese watched intently and engaged in the whole experience.

Anneliese did great on our outing! Grandma reported that she slept VERY well. Thank you Family Voices and all of its supporters. What an amazing opportunity for Anneliese, her family, and me!

-Marley
Anneliese's "Intervener"





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

CAER Annual Awards



Each year, CAER takes a moment to honor our very own. This very special celebration is for individuals who have contributed to fields of education and rehabilitation of persons with blindness/visual impairment. These awards are nomination-based and always so well deserved. The Awards Ceremony was held the morning of April 21, 2022.

President's Award. CAER President Heather Solberg recognized the 2021-22 board members: **Heather Solberg**, Secretary- **Michelle Robinson**, Treasurer/Past President- **Nancy Cozart**, At-Large Members: **Paula Conroy**, **Barb Galgano**, **Rebecca Gardom**, **Jeannie Lei**, and **Chloann Woolley** for their many contributions to CAER.

Connections Award: The Connections Award recognizes cooperative efforts that cross organizational lines, and with groups working collaboratively to benefit the field of visual impairment. This award was given to **Debbie Haberkorn**, who works at the Colorado Instructional Materials Center. She was nominated by Wendy Stoltman, Jim Olson, and Jeannie Lei Information shared about Debbie included the following phrases regarding her work at the CIMC as an administrative assistant, Library of Congress certified brailist, and as our Low Vision Clinic Coordinator:

Debbie is extremely organized, managing the members of our team, our schedule and the equipment. Debbie packs the clinic van, greets students and their parents, types and mails the reports, fills the low vision device orders for families and school districts, and so much more. She does it all with a smile, even on the longest days

Debbie is the first person our families meet at the Metro Low Vision Clinic. Her calm and friendly demeanor helps to reassure parents and students about the importance and value of the evaluation at the clinic. She is one of the most hard working, competent, kindest people I know. She interacts with parents, professionals and students with kindness.

Debbie has worked tirelessly to support students and TVIs across Colorado. Debbie consistently demonstrates the sense of urgency needed to get hard copy embossed braille under the fingertips of our Colorado student. The strong professional relationships Debbie has developed with numerous braille vendors across the country, allows the CIMC to provide high-quality braille to students, teachers, and school districts across Colorado in a timely manner.

Debbie proudly leads the Outreach Metro Denver Braille Challenge contest each year. She represents Colorado at the national planning meetings with the Braille Institute and is a key player in the preparation and organization of our Colorado contest. She trains proctors, leads the test scoring, completes and submits all required paperwork to the Braille Institute, and helps with the awards - which this year even included making one of the games, used as prize in the contest, accessible and transcribing the directions with tactile graphics.

Debbie's multifaceted responsibilities extend to every school district in the State of Colorado

At a national level, Debbie is a member of the National Braille Associations' Transcriber and Educator Services Committee



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



Lifetime Achievement Award: This award recognizes professionals who have given of themselves to students/clients throughout their career and are preparing for retirement. This award was presented to **Carol Strauss**, a longtime brailist from Cherry Creek Schools. Jeannie Lei shared ...

Carol has worked with Cherry Creek District for over 36 years, starting her career as a paraeducator to an elementary student with blindness. After a few years she transitioned into her current role as district brailist and office manager. She is truly irreplaceable. Her efficiency and care to materials is always appreciated by students. She has spent time before and after the school day to get work done so that students have access to materials at the same time as their sighted peers. She understands the importance of the work and how overwhelming our caseloads can be so always offers to support us as Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments and Orientation & Mobility Specialists.

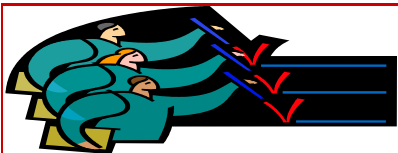
Carol's knowledge and contributions go beyond the Cherry Creek School District. She is always seeking to learn something new and she uses that learning to organize brailist trainings for other districts. This helps to ensure that the implementation of new strategies and technologies to better support students is consistent across districts. Carol is also always willing to lend a sympathetic ear to our daily trials and frustrations as teachers and allows us to vent without judgement. I will miss her not only for her dedication to the job but also as a great friend.

CAER Board Updates

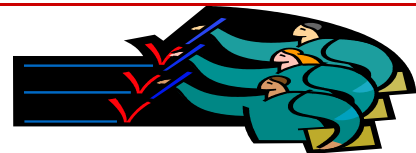
Nancy Cozart and Barb Galgano are stepping off the board after many years of service.

- ◆ Nancy has been on for 10 years first as an at-large member, then in roles as secretary, secretary/president-elect, president and then past-president and treasurer the last two years. We thank Nancy for her leadership and service!
- ◆ Barb Galgano has been on the board on more than one occasion serving in roles as at-large member and so much more! We thank Barb for her great work on the board with fund raisers, membership drives, and strong support for the organization within Colorado.

a teacher
TAKES A
hand
OPENS A
mind
& TOUCHES A
heart



CHECK IT OUT!



National Registry for Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments Launches

Success Beyond Sight, (SBS), a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization, has created a FREE National Registry for TSVIs/TVIs (NRTSVI) to empower a national voice for TSVIs/TVIs and to provide a means to reach, on a national level, TSVIs/TVIs with free resources and important professional information.

Success Beyond Sight recognizes the crucial role that Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TSVIs/TVIs) play in the long-term success of their students. Strong instruction and mentorship by TSVIs/TVIs are common denominators for many highly accomplished adults who were born without vision or who lost their vision as children.

Because TSVIs/TVIs are licensed/credentialed/certified/endorsed in their state of practice, there has not been a Registry recognizing them as a nationally important profession demonstrating the power of their numbers. SBS formed an Advisory Board to help guide the development of the NRTSVI. Advisory Board members are Dr. Laura Bozeman, Dr. Rona Pogrud, Dr. Amy Parker, Dr. Cheryl Kamei-Hannan, Jill Brown and Dr. Nicole Johnson.

SBS is providing FREE access to the *Journal of Vision Impairment & Blindness (JVIB)* for all registrants. *JVIB* is the resource for peer-reviewed research and articles for professionals serving individuals who are blind or have low vision.

TSVIs/TVIs will be able to be directly engaged with, and have a voice in, national discussions regarding:

- The funding needed to train current and future professionals and to secure the survival of this very important profession.
- Efforts to ensure sufficient funding for all students who require specialized services from a TSVI/TVI.
- The sharing of important information and opportunities to be included in relevant surveys and research to benefit the profession.
- Appropriate caseloads.
- Legislative advocacy.

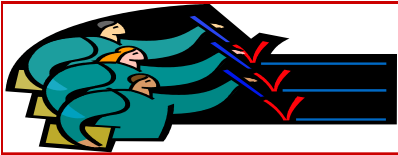
SBS recognizes that there are important professional membership organizations that provide TSVIs/TVIs a voice among other professional voices, but the Registry will provide the forum for TSVIs/TVIs to be highly visible and have their own unique voice on the national stage.

If you are a TSVI/TVI or teacher licensed, credentialed, certified, or endorsed in at least one state to teach children who have visual impairments, go to the [National Registry for TSVIs](#) to learn more and to register.

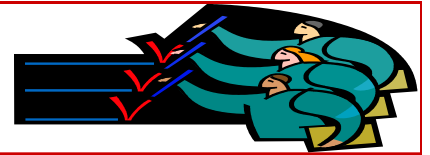
Participating in this Registry is voluntary.

For questions or additional information, please email: NRTSVI@successbeyondsight.org.





CHECK IT OUT!



Four Fast Facts about I Matter Colorado

The I Matter program provides up to six free therapy sessions for youth in Colorado ages 18 and younger (or ages 21 and younger if receiving special education services). To date more than 5,400 appointments have been scheduled, with more than 500 appointments scheduled for the next two weeks. Over 1,500 youth have received one or more sessions and youth from 46 of Colorado's 64 counties have signed up for the program. [View a map illustrating where sessions have been provided to children and adolescents across the state \(PDF\)](#). A two year extension of the program is in [House Bill 22-1243](#) under consideration in the current session of the State Legislature. Funding is set to expire Thursday, June 30.

[Access the I Matter digital toolkit and order free print materials to promote the program.](#) Visit [IMatterColorado.org](#) or [YoImportoColorado.org](#) to sign up for services.

Contact Laura.Gabbay@state.co.us with questions.

National NFB Convention

The National Federation of the Blind National Convention is the largest gathering of blind people in the world. Their national convention will occur July 5-10, 2022 in New Orleans, LA. Details about the conference are available in the January 2022 *Braille Monitor* article, [New Orleans Site of 2022 Convention](#).

Registration is now open until May 31, 2022. Registration for the 2022 National Convention is \$25 per person. Banquet tickets for Sunday, July 10, are \$70 per person. Please review our [2022 National Convention Safety Protocols](#) and the [National Federation of the Blind Code of Conduct](#) prior to registering.

Stay tuned for more details regarding the 2022 National Convention. If you have questions, please contact NFB personnel at 410-659-9314 or nfb@nfb.org.

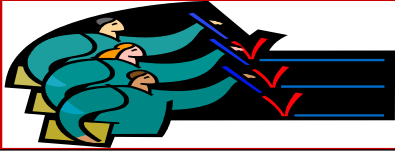
CSDB Looking for Three New Board Members

The Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind will have three of Board Member seats open starting the 2022-2023 school year. Candidates for one of the open positions must be a Deaf individual. If you are interested in applying click [here](#).

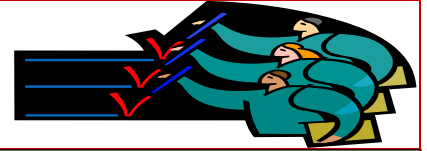


Department of Education Releases Equity Action Plan as Part of Biden-Harris Administration's Efforts to Advance Racial Equity and Support Underserved Communities

On Thursday, April 14th, the U.S. Department of Education (along with over [90 federal agencies](#)) released its inaugural [equity action plan](#) as part of the Biden-Harris Administration's continued commitment to advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities through the federal government. This plan aligns with President Biden's executive order, [Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#). U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona underscored these efforts earlier this year when he laid out [his vision for education in America](#). The Department will host a listening session on **May 17, 2022**, in which senior agency officials will hear feedback on the equity action plan. More details on the listening session to come.



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](#) website has a wealth of information to support educators and outcomes for children with disabilities.



** 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 pandemic.



** eBooks

[Book share](#) 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.



Resources and Materials

A Brain-Based Approach to “Meltdowns” and “Explosions”



Understanding why kids with FASD can go from ...
Ever wondered why our kids with FASD seems to go
from 0 to 100 seemingly out of nowhere? Discover...

New must-see short video from Jumpstart Psychology for parents, careers, and others about the invisible causes of “explosions” in people with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. In this short 8-minute video Dr. Spiller explores the hidden brain-based reasons this can happen and most importantly she provides 9 brain-based strategies to help you break the unhelpful cycles that often occur around this! (It is best viewed on a larger screen!) [CLICK HERE](#)

CDE Professional Development: Real-Time and Archived

Professional Development opportunities

[Click here for more information about CDE Professional Development offerings, including Library on On-Demand Resources and Upcoming Opportunities](#)



National Center on Deaf-Blindness

Two exciting new resources are now available that address intervener learning, support, and employment. [“Tools to Employ and Support Interveners”](#)

describes intervener roles and responsibilities, how to navigate the employment process, and intervener training and certification.

In addition, a dissertation by Beth Kennedy, director of the Michigan deaf-blind project and the intervener training program at Central Michigan University, is now available for free online. [“How Interveners Learn the Knowledge and Skills Required to Support Students Who Are DeafBlind in School Settings”](#) offers a wealth of practical information on this important topic.



Come meet Rishika Kartik, a “creative activist” committed to accessibility, diversity, and inclusion. Rishika is President of the Colorado Tactile Art Club (TAC) where she works to create opportunities for blind/visual impaired students to express themselves and find Community. The TAC meets the third Tuesday of each month.

Upcoming TAC dates:

- May 17
- June 21
- Sep 20
- July 19
- Oct 18
- August 16
- Nov 21

Please check out [Rishika’s monthly blog](#) for all the fun art projects students have worked on the last two years. Check out her studio [website](#) with all the details and experience the community that is coming together and creating.

Resources and Materials

Q and A about Students with Disabilities in Private Schools

The Office of Special Education Programs has updated its [Questions and Answers on Serving Children with Disabilities Placed by Their Parents in Private Schools](#). This revised Q&A document updates and supersedes the Department's April 2011 guidance and includes additional questions and answers that address topics that have arisen with the implementation of the provisions of IDEA related to proportionate share and equitable services. It includes several new questions and answers the clarification about which students should be counted and used in the calculation of proportionate share.

CEC & AOTA Partnership Mini-Series

Improve your collaboration with occupational therapy practitioners

CEC is proud to be collaborating with the [American Occupational Therapy Association \(AOTA\)](#) on a **complimentary mini-series of practice-based webinars** designed to help special education professionals deepen their understanding of self-regulation and best practices for collaborating with occupational therapy practitioners.

