

Editor:

Tanni L. Anthony, Ph.D.
CDE State Consultant on
Blindness / Low Vision

CO Department of Education
Exceptional Student Services

201 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

(303) 503-4647 (cell)

E-mail:

anthony_t@cde.state.co.us

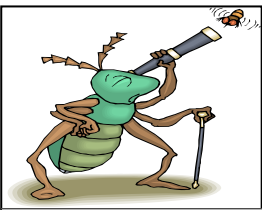
KEEPING IN TOUCH!

A Newsletter for Parents and Service Providers
of Colorado Children with Blindness, Low Vision CVI, or Deaf-Blindness
November-December 2024

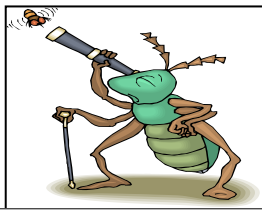


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LOW VISION NEWS



2024-2025 Low Vision Evaluation Clinic Schedule

Clinic	Clinic Date(s)	Due Date for Paperwork	Site Coordinator
Metro LVE Clinic	February 19-21, 2025	Wednesday, February 5, 2025	Roberta Curtis



Northern Regional Low Vision Clinic

By Roberta Curtis
Statewide LVE Clinic Coordinator

The Northern Region Colorado Low Vision Evaluation Clinic was held November 14th and 15th at Ensign Skills Center in Fort Collins, Colorado. Nine students from five administrative units (Boulder County District RE1-J, Boulder County District RE-2, Greeley-Evans School District 6, Larimer County District R2J, and Weld County School District RE-5J) received low vision evaluations. Eight parents and four TVIs attended the evaluation with their students.

The Clinic team would like to thank the Ensign Skills Center for hosting the event. Also a big thank you to **Abby Horner, Amber Korban, Jill Bookwalter, Liz Wieder, and Sally Burch** for bringing their students.

Thank you, **Samantha Thuis**, for coordinating the clinic this year. We appreciate your amazing coordinating skills! Thank so much to our LVE Clinic team of **Dr. Kara Hanson, Karin Hensel, and Roberta Curtis!**

Low Vision Evaluation Clinic Reminders

It is a requirement of the clinic that eligible children and youth must have an active IEP and be served by a teacher of students with visual impairments. Both the TVI and a parent must attend the clinic with the child.

There is no cost for the clinic evaluation. Device costs are the responsibility of the family and/or administrative unit. We ask that a fiscal plan be discussed ahead of the clinic in anticipation of prescribed devices. It is the TVI's responsibility to review the LVE report with the family and student, and to train the child on the ordered devices. The clinic reports will be sent to the TVI three to four weeks following the clinic through a secure portal. For logistical questions about the clinics, please contact Roberta Curtis at curtis_r@cde.state.co.us

Check out a [CDE field trip celebration of the Northern LVE Clinic](#) complete with a narrative and pictures.



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 beginning its second year of its federally-funded five-year grant cycle. The purpose of the project, awarded to every state and U.S. 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 that include an annual webinar series and the long-offered Summer Institute on Deaf-Blindness and Significant Support Needs, and to provide tiered and customized technical assistance to families and/or service providers. The project has four broad goals: (1) timely identification, (2) family networking, training, and TA support, and (3) professional training and TA support, and 4) intervener recruitment and training / support.



The project has an active website, lending library, and Deaf-Blind Advisory Task Force. The project has four CDE employees (Tanni Anthony, Gina Herrera, Roberta Curtis, and Jessica Meisel) and a contracted Family Engagement Specialist Cindy Colwell. For training, support documents and resources, please [check out the Deaf-Blind website](#).

Child Find Count of Colorado Children and Youth with Deaf-Blindness: As you identify new children in Colorado 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 will begin the December 1, 2024 Child Count process in November with our key agency and administrative unit contacts. We are in process! Our thanks for all you do to ensure our learners with deaf-blindness are properly identified across Colorado!

Colorado Deaf-Blind Project Offers Intervener Training

The Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project (aka the Colorado Deaf-Blind Project) offers intervener training and coaching. A new cohort began in August and a 2nd cohort will begin in January 2025. There is no charge for the training, if candidate are working with a student who is registered on the CO Deaf-Blind Child Count. The program is designed to provide the background knowledge needed for working one on one with students who are deaf-blind and leads to National Intervener Certification.

Here is what is included in the intervener training program through the Colorado Deaf-Blind Project:

- An online course of study using the National Center on Deafblindness' (NCDB) Open Hands Open Access Intervener Learning modules. Candidates will complete each module using NCDB's Moodle web platform with supplemental information.
- Feedback on all assignments, individual or group office hours, consultation, and mentoring from Colorado DB Project specialists.