The mini-series consists of two on-demand webinars presented by subject matter experts, which anyone can access for free at any time via the CEC Learning Library!

Series Webinars

- ◆ **Occupational Therapy and Self-Regulation**—In this session, presenter Varleisha D. Gibbs, Ph.D., OTD, ASDCS, OTR/L, discusses the role of occupational therapy in addressing self-regulation in children throughout the lifespan and shares evidence for best practice provided by AOTA. Intervention strategies include self-regulation and mindfulness approaches, trauma responsive techniques, and sensory-based strategies.
- ◆ **Occupational Therapy and Self-Regulation: A Panel Discussion on Collaboration Between Teachers and Occupational Therapy Practitioners** - This panel discussion explores the value of a strong collaboration between teachers and occupational therapy practitioners when it comes to the self-regulation development of both students with and without disabilities, as well as other developmental and educational targets.

[Access the Series](#)

Updated Developmental Milestones

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) updated their developmental Milestones Checklists for infants and young children for the first time in over 10 years. The “Learn the Signs. Act Early” tools and resources are communication tools that aim to promote developmental monitoring by tracking developmental milestones and encouraging conversations between families, health care professionals, and early childhood professionals about child development. The revised milestones are a result of feedback from professionals and families, and reflect changes in the number and age-specificity of milestones.

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html?msclkid=083b1333ac7c11ec96759ab808c89102> (English)

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/Spanish/actearly/milestones/index.html> (Spanish)



Stakeholder Input Needed for Research into the Accessibility Challenges of Digital Instructional Materials in K-12

The Purpose: The National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) is working with Vision for Independence, LLC to conduct interviews and focus groups to better understand the current level of accessibility of digital instructional materials in K-12, the experiences of students who are visually impaired or print disabled when using these materials, and the challenges involved in making materials accessible to all students.

Participant Criteria: Individuals from the six groups below will be selected to take part in a 1:1 interview or focus group. All activities will occur online using Zoom.

Groups will be comprised of individuals from the United States or its territories:

- Individuals at K-12 publishers and educational technology companies that supply digital instructional materials and are knowledgeable about accessibility issues
- Procurement personnel from school districts, state departments of education, or schools for the blind
- Braille/transcribers who prepare braille versions of K-12 instructional materials
- Ex Officio Trustees of the American Printing House for the Blind
- Teachers of students with visual impairments
- Special education teachers who work with either students with print disabilities or students with physical disabilities who require instructional materials in an alternative format

How to Participate: Complete the consent form and brief demographic survey at: https://uarizona.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2t6ovViIhC2lWOq.

What Will Occur: Individuals selected for an interview will meet with a researcher for approximately 1 hour via Zoom.

Individuals who are invited to join a focus group will meet with researchers and a small group of individuals in the same role as themselves. Focus group meetings will run approximately 90 minutes and occur on Zoom.

What You Will Receive if You Participate: Each person interviewed or who participates in a focus group will receive a \$25 Amazon or Target gift card.

The Researchers: Dr. L. Penny Rosenblum and Dr. Kathryn D. Botsford, are conducting the research study.

Who to Contact: If you need additional information, please contact Dr. L. Penny Rosenblum at rosenblu@email.arizona.edu.

This research was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the American Foundation for the Blind.

Resources and Materials



University of Colorado **Anschutz Medical Campus**

You do so much to support your students and the community - how can we help support you?

www.coloradoeducatorsupport.com

Teacher/Educator Mental Health and Support Services



This past year was hard - social distancing, masks, remote learning. We don't know what this coming year will look like, but maybe we can help you through it.

Group Sessions and Workshops
Individual Support Sessions
Online Self-Paced Program
Well-Being Support Line (303-724-2500 call/text)

The Educator Support Program is a free service for all Colorado educators and school employees.
Professional Development and Graduate Credits Available

Visit www.coloradoeducatorsupport.com or call 303-724-2500 for more information

In collaboration with the University of Colorado Department of Psychiatry, Partners in Children's Mental Health, Colorado Education Association, Office of Behavioral Health and CDPHE Colorado Spirit.



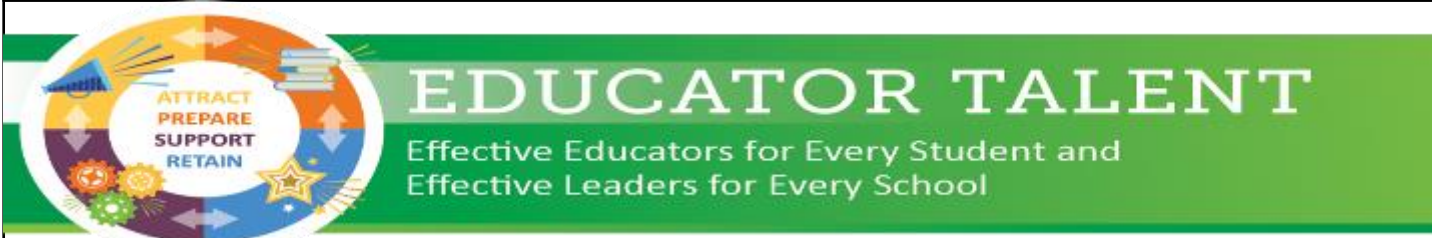
Licensure and Endorsement Specific to Special Education Specialist: VI

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>.

Initial CDE Braille Competency Testing Requirements

Initial CDE Braille Competency Certificate: 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 as a teacher of students with visual impairments, with a Colorado administrative unit. 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.

The initial CDE Braille Competency Certificate expires five years from its date of issue.

Renewal CDE Braille Competency Certificate

There is a one time expectation to renew the initial CDE certificate five years after its initial issue. This is accomplished by completing 15 renewal modules across the five year renewal period. These modules must be taken with one of the CDE Braille Proctors.

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

⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠⠠
You can do it !



AUGUST DEADLINE FOR TEACHERS TO COMPLETE EVIDENCE-BASED READING TRAINING

The deadline is approaching for Colorado’s educators who teach literacy to K-3 students to submit proof via the Colorado Online Licensing (COOL) system that they completed their evidence-based training in teaching reading. Teachers must complete the training by **August 1** and should submit their documentation by **August 15**. [The District Responsibilities for Teacher Training webpage explains the requirements for teachers and districts](#). Please note that the READ Act training requirement is not mandatory to maintain a teacher’s license status in any way. The benefit of adding the READ Act training designation to an educator’s license is that the proof of completion will stay on the educator’s Colorado credentials for future years as they may change grade levels, schools, or districts.

Additional resources for schools/districts/BOCES:

[Instructions describing how districts can check on the status of educators who have submitted their information to the COOL system can be found on here \(PDF\)](#).

[The READ Act Teacher Training webpage includes a link to communications tools](#), such as drop-in letters and fact sheets, to help you communicate with your teachers about the requirements.

[The K-3 Teacher Evidence-Based Reading Training FAQ webpage provides timely information on the most frequently asked questions](#).

The Literacy Team in the Preschool Through 3rd Grade office conducts monthly office hours to share updates on the READ Act Teacher Training. [Access archived office hour recordings and information on upcoming office hour dates on the Submitting Documentation to Receive READ Act Designation webpage](#).

Questions can be sent to the READ Act Communications Team at readact@cde.state.co.us

READ Act Instructional Programming Advisory List

The CDE Preschool Through Third Grade Office conducted reviews of core, supplemental and intervention instructional programs to be included on the READ Act Advisory List of Instructional Programming. The READ Act Advisory List of Instructional Programming has been updated and posted on the CDE website.

[Visit the Advisory List of Instructional Programming webpage for additional information](#).

For questions, please contact READAct@cde.state.co.us.

Administrative Unit responsibilities for Part C Early Intervention Evaluations

The Exceptional Student Services Unit released a memo outlining the changes to Early Intervention Evaluation Responsibilities Transfer to Colorado Department of Human Services/Early Intervention. These changes will occur in the 2021-22 school year related to special education administrative unit responsibilities for Part C Early Intervention evaluations. [Read the guidance memo \(PDF\)](#). Special education directors and Child Find coordinators are urged to review the memo carefully and reach out with any questions.

Contact Mary Morin, Child Find specialist at morin_m@cde.state.co.us, or Heidi White, preschool director at white_h@cde.state.co.us, with questions.



Toolkit Available to Communicate with K-3 Teachers about Required Teacher Training

A communications toolkit is available for districts to use to encourage teachers to complete the READ Act training and submit documentation through the Colorado Online Licensing System. The toolkit features sample webpage copy for district websites, sample letters for superintendents and principals to send to teachers, posters for teacher workrooms with reminders of the upcoming August 2022 deadlines, and instructions on how to check educators' training status in the COOL system.

The August 2022 deadlines are quickly approaching, and each Local Education Provider in Colorado is responsible for ensuring their K-3 teachers complete this required training, and for providing evidence to CDE that their educators have finished the training.

CDE has worked to create a way for evidence to be more easily submitted to the department using the COOL system. This minimizes the burden of data submissions on districts. If LEPs do not submit evidence to CDE that their educators have completed the training, READ Act funds for the 2022-23 school year could be delayed or withheld. The deadline for teacher training data submission is Wednesday, August 31, 2022.

For any questions about the requirements or help submitting evidence, email ReadAct@cde.state.co.us.

CDE-Provided Reading Training - Face-to-Face for Summer 2022

Reading Course Details: Registration for "Keys to Beginning Reading" by Keys to Literacy is now open. All face-to-face sessions will be held virtually as synchronous sessions. Class sizes will be capped at 30 participants. If a minimum of 15 participants do not register for a cohort, the cohort may be canceled. Registration for courses will close 2 weeks prior to the first training session to allow for manuals to be mailed to participants. Course manuals will be mailed to participants soon after registration closes. Attendance at all training sessions and a score of 80% or higher on the end of course assessment are required to meet the evidence-based training in teaching requirement.

Training schedules will be updated periodically and posted as dates are finalized. Sessions will continue to be offered throughout this summer

May 31 is the deadline to register for summer classes. Check it out more information on [Keys to Beginning Reading](#)

Resources for Educators

CDE hosts a webpage to help educators find professional development opportunities.

The page includes resources that are self-paced and can include online learning modules, archived recordings and more. There is also a search tool for upcoming opportunities, such as scheduled events, in-person training, live webinars and more.





Partners Needed to Ensure Colorado's Learners have Access to Food this Summer

DENVER – With nearly half of Colorado families with children struggling to put food on the table, the Colorado Department of Education is partnering with Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger and Hunger Free Colorado to increase access to the Summer Meals Program.

In a survey conducted by Hunger Free Colorado in April 2021, almost half of households with kids and teens (44%) are struggling to have regular access to nutritious food. Additionally, 1 in 6 (16%) are not getting adequate nutrition because there is not enough money for food.

In October 2021, more than 11 million free meals were served to kids and teens, which is a 60% increase from October 2020. Sponsors, sites and state partners are needed to ensure children can continue to receive healthy meals during the summer when school is out of session.

The Summer Meals Program, federally funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and administered by CDE's School Nutrition Unit, ensures that youth have access to healthy meals during the summer, which is critical for their health and well-being.

CDE's School Nutrition Unit, the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger and Hunger Free Colorado are working together to expand the number of youth who are served by the Summer Meals Program by increasing awareness of the program and providing resources and training to existing and new program sponsors.

"Summer can be a challenging time for youth who have lost access to school breakfast and lunch," said Marc Jacobson, CEO of Hunger Free Colorado. "Keeping children fueled through the summer months with no-cost, healthy meals ensures they return to school ready to learn and is part of a strong foundation to help them grow and thrive."

To help ensure summer meals are available in your community, become a program sponsor, site or state partner for the Summer Meals Program. To learn more, [visit the Summer Food Service Program webpage](#) or contact Megan Johnson at johnson_m@cde.state.co.us or 303-653-6138.

To learn more about the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger, [visit EndHungerCO.org](http://EndHungerCO.org).

To learn more about Hunger Free Colorado, [visit HungerFreeColorado.org](http://HungerFreeColorado.org).

About the Summer Meals Programs:

- Meals are FREE to youth 18 years and younger.
- Parents do not need to apply to the program for their children to get free summer meals.
- Organizations that can administer the Summer Meals Program include schools, non-profit organizations, government entities, camps, universities, and community and faith-based organizations.
- Parents and youth can find summer meal sites by texting FOOD or COMIDA to 304-304 or visit www.kidsfoodfinder.org
- Meals served follow USDA nutrition guidelines.

***This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Se necesitan socios para garantizar que los jóvenes de Colorado tengan acceso a las comidas este verano

DENVER - Casi la mitad de las familias de Colorado están luchando por poner comida en la mesa, el Departamento de Educación de Colorado se está asociando con Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger y Hunger Free Colorado para aumentar el acceso al Programa de Comidas de Verano.

Según una [encuesta reciente](#) de Hunger Free Colorado, más del 44% de las familias están luchando actualmente por poner comida en la mesa. Además, 1 de cada 6 (16%) no recibe una nutrición adecuada porque no hay suficiente dinero para comprar alimentos.

En Octubre de 2021, se sirvieron más de 11 millones de comidas gratis a niños y adolescentes, lo que representa un aumento del 60% con respecto a Octubre de 2020. Se necesitan patrocinadores, sitios y socios estatales para garantizar que los niños puedan continuar recibiendo comidas saludables durante el verano cuando termina la escuela. El Programa de Comidas de Verano, financiado con fondos federales por el Departamento de Agricultura de los Estados Unidos y administrado por el estado por la Unidad de Nutrición Escolar del CDE, garantiza que los jóvenes tengan acceso a comidas saludables durante el verano, lo cual es fundamental para su salud y bienestar.

La Unidad de Nutrición Escolar de CDE, Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger y Hunger Free Colorado están trabajando juntos para ampliar la cantidad de jóvenes que reciben servicios del Programa de Comidas de Verano aumentando la conciencia sobre el programa y brindando recursos y capacitación a los patrocinadores nuevos y existentes del programa.

“El verano puede ser un momento difícil para los jóvenes que han perdido el acceso al desayuno y almuerzo escolar”, dijo Marc Jacobson, director ejecutivo de Hunger Free Colorado. “Mantener a los niños alimentados durante los meses de verano con comidas saludables y sin costo asegura que regresen a la escuela listos para aprender y es parte de una base sólida para ayudarlos a crecer y prosperar”.

Para ayudar a garantizar que las comidas de verano estén disponibles en su comunidad, conviértase en patrocinador del programa, sitio o socio estatal del Programa de Comidas de verano.

Para obtener más información, visite: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/nutrition/summerfoodserviceprogram> o comuníquese con Megan Johnson en johnson_m@cde.state.co.us o 303-653-6138.

Para obtener más información sobre el Plan de Colorado para acabar con el hambre, visite <https://www.endhungerco.org/>.

Para obtener más información sobre Hunger Free Colorado, visite HungerFreeColorado.org.

Acerca del programa de Comidas de Verano:

- Las comidas son GRATIS para los jóvenes de 18 años o menos.
- Las familias no necesitan aplicar por el programa para que sus hijos o hijas reciban comidas gratuitas durante el verano.
- Las organizaciones que pueden administrar el Programa de Comidas de Verano incluyen escuelas, organizaciones sin fines de lucro, entidades gubernamentales, campamentos, universidades y organizaciones comunitarias y religiosas.
- Las familias y los jóvenes pueden encontrar sitios de comidas de verano enviando un mensaje de texto con la palabra COMIDA al 877-877 o visitando www.kidsfoodfinder.org.

Las comidas que se sirven siguen las pautas de nutrición del Departamento de Agricultura de los Estados Unidos.

***Esta institución es un proveedor de igualdad de oportunidades.

Changes in the Referral and Evaluation Process for Children Under Age 3

Beginning on May 1, 2022, all referrals and evaluations for children under the age of 3 with developmental concerns or disabilities will be coordinated through Early Intervention Colorado.



This change to Early Intervention referrals and evaluations* is being made to:

- Ensure families and children across Colorado have equitable access to developmental support
- Streamline the program to be easier for families and providers to navigate

*granted by legislation SB21-275

Please note that Child Find (Colorado Department of Education/local school districts) will no longer accept referrals for children under age 3 as of May 1. All referrals and evaluations for children under 3 with disabilities or developmental concerns will be coordinated through Early Intervention Colorado.**

Early Intervention referrals and evaluations will occur within a coordinated, state system.

Families will continue to receive Early Intervention services through local Community Centered Boards, either in person or virtually.

Anyone can make a referral to Early Intervention!

A referral can be made online, by phone or by fax:



Complete the [online referral form](#)



Call 833-733-3734 (833) REFER-EI



Email GetStartedwithEI@state.co.us



Download the [referral form](#) and fax to 303-866-5944



Contact your [local Community Centered Board](#)

If you have questions about this change, please contact Jody Berg, Early Intervention Evaluations Manager at jody.berg@state.co.us or (720) 633-6099

**Early Intervention Colorado is currently part of the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS). Once the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) is established, Early Intervention Colorado will reside within the CDEC.





Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)



OSEP Fast Facts: Students With Disabilities Who Are English Learners (ELs) Served Under IDEA Part B

The U.S. Department of Education collects data from states about infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities who receive early intervention services, special education or related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

The Office of Special Education Program's Fast Facts summarizes key facts related to specific aspects of the data collection authorized by Section 618 of the IDEA. Data presented includes that collected through child count, educational environments and settings, discipline and exiting data collections.

[Check out the Office of Special Education Programs report on the percentage of students with disabilities who are English Learners \(EL\), Ages 5 \(school age\) through 21, in the United States and District of Columbia.](#)

Department of Education Releases Equity Action Plan as Part of Biden-Harris Administration's Efforts to Advance Racial Equity and Support Underserved Communities

On Thursday, April 14th, the U.S. Department of Education (along with over [90 federal agencies](#)) released its inaugural [equity action plan](#) as part of the Biden-Harris Administration's continued commitment to advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities through the federal government. This plan aligns with President Biden's executive order, [Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#).

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona underscored these efforts earlier this year when he laid out [his vision for education in America](#). The Department will host a listening session on **May 17, 2022**, in which senior agency officials will hear feedback on the equity action plan. More details on the listening session to come.



ATTENTION ALL TEACHERS AND PARENTS

Every Friday afternoon Chase's teacher asks her students to take out a piece of paper and write down the names of four children with whom they'd like to sit the following week. The children know that these requests may or may not be honored. She also asks the students to nominate one student whom they believe has been an exceptional classroom citizen that week. All ballots are privately submitted to her.

And every single Friday afternoon, after the students go home, Chase's teacher takes out those slips of paper, places them in front of her and studies them. She looks for patterns.

Who is not getting requested by anyone else? Who doesn't even know who to request? Who never gets noticed enough to be nominated? Who had a million friends last week and none this week?

You see, Chase's teacher is not looking for a new seating chart or "exceptional citizens." Chase's teacher is looking for lonely children. She's looking for children who are struggling to connect with other children. She's identifying the little ones who are falling through the cracks of the class's social life. She is discovering whose gifts are going unnoticed by their peers. And she's pinning down- right away- who's being bullied and who is doing the bullying.

As a teacher, parent, and lover of all children – I think that this is the most brilliant Love Ninja strategy I have ever encountered. It's like taking an X-ray of a classroom to see beneath the surface of things and into the hearts of students. It is like mining for gold – the gold being those little ones who need a little help – who need adults to step in and TEACH them how to make friends, how to ask others to play, how to join a group, or how to share their gifts with others. And it's a bully deterrent because every teacher knows that bullying usually happens outside of her eyeshot – and that often kids being bullied are too intimidated to share. But as she said – the truth comes out on those safe, private, little sheets of paper.

As Chase's teacher explained this simple, ingenious idea – I stared at her with my mouth hanging open. "How long have you been using this system?" I said, "Ever since Columbine, she said. Every single Friday afternoon since Columbine".

This brilliant woman watched Columbine knowing that ALL VIOLENCE BEGINS WITH DISCONNECTION. All outward violence begins as inner loneliness. She watched that tragedy KNOWING that children who aren't being noticed will eventually resort to being noticed by any means necessary.

And so she decided to start fighting violence early and often, and with the world within her reach. What Chase's teacher is doing when she sits in her empty classroom studying those lists written with shaky 11 year old hands - is SAVING LIVES. I am convinced of it. She is saving lives.

And what this mathematician has learned while using this system is something she really already knew: that everything – even love, even belonging – has a pattern to it. And she finds those patterns through those lists – she breaks the codes of disconnection. And then she gets lonely kids the help they need. It's math to her.
It's MATH.

Chase's teacher retires this year – after decades of saving lives. What a way to spend a life: looking for patterns of love and loneliness. Stepping in, every single day- and altering the trajectory of our world.



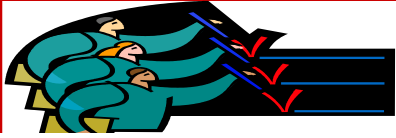


Calendar of Events

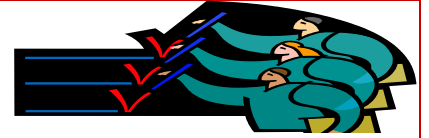
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- May 11** **CSDB Board of Trustee Meeting** - check CSDB website to determine Zoom or in-person
Contact: www.csdb.org
- May 20** **Southern Region TVI/DVR Meeting** – 2:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m., in person/CSDB campus
Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@csdb.org
- June 3** **First Friday CIMC** – 9:00-10:00am AND 2:30-3:30pm
Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@csdb.org
- June 13-14** **Summer Institute on Deaf-Blindness and SSN—Adams 12 Conference Center**
Contact: Tanni Anthony at anthony_t@cde.state.co.us
- June 17** **Southern Region TVI/DVR Meeting** – 7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m., Zoom
Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@csdb.org
- July 5—10** **National Federation of the Blind Convention**— in person/New Orleans, LA
Registration & Conference information
- July 22 - 24** **AER International Conference 2022** – in person/St. Louis, MO
- August 30** **End Date of READ Act Teacher Training Requirement**
For training options, go to: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/teacher-training>
Registration information coming soon.





CHECK IT OUT!



Strategies to Engage Students to Read Over the Summer

Monica Yoo, PhD, UCCS

Associate Professor of Language and Literacy

Tuesday, May 24, 2022

6:00-7:00 pm

This training is designed to provide tools and strategies for parents/caregivers of students Pre-K through 3rd grade on how to support staying engaged and motivated to read over the summer.



CO-SPONSORED BY:



Harrison School District Two
Character Through Diversity, Challenge & Accomplishment

FREE WEBINAR

CLICK TO REGISTER

Dear Teacher of Students with Visually Impairments,

My name is Erika Fundelius. I am a TVI, COMS, as well as a doctoral candidate at Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL. For my dissertation I am conducting a survey study to examine current working knowledge of self-determination of TVIs. Based on my experiences in the field and continued conversations with colleagues, I discovered that we are still challenged to truly implement the expanded core curriculum, and more specifically, the area of self-determination.

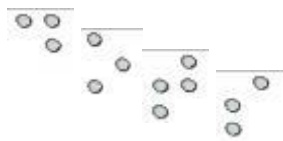
TVIs in the United States and territories are invited to complete an approximately 15-25 minutes online survey. The survey was created in Qualtrics for accessibility and contains 30 questions in a variety of formats. Twenty-five (25) participants -who elect to enter a random drawing- will receive a \$20 electronic Amazon gift card.

To participate in this study, please visit the following LINK: <https://bit.ly/15YrofSD>

Please enter the following password to be able to participate: **LowVision**

If you have any questions, please email me at ef19g@fsu.edu. For questions related to the rights of research participants, please contact the Florida State University Human Subjects Office at 850-644-7900 or humansubjects@fsu.edu.

For more information on the study, please visit the following link: <https://bit.ly/15yrsInfoSheet>



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

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

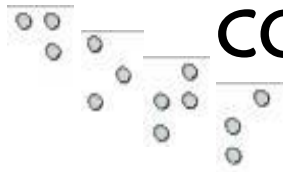
The Practice Test items have been posted on the braille competency webpage—that information and other resources can be found at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-vision_guidedocs.

For summer 2022 assistance, please be in touch with Tanni first to secure an available proctor / mentor.

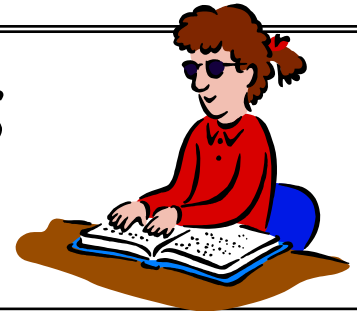
Braillewriter Repair

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





CONNECTING THE DOTS



How to Read Braille With Dottie and Dots

By: Kristie Smith-Armand, M.Ed.
Illustrations of Dottie and Dots
By: Bill Morgan



Learn to read braille with Dottie and Dots! This fun book can be downloaded for free to teach children the dot configurations of the braille alphabet.

When a person who is blind reads a letter in braille they feel of the letter. Dots and I help our friends who cannot see to read the braille letters and we would like to teach you, too. However, because you can see, you will learn printed braille. Are you ready to learn the alphabet in printed braille? Whee! This is going to be fun!

UEB Technical Versus Nemeth Braille Codes

The Colorado Department of Education does not dictate a math code for students with visual impairment, including blindness. Two math codes are approved by the Braille Authority of North America. The decision about the math code is an individual student-by-student or IEP decision.

Both codes are viable for instruction and state testing. For more information, contact Tanni Anthony at (303) 866-6681 or anthony_t@cde.state.co.us.



Did you know that many braille textbooks for students K-12 are produced in prisons across the United States? Since 2002, APH has taken a lead role in developing the National Prison Braille Network (NPBN). This group of professionals, serving in the fields of vision and corrections, works with prisons across the country to create quality braille textbooks with the goal of increasing quality of life and independence for students and transcribers alike.