Do you have a new intervener who needs this training? Are you still looking for an intervener who will need this training? For more information, please contact Jessica Meisel at Meisel_j@cde.co.state.us

To register, please complete the [DB Intervener registration](#).

Colorado Deaf-Blind Project News

Free Technical Assistance for Learners with Deaf-Blindness

Technical assistance is the term that field uses to mean “support” or “information” for individuals providing support to children and youth (ages 0-21) with deaf-blindness. TA recipients include Colorado families of children and youth who are deaf-blind, early intervention and school personnel, and agencies providing services to identified children and youth.

Technical assistance may also include:

- personalized on-site consultation with family members / early intervention agency staff / school staff
- in-service training customized to the team’s needs
- workshops sponsored by the project across the state
- family support service, such as Parent Retreats, coffee hours, family outings etc.



We are here to support you! **To request a school or home visit**, complete our e-Technical Assistance Request Form located [here: https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/techassistrqst](https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/techassistrqst) Return this form as an email attachment to Gina Herrera at Herrera_G@cde.state.co.us. Please call Gina Herrera at 303-253-0451. Or [fill out our new Google Form for Technical Assistance](#).

Community Intervener Program

The Community Intervener Program is under the Colorado Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind (CCDHHDB). The program offers Colorado infants, children and young adults who are DeafBlind 14 hours per month of 1:1 services with a trained Community Intervener. Some DeafBlind adults are also eligible for the program under certain specifications and guidelines. Services can be utilized within the home or out in the community, and the DeafBlind individual can participate in ways they have not been able to before.

For more information or to sign up, please contact Elli Streifer, the Program Manager, at elli.streifer@state.co.us

NCDB Communication Modules Released!



**National Center
on Deaf-Blindness**

The National Center on Deaf-Blindness has just released a series of Communication modules. You can find all modules here:

[Teaching Children Who are Deafblind: professional development for educators](#)

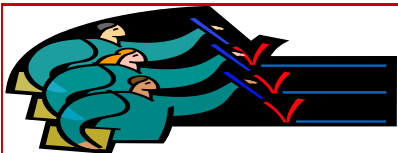
We are thrilled to share that our very own **Jessica Miesel** is in one of the modules - you can find her:

[Communicating With Children Who Are Deafblind](#)

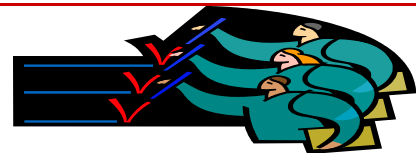
- Lesson 2, Part 2 at 8:05 minutes
- Lesson 2, Part 3 at 2:11 minutes

[The National Center on Deaf-Blindness \(NCDB\)](#) released a flyer to help spread the word about the importance of vision testing for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

[Get Their Vision Tested, Too!](#) explains how identifying combined hearing and vision loss can activate referral to important specialized services and supports. The flyer is available in both color and black and white PDFs, suitable for printing or electronic dissemination.



CHECK IT OUT!



Southwest Center for Assistive Technology Training (CATT) Program

CATT offers complimentary training in Assistive Technology for Teachers, parents, and students. CATT's emphasis is on the "train the trainer" approach, with a special focus on products tailored for individuals with visual impairments or blindness. For more information or to book a training, visit <https://seeitourway.org/services/catt/> or call 602-337-8243. Our regional CATT contact is Niraj Parikh.

APH ConnectCenter's Latest Content

[Browse APH ConnectCenter's Latest Content](#)

[Walking with a Human or Dog Guide](#)

[Helping a Child with Multiple Disabilities Develop Their Senses](#)

[Considerations for Hiring a Blind or Low-Vision Employee](#)

[Customized Employment: A Path to Meaningful Work](#)

[Understanding Your Child's Visual Efficiency with the Barraga Program](#)

[Body Protection Techniques to Avoid Injury When Blind/ Low Vision](#)



Social Etiquette Tips for Children

Equip your children or students who are blind or low vision with etiquette skills to shine as hosts or guests. From prepping the space to mastering table manners, this article offers tips for fostering confidence and kindness during upcoming holiday gatherings: [Holiday Etiquette Tips for Children with Blindness](#).