Learn more about this Network by reading APH's [NPBN blog](#) and visit the new and enhanced [NPBN website](#) at npbn.org.

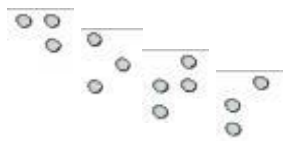
School Project to Fix School's Braille Signs

Thanks to Brooke Miller for sharing this information. Please see this article to see how one Colorado high school is updating the Braille to UEB. [Coal Ridge student uses 3D printers to fix school's Braille signs](#)

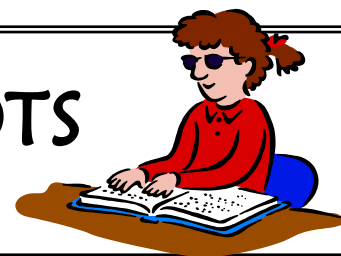
Braille Stampers

Thanks to Mike Plansker who shared this information from a parent who shared it with him. The link will take you for information about Braille Play-Doh Stampers. [Braille Play-Dough Stampers](#)

The Braille Alphabet by Jack Hartmann is song that teaches the braille alphabet. This song came about from a very special request from a group of visually impaired students who heard our See It, Say It, Sign It video with the ASL sign for each letter of the alphabet. They asked their teacher, Jessica Hayes to write us and ask for a braille alphabet song. With the help of many expert's contributions, The Braille Alphabet Song was created. Braille consists of various patterns of raised dots arranged in a braille letter, a braille number or a punctuation mark. In the Braille Alphabet consists of six dot which are numbered vertically. This Braille Alphabet Song is used with words that are tangible examples for each letter. The words used in this video were specifically chosen for their tangible attributes to assist the child with a visual impairment. The caregiver may collect the items in advance and provide the items to the child to feel as they are learning the alphabet and their corresponding sounds. Check out [The Alphabet Song on YouTube](#).



CONNECTING THE DOTS



Attend 2022 NFB BELL® Academy In-Home Edition: Applications Now Open!

Enhance Braille and Nonvisual Skills

The National Federation of the Blind is offering one three-week virtual program of the NFB BELL Academy In-Home Edition 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 July 18 through August 5, 2022. Additionally, in-person NFB BELL Academies will also be offered in a city near you! 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:

- Do not receive enough Braille and nonvisual skills instruction in school
- Could benefit from more Braille exposure over the summer
- Would enjoy connecting with blind role models

In person locations coming soon!

Take advantage of this opportunity for your child to connect with blind role models. Limited space is available. Learn more and apply now!



<https://nfb.org/programs-services/nfb-bell-academy>

Help NBP Get Braille Across America This Spring!

Join our Braille Across America team! Starting on NBP's 95th birthday, take on the Braille Across America Challenge and help us carry our braille baton and show and share with everyone why braille is so important! This virtual challenge begins on March 17th and ends on April 18th. You can walk, run, bike, roll the distance of a marathon or two, or three, over the course of 33 days while raising a minimum of \$262 so we can produce more braille books! You can set your own goal! Walk, run bike, or roll with your child, mother or father, as a family, with work colleagues, friends, and form a team! You can also use a treadmill or stationary bike. [Join the team here!](#)

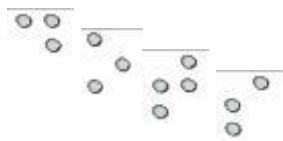
Last year's team logged more than 10,300 miles, traversing the country from Boston to California four times! Help us double that distance! Participation will include a Braille Across America Team shirt, a medal, fitness tips and personal and team fundraising web pages as well as virtual gatherings, play lists for the challenge, private face book page and lots of fun!

Last year, we had 32 states represented, as well as Japan. Let's get all 50 states participating this year, Canada and beyond! Help us make as many people aware of braille and the power of reading!

[Watch this video to see what last year's participants have to say about the challenge!](#) (Braille readers, once you click on the video, select "More Options" and then "Play.") [Then, head over to register \(or make a donation\) here!](#)

Thank you!
Nicole Kosar, Annual Giving & Event Coordinator

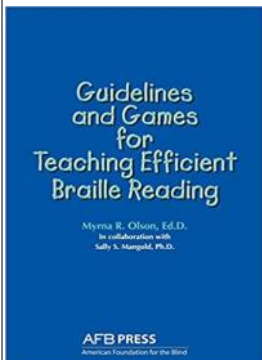




CONNECTING THE DOTS



Guidelines and Games for Teaching Efficient Braille Reading



This will be the first-ever APH Press book available for purchase with Federal Quota funds.

Providing unique ideas for adapting a general reading program to the needs of braille readers, the second edition of *Guidelines and Games* celebrates its 40th anniversary with this release. Based on research in the areas of rapid reading and precision teaching, this handbook serves as an invaluable resource to both supplement and enrich early braille instruction for parents and teachers of those who are blind or visually impaired. The activities and games presented in the book enhance the traditional teaching of braille reading skills from the preschool level through Grade 3. The book also offers suggestions for working with remedial readers, regardless of age.

In the foreword of *Guidelines and Games for Teaching Efficient Braille Reading*, author Renae T. Bjorg, PhD. commented on the first edition, saying, “Myrna Olson birthed this book out of frustration of the low reading rates and poor mechanical habits demonstrated by her students who were braille readers. In her quest to resolve these issues, she partnered with Sally Mangold who had a long history of working with students who were visually impaired. Mangold was a braille reader herself. Her research focused on the development of good mechanical skills during beginning braille instruction. Together, these pioneers set the standards for excellence in teaching foundational skills for beginning braille readers.” The second edition was updated to reflect advances in technology that have made braille more accessible in a digital format, such as refreshable braille devices, digital notetakers, and translation software. The writers have also incorporated new research on teaching braille literacy, as well as current best practices for teachers of students with visual impairments. Stay tuned to your email inbox to learn when you can purchase this valuable resource.

Tonal Braille Project

A team of people from the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind (CSDB) devised a strategy to teach braille to emergent braille readers called tonal braille. Keith Harrison helped us create the app. The app can be used with androids only and is found in the android app store. Let us know if you'd like to help us collect data on this strategy.

For more information check out the [CSDB Tonal Braille Project webpage](#).

Registration Now Open for Braille 2000 Textbook Transcription Course!

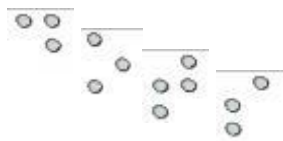
The NIMAC is excited to announce that registration is now open for a **free** six-session course, "[Braille 2000: Textbook Transcription from Start to Finish](#)."

This course, hosted by the [APH Access Academy](#), will walk Braille 2000 users through the complete process of using NIMAS files to produce high quality braille.

We encourage you to share this announcement widely through your networks!

The NIMAC will also be offering a similar course for Duxbury users in June—stay tuned for a registration email for that!

Feel free to contact them at nimac@aph.org if you have any questions.



CONNECTING THE DOTS



Recruiting for Nemeth in a Box

Do you have a student who reads braille that will be in Grades 5-8 next year? Does your student need to work on their Nemeth or math skills? Does your student like games and puzzles? Would your student enjoy meeting others who read braille?

If you said yes to these questions, here is a great opportunity! Project INSPIRE is offering a three-week, online Nemeth in a Box Program for middle school students who read braille this June.

We will meet on Mondays and Wednesdays beginning on June 13 and ending on June 29. We will offer two sessions. The morning session will be held from 11:30-1:00 Eastern/10:30-12:00 Central/9:30-11:00 Mountain/8:30-10:00 Pacific. The late afternoon session will be held from 4:00-5:30 Eastern/3:00-4:30 Central/2:00-3:30 Mountain/1:00-2:30 Pacific.

The attached flyer has additional information, and the link to the registration form is https://uofsc.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bdu52hMbsVDIECG

We are accepting 15 students, and we will begin reviewing applications on Friday, May 20. Please feel free to share this information and the attached flyer with students and families who may be interested. If you have questions, please let me know.

Priority will be given to students who have not participated in the Nemeth in a Box program previously.

Tina S. Herzberg, Ph.D.
Office: 864-503-5572

herzberg@uscupstate.edu



TRANSITION INFORMATION ABOUT MOVING ON!

Parents' Guide to College Admissions podcast

National PTA's [Center for Family Engagement](#) hosts a podcast for parents by parents entitled *Notes from the Backpack*. The podcast features parents and experts who offer advice and strategies to help children succeed in and beyond school. [Listen](#) to the current topic, Parents' Guide to College Admissions, and other episodes on their website. If you have ideas for future seasons of Notes from the Backpack, please complete the podcast feedback [survey](#).

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.

First Wednesday of the Month ParentConnect Family Support Group

ParentConnect: A family support Group offered in partnership with the Virtual Parent Support Group Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind APH FamilyConnect and the Chicago Lighthouse are pleased to offer this virtual support group for parents and families of children who are blind or visually impaired. These monthly sessions are for families to connect with and learn from each other about the joys, challenges, and adventures of raising children with visual impairments and blindness. These sessions are open to families. No ACVREP or professional development credits will be available.

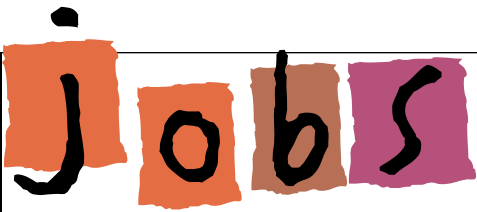
National Organization of Parents of Blind Children

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 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 their 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.



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

- ◆ **1 FTE TVI (Home Visit focus)** - Anchor Center for Blind Children. For more information, please reach out to Melinda Carter at mcarter@anchorcenter.org.
- ◆ **1 FTE Brailist**—Denver Public Schools. Check out the [DPS Job Board](#)—type in “braille”/”brailist”.
- ◆ **1 FTE Brailist**—Cherry Creek School District. Contact Nory Marsh at lmash@cherrycreekschools.org
- ◆ **1 FTE TVI/O&M Specialist**—Cherry Creek School District. Contact Nory Marsh at lmash@cherrycreekschools.org

Across Metro, Northern, and Western Regions

- ◆ **Contact Work with Flexible Hours**—A Shared Vision. For more information about working in many areas of the state with the 0-2 population, please contact Steve Lindauer at slindauer@asharedvision.org.

Northern Region

- ◆ **1 FTE TVI/O&M Specialist**—Thompson School District. Contact Nancy Ingalls at nancy.ingalls@tsd.org

Southern Region

- ◆ **1 FTE TVI / O&M Specialist** - Academy 20 School District. Please contact Belinda Lujan-Lindsey at Belinda.lujan@asd20.org or (719) 234-1328.
- ◆ **1 FTE TVI and O&M Specialist** — Falcon 49 School District. Please contact Ronda May at rmay@d49.org
- ◆ **1 day/week TVI Contract Work**—Fort Carson School District. Please contact Tish Watson at twatson@ffc8.org.

Eastern Region

- ◆ **O&M Specialist Contract Work**—East Central BOCES—Contact Beverly Bragg at (719) 740-0544 or bevb@ecboces.org.

Western Region

- ◆ **1 FTE TVI/O&M Specialist**—Combined Summit County School District and Mountain BOCES position. For more information, please contact Ellen Clark at ellen.clark@summitk12.org.

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 want to be added to CDE’s contract list, please be in touch with Tanni at anthony_t@cde.state.co.us.



just for PARENTS

Sharing Info about State Assessments with Families of Children with Disabilities

In February, CPIR teamed with NCEO to spotlight an amazing new resource, the *Participation Communications Toolkit*. The highly customizable toolkit is designed for stakeholders to use in discussing and making decisions about how children with disabilities will participate in state assessments.

Check it out at: <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/state-assessments-nceo-cpir-webinar-feb2022/>

Q&A on Serving Children with Disabilities Placed by Their Parents in Private Schools

This OSEP webinar for Parent Centers answers questions about states' obligations to provide equitable services (versus FAPE) to children with disabilities who are placed in private schools by their parents. Simultaneous Spanish interpretation was also provided. Find the 2 YouTube videos, a PDF of the presentation slides, the guidance document, and more at <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/osep-webinars/>



The National Family Association for Deaf-Blind has open positions on its Board of Directors. They are looking for people who have family members of any age who are deaf-blind, professionals in the field, or individuals who are committed to our mission.



Check out the QR code for more information.

If you have questions or wish to nominate someone, please feel free to reach out to me at edgenie@nfadb.org or 512-563-3676!

To learn more, request an application, or nominate someone, please visit the [**NFADB BOARD OF DIRECTORS CALL FOR NOMINATIONS**](#), scan the QR code or contact Edgenie Bellah, NFADB Nominations Chair.

VISION COALITION MEETING MINUTES

April 6, 2022

Persons in Attendance: Tanni Anthony, Melinda Carter, Nancy Cozart, Melissa French, Anahit LaBarre, Paula Landry, Erin Noe, Sara Noel, Jim Olson, Michele Reed, and Chloann Woolley

Guest: Cheryl Austin

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 2021-22 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 – Anahit LaBarre
- ◆ 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 – Sara Noel
- ◆ Metro TVI / COMS– Nancy Cozart
- ◆ Northern TVI / COMS – Melissa French
- ◆ Southern TVI / COMS – Chloann Woolley
- ◆ University of Northern Colorado – Paula Conroy
- ◆ Western TVI / COMS – Erin Noe

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 critical issues to the table.

Decision Protocol: In instances where a vote may be taken to decide on 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

- ◆ A special thanks to Anahit LaBarre for attending today, all the way from Armenia with a ten-hour time difference!
- ◆ Kudos to the CIMC staff for all they do for our state! The Vision Coalition wants to take time to applaud the commitment of Jim, Debbie, Theresa, and Taylor.
- ◆ Welcome to Cheryl Austin, the new CSDB Outreach Director!

PROGRAM UPDATES

Metro Region (Nancy Cozart)

The Denver Metro TVI/COMS group has been busy, even overwhelmed, through the school year! The BVI office hours have been appreciated with wonderful topics. This option for training has been helpful.

At the last virtual meeting, Michele Reed and Anmol gave a DVR Update. The primary focus of the meeting was working on SMART goals & objectives. Samples were reviewed and discussion occurred around updating the ones on the CDE website.

* The next meeting is scheduled for April 13, 2022, from 3:30-5:00 p.m. This is a zoom meeting so others from across the state can join in the meeting. On the docket will be Anchor Center with the topic of the transition of preschoolers from Anchor Center to public school programs. Also, Julie Deden will share information about the Colorado Center for the Blind and its safety/liability practices.

Nancy Knight from Littleton Public School is leading the activity for 3rd-5th grade students from the metro area. *FUN ON THE 5TH of May* is an opportunity for students to meet/further get to know peers with vision loss in a social setting. TVs and their students will be having lunch and activities at a park. Details are being finalized soon.

Next year, the Metro TVI/COMS representatives will be Nancy Cozart and Jeannie Lei.

Discussion Items:

- *Is it possible to have BVI Office Hours continue?* Yes, they will be converted to the title of *Sound Bites*. The goal would be once a month on Wednesdays from 3:30 to 4:30. The goal will have designed topics that would be calendared by the beginning of the school year. It was suggested not to go later than 4:30 p.m. We know that this time slot will not work out for everyone. These will be elective opportunities.
- *What benefits/drawbacks would there be to merge at least some regional TVI/COMS meetings? i.e., CIMC updates, reviewing VC questions/information gathering, etc.* It was suggested that regions, as possible, book their regional meetings right after Vision Coalition so that the topics are fresh and can be shared / queries can be made.
- *Concerns about professional membership, involvement, and taking leadership roles.* Everyone is busy and work/life balance is important. We often see the same people taking leadership work. How can we invite/incentivize others to take on these roles?

Northern Region (Melissa French)

The Northern Colorado TVIs and O&Ms met on March 4th virtually. Orientation and mobility instruction was our main discussion and included adaptive mobility devices for wheelchair users, purchasing of canes, CVI, and travel to/from lessons as it relates to liability. One discussion item included the question; With different district policies how have COMS been creative with providing meaningful experiences and skill practice in multiple environments for students?

Discussion items:

- *We are seeing an increase in CVI being diagnosed in my district. Is everyone experiencing this? What is the approach across the state so we can be consistent?* CVI is a top diagnosis in our state count. There are reports of an increase in students with CVI across some districts. Some districts see consistent diagnoses from particular doctors. Parents can also be helpful with recommending specific doctors to other parents. TVIs also share that not every child with a CVI diagnosis present with functional concerns impacting development/academics. TVIs are trained on cortical/cerebral visual impairment characteristics – the goal is not on the educational diagnosis, but confirmation of functional status and intervention / specially designed instruction needs.
- *Is there a way to make it so the practice problems for CMAS can be embossed on any embosser? If not, can we get the practice items sooner to ensure accessibility?* See notes under the southern region section.
- *Is there a “list” of braillists in the northern area (or beyond) retired or working, that can be contacted for small jobs or hourly time?* This is a real need. Assignment: Tanni and Jim can assist with this effort. Also, it might be good to share how many administrative units are training new braillists with great results. There may also be a way to harness existing braillists who do not have as many braille students during a given semester school year.
- *How are districts handling convergence insufficiency referrals? Is there a way we can be consistent across the state?* Minnesota Department of Education has a Fact Sheet on CI. Tanni will share this handout with VC members for their review. This is not a vetted CDE document. Eligibility follows a formula that ends with educational impact and the need for specially designed instruction by a special education teacher. A 504 Plan may address needed accommodations such as extended time. There may also be a need for assistive technology to explore both visual learning and auditory learning options.

Southern Region (Chloann Woolley)

The Southern Region TVI-DVR group met for Zoom meetings in January and February. However, the most recent March 18th meeting was able to be in person on the CSDB Campus. The Southern Region hosted Cara Johnson, School Psychologist at CSDB. Cara presented on *Executive Functioning and Schedules*. A Make-And-Take portion was planned but the meeting ran long. All agreed to have a follow-up activity at a future meeting to complete the make-and-take. Watch for updates on meeting topics.

The hot topics from our January meeting included: How do school districts support students that need eye exams and/or glasses?; How to provide ideas to APH for new products?; Guide Dogs, Graphing Calculators, and APH training and resources for our field.

The following options are available to support students who need eye exams or possible glasses:

- EverythingForSight.org, our local non-profit (founder: Dr. James Barad)
- Vouchers – check with your school nurses (VisionUSA, etc.)
- If your family has insurance that will pay for an eye exam and is just resistant to the follow-through of setting an appointment, consider turning it into a lesson. Get signed parent permission from the

parents to take their child to the appointment, ask for a copy of their insurance card, and see if you can take the student yourself.

- Lions Clubs, check for your specific part of town, we have several clubs in town.
- Check with your school to see how your district's Medicaid works – does it include the ability to pay for an exam and/or glasses?

APH has an application process to share new APH Product ideas. There is a product submission form you submit that is reviewed by a committee at APH. In January, the new product applications were put on hold. Keep checking their website for updates about accepting new product ideas. Check these links out for great information from the American Printing House for the Blind: APH CareerConnect, APH Connect Center, [InSights Arts Competition](#), Access Academy, and APH Hive. Jim Olson shared the Wags & Wisdom panel discussion information about guide dogs. The event is over but important information about guide dogs can be found on their website: <https://www.guidedogs.com/> Since the APH Accessible Graphing Calculator is not available at this time, Leanne Grillot offered information on Desmos which is included on the MATT Connect tablet.

During the SWAAAC Coordinator's meeting the DCMP, Described & Captioned Media Program was shared. Many of the Coordinators had never heard of it and were amazed and excited about sharing the resource with their teams. Please share this resource with your general education teachers. Many of the videos and resources that they are already using in class are up and ready with audio and/or close captioning access.

The newest discussions at the March meeting included the participation of our braille readers on college and state assessments. Test-taking takes time and preparation to ensure that our braille readers are given the same opportunities as their sighted peers to practice the format and process of the assessment. Additional time and training are required for TVIs to proctor, obtain tools and prepare materials for braille readers to participate in the CMAS (Colorado Measure of Academic Success) Math, ELA, and Science assessments.

Districts are still reporting shortages of qualified staff to support our students. Remember to be an ambassador for our field with your colleagues, acquaintances, and friends to promote our field of employment.

The last two monthly meetings are scheduled for:

April 15	7:30-8:20 a.m. (zoom)
May 20	2:30-4:30 p.m. (CSDB, Lions conference room)

Professional Sharing: Cody Laplant, owner of eyetvision.com has posted a new document to his Screen Reader Tidbits: How to Start with Chrome. If you sign up for their email list you will receive screen reader tidbits right to your inbox. Here is the New PDF document: Basic Internet Navigation with VoiceOver for Mac He also teaches a series of screen reading webinars archived on the APH YouTube channel. From Christine Dalee, CSDB Employability Center: She came across this new Atkinson Hyperlegible font developed with Braille Institute, which is now available for free download.

Discussion:

- *Parent Consent Forms: What happens to the students who are not registered? As a TVI, if the student qualifies for services, we continue to provide services. There is a concern that these children are forgotten and not included in our state count. Is there a way, without giving a name, that they are still recognized on the state count as a line item for the district? #of VI students served within ___ district (NPC = No Parental Consent)/# Brl readers/#Low Vision. Services are not affected by whether a child is on the APH Quota Count / CIMC State Count. The student should receive all the services they need based on their*

IEP. To be eligible for the APH quota funds or any CIMC support material items the child must be on the APH Quota Count and/or the CIMC State Count. A question came up about whether there could be a comment on the form to note that the TVI serves additional students that do not have parent release forms. The CIMC cannot keep data on children without parental consent.

- *Contracted Vision Services: What are the supports for contracted TVIs? Students with vision impairments seem to be penalized because their TVI/O&M teacher is not an employee.* For example, the books sent out from CDE are not sent to contract employees, but to the AU for the housing in their BVI library. The CIMC and CDE Deaf-Blind Lending Library also have copies to loan to the contractor. The CIMC has some restrictions on the distribution of certain equipment, this equipment is given to AUs directly and, sometimes, based on the numbers of enrolled students. If there are concerns about books or equipment, contract personnel should reach out to Tanni and/or Jim. There are resources with Tools for Life for students, as well as the CAER mini-grants.
- *CMAS Braille Practice Tests and CMAS testing for a braille reader- There were some questions and concerns about the student training materials for the CMAS Practice Tests that were distributed as electronic files to the District Assessment Coordinators (DACs).*
 - *Was this the first-year practice materials that have been provided in a braille format?* Yes. There have long been practice materials that could be downloaded and prepared in braille and tactile graphics.
 - *Was any written guidance provided to the DACs or district TVIs and braillists?* Administration guidance is provided in the Teacher Notes. Specific information about the file type was not included.
 - *If the CMAS tests are provided in hardcopy braille, could the practice materials be delivered that way? (some of the pages were considered to be 'consumable.')* Currently, student practice resources are available online to print as a hard copy. The braille practice resources are also available electronically. Upon request, they are sent to the DAC in the .prn format to be embossed as a hard copy.
 - *If your district does not own a ViewPlus embosser, how is your district supposed to emboss the files?* This appears to be a question for districts rather than for CDE.
 - *Can CDE produce a strategy to assist those districts who do not own a ViewPlus embosser?* In consideration of possible strategies for the future, CDE is gathering more information from districts about how materials with graphics are typically processed/printed for instruction.
 - *Are the practice materials available year-round to TVIs?* The practice resources are available year-round. They are periodically updated with additional exemplar content.
 - *Are TVIs allowed to start months ahead of time?* TVIs are allowed to use the practice resources at any time.

Suggestions from the group to better the braille practice test process:

- *Provide directions for the DAC once the braille files are received.*
- *Provide the braille files in a more universal braille extension file (Many TVIs had a difficult time accessing the Tiger Software Suite .prn files. The "ViewPlus Professional" embosser files had to be manipulated to work with different ViewPlus embossers.)*
- *CIMC offered to emboss the materials on behalf of districts that could not access the braille files for the ViewPlus embossers. CIMC does not receive these files from CDE or any DACs. The CIMC only embossed from the files each district TVI sent to the CIMC (the CIMC and teachers did not know if there were different practice tests used by the various schools and/or districts.)*

- *Please distribute braille practice test files earlier, to allow time to complete the embossing and additional time to practice the braille testing format and process with students*
- *Provide training (video?) to TVIs on how to proctor a braille CMAS test*
- *VIs discuss concerns with their respective DACs, who then relay the issues to the Assessment person at CDE, but most DACs (with the exception of perhaps the DAC for CSDB) do not understand the implications and complications TVIs may encounter.*
- *Material prep takes more time than is not typically in the TVI's schedule, and it is difficult to rearrange schedules to match the general classroom schedule or keep up with the rate and frequency of testing practice that sighted peers receive.*
- *There is a need for our students to have the **tools** readily available in daily instruction that are used during the assessment for graphing, plotting points, creating diagrams*
- *Perhaps, Tanni could be involved in a discussion with the state assessment team and coordinator to support DACs to explain the need for an earlier release of materials/braille files.*

CDE is appreciative of these suggestions and Tanni has shared this information with the Assessment Unit. This is a topic for internal discussion on how to improve the steps for this next year. Jim noted that we do not want BRF files as the graphics will be poor.

Also, it is recommended that the TVI work with the classroom teacher to create graphics on a routine basis. Some districts have this option for regular material prep by their brailleists. This is ideal for instruction and for prep of the practice items that are on the CDE website (beyond what is provided in braille). Another thought is to share the wealth across the state if we work together to share practice items that are created across the grades – it may work to build out a repository of existing materials.

The CIMC staff reported that it would be quite easy to emboss needed copies of the CMAS practice tests anybody would need. They can be 'consumable' (meaning we do not barcode them; we just send them out and you keep them or send them back if you are done with them). There are some consumable pages - which are at the end of the tests we bound with plastic binding combs...we would just have to emboss extra consumable pages, again not difficult for us at all.

- *SAT & PSAT Accessibility Questions:* There have been questions about MP3 and AT versions of practice tests for the three assessments (PSAT in grades 9 and 10 and SAT for grade 11). When reviewing the AT version of one of the assessments, it was discovered that when it played JAWS, it included extra content and took the staff member much longer to get through than it would/should for a student with standard timing. As a result, they are setting up a follow-up meeting with that staff member and College Board's SSD team to discuss that experience further so that College Board can make those practice tests work better.

Western Region (Erin Noe)

The Western Slope TVI/COMs continue to meet virtually this school year. In February they met with Jim Olson for a refresher on CIMC's services, their website, CIMC forms, and the virtual Braille Challenge. Jim answered questions and shared information about APH Hive and APH Access Academy. The TVI/COMs were grateful to learn information about new APH materials for students with CVI, tactual books for preschoolers, and resources to locate tactile graphic images. Jim is a wealth of information, and we are grateful for all his knowledge! We are hoping to have Jim join us again in the future as we like the small group setting to learn and ask questions.

In staffing news, we welcome Donna Johnson from Eagle County who is now wearing multiple hats working as both a Transition Coordinator AND taking on TVI responsibilities. We are sad to see Stephanie Crosen leave Colorado for Utah. There is a new TVI opening in Summit County. We wish her and her family the best!

Discussion Item:

- *Are districts having difficulty getting eye doctors to checkboxes on the Meets the Definition of Blindness (MDB) / Functions at the Definition of Blindness (FDB) Form in order to be counted in the Federal Quota program?* A recommendation is to call the tech/office ahead of the form to get some internal help. Identify someone to help with this next step. Try highlighting the area of need on the form. Others have another problem – they check that the child is forever legally blind and then the next time the child is in the office, they do not note a visual impairment. This appears to be a situation where the doctor is not reading the form well. Jim also gave a heads-up that this form may be changing per APH requirements for the next year.

A Shared Vision (Paula Landry)

Just as spring brings new growth, A Shared Vision is experiencing a growing rate of vision referrals. This directly correlates to data recently obtained from EI Colorado, which reported a record 49 percent growth statewide, from 2019 to 2021, in the occurrence of vision services as a percentage of children in early intervention. This remarkable growth compares to declines in other key services during that same period, including speech-language pathology (-2%), developmental intervention (-1%), occupational therapy (-4%), and physical therapy (-11%). This growth in demand for vision services is related to the effectiveness of the updated vision screening protocol developed by CDE, CDHS, and A Shared Vision at the start of the pandemic. Leveraging the protocol, A Shared Vision has provided training to more than 900 early intervention professionals; 65% of whom are qualified to detect vision concerns in a young child via telehealth and refer families to a pediatric ophthalmologist and/or a licensed EI-TVI. As we emerge from the impacts of the pandemic, we will collaborate with the state to update the vision screening protocol to support in-person evaluations. Because of this growth in vision referrals, we are working to meet the demands for vision services. We are looking for collaborative, sensitive, licensed Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments who are interested in supporting little ones with blindness or visual impairments. We offer a flexible work schedule; you can support one or more families depending on your schedule. The visits can be done in the families' homes or community settings, or via telehealth. We support the training and mentoring to help you succeed in early intervention – it is different providing services to caregivers, rather than students! If interested, please send an email to hr@asharedvision.org with your resume and a short paragraph on why you are interested in supporting families with children, from birth to age three.

Other exciting news – Paula Landry and Steve Lindauer conducted an online webinar on March 3 for the TSBVI Outreach Coffee Hour sponsored by WREIC on “Teaching a Child’s First Teacher: Adult Learning in Early Intervention.” In this two-hour session, they reviewed adult learning frameworks and best practices to build caregivers’ capabilities, specifically the skills, knowledge, and behaviors to be their child’s first teacher. Nearly

200 participants attended. The recorded session is now available at <https://www.tsbvi.edu/videos-webinars/coffee-hour-archive-2022>.

Anchor Center for Blind Children (Melinda Carter)

Plans for Preschool graduation are already happening, and we have 15 graduates this year! Graduation will be Thursday, June 2 and with such a large class we will probably have 2 graduation times. Registrations for the 2022-23 Preschool year have gone out and as of right now we have 24 children registered and several others who we are just waiting on paperwork. Our pilot year for inclusion went well and we will have 4 “sighted peers” for next year’s preschool. We plan to have 5 classrooms led by an ECSE with the support of a TA, TVI, and other therapists as we did this year. Planning for our summer camps is underway. These will happen in July with Summer Sprouts (birth-3) on Mondays in July, except the 4th, and the first Monday in August. Anchor’s Away Camp (ages 3-6) will be July 12-15.

Elise Darrow and Melody Furze have been working hard to get the CVI Center up and running. Their focus right now is assessments and reaching out to parents and professionals through surveys to find out their needs and where their focus should be.

Colorado AER Chapter (Nancy Cozart)

The CAER Banquet Over Breakfast zoom meeting will begin at 7:00 a.m., but the meeting and awards begin at 7:15 a.m. until 8:15 a.m. Annual awards will be presented!!! There will be drawings for prizes .

Please consider becoming a CAER Board Member. The great news is that we are virtual. We will continue to have virtual meetings to make it easier for our members on the western slope and southern parts to attend meetings. It also gives you CEUs for ACVREP! Easy credits for just an hour or so a month! Please consider joining and becoming part of this great group. Please contact Heather Solberg, at heather.solberg@va.gov.

CAER continues to offer CEUs for free to its members. On March 8, a training was held on accessing Podcasts and YouTube specific to the blind/low vision population. This session's presenters were Nancy Cozart and Heather Solberg. On February 28, 2022, Rebecca Gardom presented on O&M & TaiChi. Mini-Grant recipients are paying it forward. At CAER’s monthly meeting in February, Trina Boyd-Pratt shared information on her tactile maps specific to Denver area transportation stations. There is interest in accessing these maps “on loan” from Trina Boyd Pratt to specific COMS to use on a short-term basis with clients /students.

Michelle Robinson continues to manage the Adaptive Aid Equipment that is available to CAER members. This equipment can be helpful to students who need home use, have financial difficulty, etc.

CAER had a wonderful fundraiser with the Braille Beanies! People had access to purchase them online and have items sent directly to their home or office. In addition, some people made direct donations in addition to or instead of a product purchase. These funds provide the financial means for mini-grants. THANK YOU! Paula Conroy will be the CAER rep for the Vision Coalition for this next school year.

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 for the Pueblo/Southern Colorado office and an Assistive Technology Technician in the Denver Metro office. We are currently fully staffed for BLVS Rehabilitation Counselors.

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 including remote training, in-person training, and Zoom virtual group sessions (Reflections, Enrichment Hour, Women’s Group, and two Braille Groups). We are adding a Men’s Group and a Job Seekers Skills Hour in April and May 2022. We are also going to begin discussions on how to reopen and offer in-person training opportunities at the Denver Metro Regional Office. We are anticipating in-person skill-specific workshops at the Denver Metro regional office starting in August 2022.

Employment Matters for Youth and Young Adults: BLVS/Pre-Employment Transition Services collaborated with ObjectiveED to pilot “Employment Matters for Youth and Young Adults.” This was a 5-week job seeker skills training course for students 15-21. This curriculum included online sessions which included lively discussions, activities, and homework to discover skills to develop a work-readiness profile and search for that desired employment opportunity. ObjectiveEd provided a gamified “Choose your own Adventure” for students to reinforce work-readiness skills, soft skills, and decision-making skills that are presented during the online sessions. However, only 3 students registered for the pilot program, and attendance was sporadic. Many students who did participate failed to complete the gamified interactive story to prepare for the discussion and activities online.

BLVS/Pre-Employment Transition Services: This program will be offering Creating Connections, information sessions regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services available to students 15-21 during the 2021-2022 school year. Our final session this school year is April 28, 2022, 5:00-6:00 p.m. This is a virtual session.

Attendees will learn about the following:

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

During these sessions, BLVS will announce activities and workshops that will be available to students at DVR and our community partners. For questions, please contact Michele Reed at michele.reed@state.co.us or 303-866-3512. To join the meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88639503631?pwd=MldBUFdrSGxTTHRLbjE4a25BV3c1UT0>

Meeting ID: 886 3950 3631 Passcode: 895834

BLVS and DVR are looking at pre-employment transition services including training/job development support, collaborating with other youth with disabilities, collaborating with other states, and increasing vendors to provide more options and opportunities. We are still planning our summer activities. We will focus on career exploration activities and work readiness skills this summer. Stay tuned!

Discussion:

- *There is a challenge with student and parent involvement in some of the offered activities. People shared that they see more involvement with younger families. Also, see families participate in*

activities where the child can participate in an event without parents needing to be there. Also, there is hope that the family and child are involved in school activities in their home communities.

Colorado Center for The Blind Youth Programs (Anahit LaBarre)

Training and Policies: The Colorado Center for the Blind recently completed its CCB Youth Participation Protection Policy, which has been forwarded to its Board of Directors for final approval and adoption at the next meeting. The policy's purpose states:

The Colorado Center for the Blind (CCB) understands the importance of protecting individuals that participate in youth programs offered by the Colorado Center for the Blind. This includes any program directly managed by the CCB. These programs may take place at the Colorado Center or other locations. This policy affirms our commitment to taking the necessary steps to provide a safe and secure environment for program participants.

We continue to provide training and support for our staff and current adult students in the areas of consent, appropriate boundaries, and sexual misconduct. We have similar training planned for our summer youth counselors for 2022. You can follow our efforts by visiting the Safety and Support page on our website.

CCB/CSDB Mentoring Program: Our CSDB mentoring program took yet another break from in-person activities, due to the increase in COVID cases. However, it is back in progress and thriving. We visited the school in December, along with three mentors who are currently students at CCB. We worked with the seniors on their Capstone project. This consisted of working on the visual/tactile poster, writing techniques, proofreading braille materials, etc. We also worked with the art class and the independent living class. In March, we had an opportunity to virtually meet with two of the capstone project students, who were able to share their presentations with us. They were looking for feedback to improve their presentation before the final date. This was a very productive process. Additionally, we visited the school in March, where we spoke with the senior class, sharing information about all the services the Colorado Center for the Blind provides. We also had a class, with one of our current students presenting on the value of nutrition and how to apply that knowledge on daily basis. Students had an activity to create a menu with healthy choices and justify why they chose particular ingredients. All of these activities are providing excellent opportunities for the students to meet blind role models, ask questions and learn more about available services. We are working closely with the staff, so we can learn how to best support them and address the needs of the students.

FAST Program (Fun Activities and Skills): Our FAST Saturdays are lively and busy with fun and social interactions, as well as a lot of learning. In December, students took part in three different activities: baking cookies, making winter decorations out of clay, and making a wooden top in the woodshop. It was a blast, with lots of laughter and developing friendships. We had to skip January, due to COVID vaccination side effects for staff. In February, the CCB graduate, Ellie White, and our Yoga instructor, Julie Hill, lead a dance lesson for the students. The idea was to encourage students to actively participate in social events held at schools and other locations. The center was decorated for Valentine's Day, and we all frosted cookies afterward. In the meantime, our director Julie Deden, along with two certified cane travel instructors, worked with the parents to discuss the importance of cane travel instructions and how to best support their children in learning how to use a white cane. In March, Martin Becerra led our volunteers and students in the game of goalball. We had 17 participants and the energy was high! While half of the group was learning the rules of the game in practice, the other half was in the kitchen, learning about the main components of a nutritious snack that will provide you with a lot of energy. Things are always fun when they end with a delicious snack!

Shark Dissection: After a two-year, pandemic-enforced, break from this very hands-on activity, we finally were able to be back in person. Arapahoe Community College Professor Terry Harrison lead twenty k-12 and ten Colorado Center for the Blind students in a tactile exploration of shark's anatomy. Students were directly exploring, experiencing, and coming to know sharks' internal organs and their functions. Additionally, blind school-age students got to meet blind peers and work with other blind role models. A lot of fun was had. We are so thrilled that after a long pandemic break, we are able to provide these opportunities for our students. Academic growth and experiences are important, but so are social interactions.

2022 Summer Programs: We will hold two three-week sessions for the Summer program: one in June and one in July. Each session will have ten participants. We are currently in the process of hiring the staff for the Summer. The program will focus on four main areas: cane travel, home management, technology, and braille. But we will also be covering employment skills, college readiness, science activities, recreational challenge activities, and much more.

Homework Club: We are working hard to promote our Homework Club and let families and professionals know that tutoring services are available to blind/visually impaired school-age students via zoom at no charge. We had a number of students participate. However, we are hoping to assist more individuals. The tutoring services are available in the area of Math, Writing, braille, and assistive technology.

Learning Box: We are happy to share that our Learning Box program is thriving and growing consistently. December Learning Box was dedicated to exploring tactile number line and graphing, depending on the student's age. It was amazing to watch students who struggle in the classroom, make sense of tactile number lines and how numbers relate to objects. This activity helped our participants build a more solid one-to-one correspondence concept. For more advanced students, discovering how negative and positive numbers translated on the line and how graphing works was beneficial. January's learning box was dedicated to using a tactile world map to learn about continents, cardinal directions, oceans, etc. We discussed the weather in different parts of the world and the reasons behind the timing of seasons on different continents. This theme was continued in February, with a virtual presentation from Mike Nelson, the meteorologist for Denver7. Students learned about weather patterns and the reasons for them. The lesson was accompanied by tactile images produced by Ann Cunningham. Probably, one of the most exciting Learning Boxes was the one for March. Each student received a 17-inch skeleton and a CCB graduate who majors in Chemistry at Metro State college, lead a lesson on bones and skeletal structure. The students learned a lot and had many questions. It was a very engaging lesson.

School District Partnership: We are continuing to partner with school districts to complement the hard work of the TVIs and provide additional hands-on experiences for students. The Denver Public School District visited CCB in February. We had a busy kitchen, with fifteen students and ten TVIs and professionals baking up a storm and preparing delicious Valentine's Day treats. The student I worked with has never used the oven and was very hesitant at first. He did not want to leave at the end of the activity. It was a great success for all.

Family Support: We have been providing educational seminars for parents during the FAST events. The first one was held in February and was dedicated to cane travel and how to best support the students while they learn how to use a white cane. The second one was in March. We discussed tactile graphics and braille, as well as general questions regarding raising a child who has vision loss. Both events were well attended and had positive feedback.

Upcoming events: Here are some of the events we are planning to hold during the remaining Spring months: Making Connections career seminar, STEM hands-on activities, including learning about electronics, basic coding, etc. a combined activity with Parents of Blind Children, where kids will prepare lunch along with blind parent volunteers and an end-of-year celebration with students from multiple school districts, featuring breakout groups to discuss various topics and socialize. We will also be combining the April Learning Box and FAST. The students will have an opportunity to plant and learn about the cycle of plant life, as well as play goalball. May's Learning Box will focus on financial literacy and learning how to identify currency and coins.

This school year has been very productive. We love working alongside our TVIs and are always open to ideas and suggestions on how we can complement the hard work that takes place in the field daily.

For information on any of our Youth Programs, please contact Anahit LaBarre by emailing alabarre@cocenter.org or by calling (303) 778-1!!!130 Extension 223.

Colorado Instructional Material Center (Jim Olson)

Program updates are due no later than noon, Friday, April 1, 2022. Statewide Registration Database Report: As of Friday, April 1, the total number of registered students is 1,001 students actively registered, and we are waiting on 199 signed Parent Consent Forms (with at least Part I signed) which could bring our total to 1,200. We cannot provide a final count number at this time. If we do not have the signed Parent Consent Forms at the close of the count process, then administrative units will have to fill out and submit new (1) signed Parent Consent Forms, and (2) CIMC Registration Form, in order to add them back onto your statewide student registration database reports.

Federal Quota Census Count: Phase 2 runs around the first 2 weeks of April. During this process, we need 118 signed Parent Consent Forms with Parts 1 (statewide registration database report) and Part 2 (Federal Quota Census), or these 118 students will need to be "Marked For Deletion" (MFD) before we can close Phase II on the two CDE accounts. Our third, CSDB, account has 100% of the Parent Consent Forms signed and on file

Book Orders for Next, 2022-2023 School Year: Friday, April 1, 2022, was the deadline for book order submissions for the next school year. At the end of the day, the CIMC has received inquiries and orders for 180 books. Our average order fulfillment is about 600 textbook titles a year, so we know to expect many more orders. We do appreciate those districts that were able to submit their orders much earlier this year. Remember, we compete with nearly every state to secure a place in the production queues of braille vendors.

Summer Shipping: Assignment: VC representatives: please share with folks in your regions that the CIMC would like the contact person for every administrative unit/school district to contact us with their summer contact information and shipping information.

Summer contacts for every TVI and contact person who has open orders submitted (for APH products or books) in case we have a question about an order. Shipping information – let us know if we can ship to your mailing address in the summer or provide us with an alternate shipping address for the summer. Please include dates of when to stop shipping or start shipping to each address. We know some districts are moving their offices before the start of the school year.

CSDB – School for The Blind (Jamie Lugo)

Student Updates” First-semester awards ceremony took place in February for preschool – 12th grade Six students participated in the Optimist Club Oratorical Contest on February 4, 2022. Six students competed and three will move on to the next round. We welcomed four new students over the past two months. Two of the students enjoyed some time skiing in the mountains with Foresight Ski Guides, February 28 - March 1.

Parent Updates: Survey information was gathered regarding virtual workshop topics for parents. Spring Parent-Teacher conferences were held the week of February 7-11.

Trainings: Cara Johnson, a school psychologist, presented on three topics based on feedback: Child Sexual Abuse Prevention, Executive Functioning and Routines, Zones of Regulation, and How to Use it at Home. These workshops were offered to CSDB families and families across the state. We are offering a parent braille class to CSDB families on zoom. It has been a great success. We would like to reteach this class opening it up, statewide.

School Events: After-school tutoring in assistive technology, math, and literacy began in January. Once a month social skill workshops are happening. begins for students on Sunday afternoons in the middle of February. We celebrated the 100th day of school with projects, dressing up like we were 100 years old, and raffles. A Read Across America event for both programs was held on March 2nd. The week of February 28th, Dr. Jones performed her “Vision Through Sounds Project” in the School for the Blind. Dr. Jones returned a few days later for a round table discussion.

Braille Challenge: The Braille Challenge took place on Thursday, March 3, 2022. It was a success. The Bulldog Band provided entertainment during closing ceremonies. Dr. Benham and Tera Wilkins provided words of encouragement and inspiration during our opening ceremony. Elementary classes completed a Mardi Gras project.

CSDB Outreach Services (Sara Noel)

New Outreach Director: On January 3, 2022, Outreach welcomed its new Director, Cheryl Austin, to Colorado and CSDB. Cheryl comes to us from Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) with experience as an administrator in the Residential department and a teacher (TVI) in both the Residential and Short-Term Programs departments. Before her time at TSBVI, Cheryl worked as a TVI in a public elementary school in Dover, Massachusetts, and held several roles at Perkins School for the Blind. Special education is a second career for Cheryl, after nearly 15 years in the field of food and nutrition, with positions in hospital food service management, community food assistance programs, and clinical and public health research. Cheryl holds three master’s degrees, in Public Health, Medical Nutrition Sciences, and Special Education-Visual Impairment, and maintains her credentials as a Registered Dietitian. She is thrilled to now be a Bulldog and experience all that the CSDB and Colorado Springs communities have to offer.

Update from Cheryl Austin: CSDB Outreach is currently collecting information from the districts and agencies we serve with respect to anticipated vision and O&M needs for the 2022-2023 school year. We have also begun conversations with several Early Intervention providers around ways to better inform, support, and connect families, especially as they prepare for the transition to preschool and beyond. Finally, we will not host a program on campus this summer but plan to return in June of 2023. Stay tuned for more information!

Discussion:

- *Is ACVREP Certification required by CDE after initial certification? Do most O&Ms let ACVREP lapse vs. what are the benefits of keeping up with this certification, do any districts pay or help pay for ACVREP for O&M? ACVREP certification is required for the initial O&M authorization. After this time, it is*

encouraged but elective. O&M Specialists are encouraged to maintain this professional certification for many reasons professional status and the ability to supervise an O&M intern. Some administrative units may assist with certification/recertification costs. This may be an important conversation for AU support in order to continue with recruitment efforts. CAER also supports some reimbursement for AER members.

UNC VI Program (Paula Conroy)

We have ten graduates this semester with one being from Colorado. Congratulations to Jordan Borenstein who will graduate with her MA in Special Education: Visual Impairment in May and finish her O&M practicum this summer. We continue to partner with the University of Utah in training cohorts of TVIs to become Orientation and Mobility Specialists through a grant from the state of Colorado. We expect to start the third cohort in the coming academic year.

At UNCO we have recently hired a new faculty member to coordinate the SPED Administrative program. Dr. Jodie Rommel will join us in August. We are in the midst of hiring a faculty member to replace John Luckner in the DHH program. Dr. Luckner retired last year leaving big shoes to fill. UNCO just hired a new provost who will join us this summer. There are many administrative changes due to retirements and job shuffling in Academic Affairs making it challenging to have consistency in our processes and procedures from year to year.

Colorado Department of Education (Tanni Anthony)

Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project: We are in the fourth 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 vision and 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 Jessica Meisel are our Technical Assistance (TA) Specialists for the project. Both Wendy and Jessica provide onsite consultation and customized training to the educational teams of the children with deaf-blindness. Jessica has been involved with training and support for school-based interveners. Cindy Colwell is our 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: We are in the process of tallying the collected Child Count forms. Thanks to everyone who supported the December 1, 2021, Child Count of our learners across Colorado with combined vision and hearing loss.

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 Deaf-Blind webpage URL is <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/SD-DB.asp>

Project Trainings: We closed out the sixth of the 2021-22 Deaf-Blind Webinar Series in early March. The series was well attended and received. We will create a new series for the 2022-23 school year. The 2022 Summer Institute has been planned for June 13-14, 2022 and will be held at the Adams 12 Conference Center. The featured speaker will be Maurice Belote on communication and social skill strategies.

BVI State-Funded Activities: The CDE has a strong commitment to services and supports for 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: The BVI Office Hours were created in the midst of the early pandemic and have faded over the course of this school year with so much on people's plates. The better-attended ones have had a training topic. For the next school year, the focus will be on Sound Bites, with one topic per month offered virtually. If you have any topic suggestions, please reach out to Tanni. This is a great opportunity for once-a-month training and networking!

CDE/CSDB Regional Low Vision Evaluation Clinics: The Metro Region Low Vision Evaluation Clinic was rescheduled for May. Thanks to Karin Hensel for all of her coordination support of this three-day clinic. The clinic team asks that TVIs are proactive in working with families and not to send children who have colds to the clinic. Also, we ask that TVIs work with their families and districts well ahead of the clinic to make a plan for purchasing prescribed devices. The Purchase Policy, Welcome Letter, and Parent / TVI form have been translated into Spanish and are on the CDE website.

CDE State Conference on Blindness/Visual Impairment: Dr. FM D'Andrea was our featured speaker of t Weaving the Strands: The Science of Reading and Students with Visual Impairments. We had a great turnout and excellent evaluations.

CDE O&M Seminar: We are booked for April 21, 2022, for four virtual trainings on the following topics.

- Session 1: Culturally Responsive O&M Career, College, and Community Readiness Standards(O&M CCCRS) in Practice. This session articulates the need for standards-based instruction in a 21st-century educational system, in which the field of O&M has not kept up, until now. Presenters: Mary Tellefson, and Bill Koehler.
- Session 2: O&M Risk Assessment, Safety Supervision and Liability (RASSL) Presenters: Mary Tellefson, Bill Koehler, Sarah Moreau

- Session 3: Determining Instructional Minutes, A Research-Based Range that Aligns with the O&M CCCRS. A review of research that provides O&M instructors an alternative approach to determining an appropriate level of instruction (amount and frequency) for progress toward the O&M CCCR Standards' age/grade level performance targets (skill sets) and corrects misconceptions regarding the IEP team's role in the determination of instructional minutes. Presenter: Bill Koehler.
- Session 4: Using the Internet to Your Advantage as a COMS. The session will review how Orientation and Mobility Specialists can take advantage of the resources they have at their fingertips! The session will review ways to use social media websites to gather information, and also use google programs to stay organized and keep on top of clients and case notes. Presenter: Kristen Shapeless

Recruitment and Retention: We have very few TVI / O&M Specialist openings: 1 FTE in Academy 20 School District and 1 FTE in Falcon 49 School District, a to-be-determined FTE in Summit, and 1. FTE in Cherry Creek Districts. There is also part-time work in Thompson School District. A Shared Vision and Anchor Center need more TVI support. Please keep Tanni in the loop on anticipated and real vacancies. We have two people looking for TVI employment in the metro area. If you want to be on the CDE list of contractors, please reach out to Tanni.

Listservs: 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 occasions, 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: 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 of 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. Please be aware that all TVIs in Colorado public schools must renew their braille certificate one time after the first five years of initial certification.

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. Wendy Stoltman and Elaine Karnes are on board as a coach/mentors. Elaine is offering mentor/coaching assistance specifically in one northern region administrative unit. If you have time to contribute as a BVI Coach / Mentor, reach out to Tanni. We have had several requests already this school year. To request a coach / mentor, contact Tanni at (303) 866-6681 or anthony_t@cde.state.co.us.

Keeping in Touch Newsletter: There will be one remaining newsletter for this school year, the March-May edition. Please be sure to share this link with parents as we are no longer mailing out the newsletter and do not have the email addresses of most parents who have signed up to receive the newsletter. A representative from each AU is encouraged to reach out to Roberta Curtis at Curtis_r@cde.state.co.us to go through parents and key contact information.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

CDE BVI Budget for 2022-23

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

- ◆ Braille Competency Testing / Mentor Support
- ◆ BVI Coach / Mentor Project
- ◆ CDE O&M Seminar – goal is for in-person (assessment for learners with additional disabilities / working collaboratively with OT / PT; Microsoft SoundScape)
- ◆ CDE State Conference on Blindness/Visual impairment
- ◆ CIMC (Interagency Agreement with CSDB)
- ◆ Vision Coalition
- ◆ (UEB) Math Training – on hold until face to face (low vision – show your work/braille – tactile instruction strategies) Tina Herzberg is a recommendation/work of Project INSPIRE
- ◆ Regional Low Vision Evaluation Clinics
- ◆ Sound Bites (monthly virtual trainings) – Focus on Implementation

With the newsletter going electronic, there is no need for funds for this project. Tanni asked for topics for the state conference.

Also, Tanni is investigating offering a book study in the next year using the text *Comprehensive Literacy for All* by Karen Erickson and Dr. David Koppenhaver. Gina Herrera and the SSN mentor completed a successful two rounds of book studies during school year 2021-22. The focus of what Tanni is thinking will be specific to learners with SSN AND visual impairment

Next Meeting Date: September 21, 2022

Assignment: Tanni asked members to confirm their interest in remaining on the VC for the 2022-23 school year.

THANKS FOR ANOTHER GREAT SCHOOL YEAR!
HAPPY SUMMER AHEAD!!



With Gratitude, We Say Farewell

- ◆ **Stephanie Crosen** has lived in Colorado for six years. She worked as a TVI/O&M in Brighton 27J School District for the first two years and then decided to experience mountain living and started work for Mountain BOCES/Summit School District where she has been for the past 4 years. This past fall, Stephanie also started working with A Shared Vision.

Stephanie welcomed her first born, Dutton, in April of 2021 and she and her family are moving on to their next adventure in Utah. We want to thank Stephanie for her time and many contributions in Colorado. She has been a bright light in our state and was a member of the CAER Board too. All the best to Stephanie and her beautiful family!



- ◆ One of Colorado's finest Teachers of Students with Visually Impairments is setting aside her braille writer! **Carol Jordan** is retiring at the end of this school year. Carol has devoted her entire career to the service of students with special needs. She has touched the lives of so many students and families over the years and has worked tirelessly to improve each and every one of them. Carol has not only had an impact on her students, but her colleagues as well. Carol is always generous with her time and willingness to share her knowledge and skills with others. Carol has been an absolute asset to all the programs she has worked with over the years.



Carol began her path to becoming an educator at the University of Michigan earning her B.A. in Deaf Education and continuing onto Oakland University earning her M.A. in Reading and Learning Disabilities. She then moved to Texas where she earned degrees in Teaching Visual Impairments and Blindness and Educational Diagnostics. She taught for several years as a Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in a Mild/Moderate Disabilities Program. She attended Gallaudet University to learn cued speech for the Deaf which led her to having her own classroom in cued speech/total communication. She worked for several years in Texas as a Teacher for the Visually Impaired. During her time in College Station ISD, Carol coordinated the preschool program including play-based assessments for deaf and visually impaired infants. Carol moved to Colorado with her family and began her Colorado career in Douglas County. She was a TVI in Douglas County for five years. Carol then worked for EC BOCES as a Teacher for the Deaf for two years. Then Carol joined the team in Cherry Creek Schools as a TVI for the past five years. This is where Carol's amazing career winds to a conclusion. Her Cherry Creek colleagues share, "What a remarkable career for a truly remarkable person."

Carol will sincerely be missed and so warmly remembered by so many colleagues, families, and students. Carol, we all wish you the best of luck and endless joy in your next adventures." Thank you to Carol and all the best ahead!!!

With Gratitude, We Say Farewell



◆ **Carol (Potashnick) Strauss** is retiring this May. She has been a fixture as a member of the Cherry Creek Services for the Visually Impaired team for 36 years, to be exact! Carol is a Colorado Native! She attended George Washington High School (DPS) and promptly moved on to CU Boulder where she majored and graduated with a degree in journalism. Carol began working for CCSD after both of her daughters were enrolled in school full time. At that time, she was hired as a classroom teacher's assistant, until five years later when a young kindergartener with blindness started at her school. Carol, along with the other teacher assistants, were asked if anyone would be interested in working with this youngster and to learn braille. Carol jumped at the opportunity and has never looked back! Carol worked with this young boy for approximately 4-5 years before adjusting her course of action and became the Department's Braille Transcriber thus creating wonderful braille transcription, tactual graphics, and materials for all students. Carol was and continues to be available to do whatever it takes for the students to receive their materials at the same time as their peers and assist the department's TVIs & COMS with many tasks. This includes but is not limited to coverage in the classroom, recording books on tape (there's a blast from the past), instruction and troubleshooting technology. She lends a sympathetic ear to all staff and participates in events for both students and their families, and SO MUCH MORE!

In 1999 Carol knew that receiving her Library of Congress (LOC) Certification as a Certified Braille Transcriber would be extremely beneficial to the department and to the many braille reading students in the district. She set out to complete her LOC Certification only to promptly have it get lost! Carol did not give up. She completed a second LOC manuscript and sent it in for submission and in 2002 she became a proud certified LOC Braille Transcriber!

Over the years Carol has worked in numerous environments in the Cherry Creek School District, but truly calls the Mission Viejo Elementary School Services for the Visually Impaired Mobile home. She has been an active member for the past 7 years on the CCSD Classified Employees Council, recipient of the Cherry Creek All-Star Award and most recently received the 2002 Colorado Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind (CAER) award for Lifetime Achievement.

When asked to reflect on her time as a member of the CCSD Services for the Visually Impaired team, she stated the entire experience has been "priceless!" She has learned so much about visual impairments, braille tricks of the trade, and made lifelong friends. Retirement for Carol will involve lots of moving and grooving! She plans to learn how to play pickleball, improve her quilting skills, play Mahjong with friends, read all the books she didn't have time for and most of all visit with family and friends around the country, especially her grandchildren in California! We wish Carol the best of luck in wherever retirement takes her. She will be missed more than words can say.

◆ We say goodbye to **Aubrey McDonald**. She has been a TVI for the eastern side of Colorado, Aubrey also provides services for students who are taking classes online. She has been in Colorado for 2 years and it has been such a great experience. She and her family are moving to Florida in June to be near family and so her husband can pursue his career path.

Aubrey notes that she will miss Colorado but is ready for warm weather and babysitters! You may still see her around in zoom meetings because she will continue to work with her online students who are based in Colorado. We wish her all the best!



With Gratitude, We Say Farewell



◆ **Donice Fennimore** began working at CIMC in 2005, assisting in the Colorado Regional Low Vision Clinics. The seed to become a TVI was planted by Dr. Tom Theune and Jim Olson. Both gentlemen provided knowledge, guidance and a passion for students with a visual impairment. Donice recalls sitting with a young lady at the Low Vision Clinic learning to use her low vision devices, and the amazement and smile on the young lady’s face was when she know she wanted to be a part of assisting others with visual impairments to help them “see” more clearly and understand the world around them better.

Donice returned to college to earn her MA form University of Northern Colorado. Since 2005 she has served a the southern region. One year as the Southern Region TVI meeting coordinator, 11 years as the Southern Region Clinic coordinator, 12 years providing vision services to students as a TVI—6 years with the Pikes Peak BOCES and 6 years with the Pueblo 60 School District.

Donice shares, “My hope is that I have given my students as much inspiration to grow, learn and love life to the fullest as they have given me. It has been a wonderful ride” We thank Donice for all she contributed over these past many years and know there are so many students who are grateful for her guidance and expertise.





colorado connections



Braille Competency News

- ◆ Hats off to **Bryan Moles** from Jefferson County School District and **Caroline Maestas** and **Aimee Pemberton** from Aurora School District for earning their initial CDE Braille Certificates! Even more hats in the air to the following individuals who have earned braille renewal clock hours: **Nicole Andersen, Lorraine Chevarria, Vicki Chinski, Melissa French, Caitlin Goeffrion, Sarah Goodfellow, Jeanine Holmes, Jennifer Holt, Patti Shannon, Maggie Tutt, and Liz Wieder**
- ◆ Thanks to CDE braille proctors **Chris Maynard, Brenda Shepard, and Julie Wetzstein!**

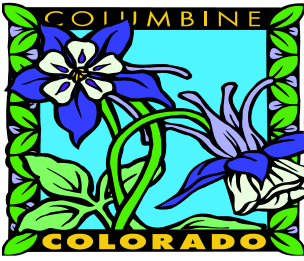
Professional Development Contributions

- ◆ A big thanks to Dr. Tracy Luiselli for her presentation on February 8th on the topic of *Systematic Instruction for Students with Severe Disabilities (Part 2): Constant Time Delay* TVIs in attendance included: **Paula Landry, Janis Mountford, Mike Planser, Sara Noel, and Wendy Stoltman**. Interveners **Catherine Bivens** and **Laura Rodriguez** were also in attendance.
- ◆ Thanks to **Rebecca Gardom** for presenting on O&M and TaiChi through a CAER professional learning offering on February 28, 2022. On March 8, 2022, a CAER-sponsored training was held on Accessing Podcasts and YouTube specific to the blind/low vision population. This session's presenters were **Nancy Cozart** and **Heather Solberg**.
- ◆ Tune in to BEST Together April 4 podcast featuring A Shared Vision's co-founder **Paula Landry**, who shares her journey as a parent of a child with a visual impairment and her leadership with A Shared Vision and the early intervention community in Colorado. Check it out at: [BEST Together: Coast to Coast Series](#)
- ◆ A thundering applause to our four speakers at the April 21, 2022 CDE Orientation and Mobility Seminar: **Bill Koehler, Sarah Moreau, Kristen Sharpless, and Mary Tellefson**. Combined they offered us four important sessions on the professionalism of being an Orientation and Mobility Specialist. Thanks also to the 55 or so Colorado O&M Specialists who attended, participated, and asked good questions. This was our second year in a virtual format and everyone's involvement made for excellent conversations and learning.

Thank You, Thank You!

- ◆ Many thanks to the members of the 2021-22 Vision Coalition – you are so appreciated. The following join Tanni on the Vision Coalition: **Melinda Carter, Paula Conroy, Nancy Cozart, Melissa French, Julie King, Anahit LaBarre, Paula Landry, Jamie Lugo, Erin Noe, Sara Noel, Jim Olson, Michele Reed, and Chloann Woolley**.
- ◆ A very warm and grateful thank you to our CIMC staff for all they have done during the school year to provide braille books, instructional materials, and to persevere with an accurate and timely database of our learners who are blind/visually impaired. Their commitment is profound and we are so fortunate to have one of the best instructional material centers in the country right in our state.

Thank you to **Jim Olson, Debbie Haberkorn, Teresa Kilbury, and Taylor Crocker!** Your contributions are many and our gratitude is profound.
- ◆ Thanks to **Wendy Stoltman** and **Elaine Karnes** for their mento work this past school year—invaluable!



colorado connections

Awards

- ◆ This Gold Heart Award is a prestigious award is for any individual who has "opened their heart" to touch the life of a Cherry Creek School District student with special needs. Each person who receives this award has gone "above and beyond" to support students with special needs who attend Cherry Creek Schools. One of the recipients for this school year was our wonderful **Jeannie Lei**, TVI and COMS in Cherry Creek School District. Congratulations, Jeannie!



Congratulations

- ◆ Happy Baby to **Jasmine and Daniel Gomez** on the birth of their second daughter. Luna was born on February 15th and joins sister Lily in the Gomez family!
- ◆ So happy for **Kaitlin Lombardi and Jonathan Lunceford** on the birth of their daughter Madden Lombardi Lunceford. Baby Madden was born on April 5th, 2022. She enjoys learning about dinosaurs from her wise older brother, Callum. Sweet!
- ◆ More fun baby news! Congrats to **Caitlin and Alan Geoffrion**. Lorelei Faith Geoffrion was born on 3/28/2022. Her parents say that they are thankful she's an easy going baby and a good sleeper!
- ◆ Happy (belated) wedding congratulations to **Morgan (Fitzpatrick) and Tyler Harrington** who were married way last August 28th. So happy for this wonderful couple!!

Personnel News

- ◆ Happy retirement to DPS brailist **Rebecca Plooster**.
- ◆ Dear CSDB Staff, Families, and Community,

We are reaching out to share some information regarding the leadership of the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind. After 2 ½ years, as superintendent of the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind, Dr. Nancy E. Benham has announced her immediate resignation. On behalf of the Board, we wish Dr. Benham the best in her new endeavors, and we are committed to the future at CSDB.

The Board of Trustees unanimously approved Tera Wilkins as the CSDB interim superintendent. Tera currently serves as the Director of CSDB Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. The Board's decision to name Tera as interim was an easy one. As Director of CSDB Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Tera has demonstrated strong leadership with good instincts. She is strategic, empathetic, and collaborative - all skills that will serve CSDB well in this next chapter.

We look forward to working with you in these next steps.

Diane Taylor, School/Community Liaison
Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind
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