Techi Toy Gift Guide

CSB Assistive Technology Team is excited to announce our [Techi Toy Gift Guide](#), a curated list of accessible toys and kits that teach STEM skills through fun and play. Explore this exciting collection of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) toys and kits that feature tactile elements, audio-guided activities, and other accessible elements, making them a great fit for children with visual impairments. They have gathered this selection to highlight options that foster hands-on learning and creativity. As always, use your best judgment to ensure the recommended age levels align with your child's developmental needs. [Techi Toy Gift Guide](#)

Research Study on Visual / Graphical Information

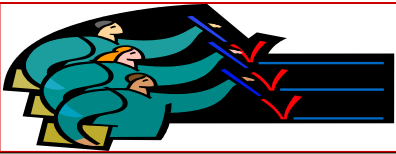
Joyeeta.Mukherjee@unarlabs.com is conducting a **Research Study, TVIs wanted:** Researchers at UNAR Labs in collaboration with Northeastern University are seeking to address the challenges and barriers students with visual impairment encounter when engaging with math and visual/graphical information. They are looking for teachers of visually impaired students to support this project! They are specifically looking for special education or teachers of the blind or visually impaired (TSBVI) that support middle and high school BLV students. You will participate in one 30-minute interview and you will receive a \$25 Amazon e-gift card as a thank you for your time. If you are interested in participating, please [sign up using this link for in-person or virtual interviews](#).



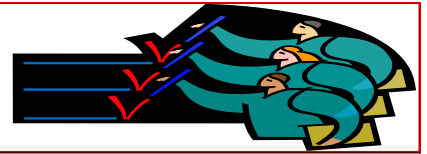
The Buzz: News from the APH Hive

Ready to empower your students to thrive independently? The Hive's newest course is your guide to helping students who are blind or have low vision develop essential independent living skills.

Strategies to Develop Independent Living Skills includes an interactive checklist that helps to evaluate students' abilities so that you can personalize instruction to meet their unique needs. [Enroll in this 1.5 ACVREP credit course](#) and start helping your students gain confidence and independence at home and in school.



CHECK IT OUT!



Functional Vision and Learning Media Assessment (FVLMA)/NEWT Survey

If you are familiar with the FVLMA and NEWT toolkits from APH [please fill out the FVLMA/NEWT Survey](#) and share your thoughts on how to improve existing materials for a better evaluation experience.

The Latest from Change Makers

APH's *Change Makers* podcast highlights people who are making a difference in the blindness field. Learn about eye pressing and how a bracelet can help subdue the need on Change Makers [Episode 109: Solutions to Eye Pressing](#).



Accessibility in Early Childhood Education—Ensuring access and engagement with learning materials is crucial to early childhood education equity and inclusion. An ED-funded resource [Accessible Educational Materials and Assistive Technologies in Early Childhood Education: What, Why, and How](#) discusses using accessible educational materials and assistive technology in early childhood settings.

New on the OSERS' Blog

My White Cane Awareness Day Celebration Experience

Blind Awareness Month and White Cane Safety Day

Across the U.S., White Cane Awareness/White Cane

Safety Day events are held during October each year. In Vermont, this event is celebrated in partnership with the state Division of the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired and LEAP (Learn, Earn and Prosper), which provides pre-employment transition services. Read more on [OSERS Blog](#)

Collaboration, Inclusivity and Ingenuity Creates Growth Opportunities

Blind Awareness Month and Oct. 15 is White Cane Safety Day

Around the country, local education agencies, state agencies, nonprofits and foundations, infants, toddlers, students, families, teachers, and administrators came together to celebrate the importance of the long cane used by individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Read more on [OSERS Blog](#)

Launching into a Lifetime of Literacy with Braille and Talking Books from the National Library Service

Dyslexia Awareness Month and Blindness Awareness Month

Inclusion and acceptance at school are important to all students, and for students with disabilities, reading and enjoying the same books as their classmates can be an important part of fitting in. Read more on [OSERS Blog](#).



New Assistive Technology Myths vs Facts Card

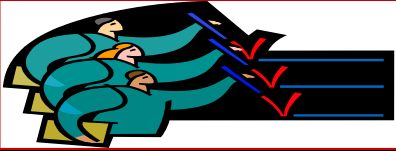
The [Center for Inclusive Technology and Education Systems \(CITES\)](#) shared a new resource to support the Assistive Technology (AT) Myths and Facts implementation. Check out the [Myth vs Fact printable card game](#) with directions and options for implementation to support administrators, educators and families

Two New PROGRESS Center Videos That Can Support Professional Learning

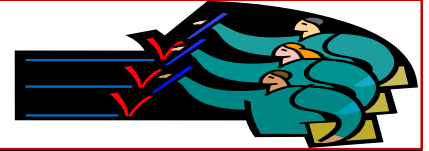
[The Progress Center](#) released two new videos. [Fostering Belonging for Students with Disabilities](#) provides considerations for how to create an environment where every student is not just included but is an indispensable member of the school community. [What Do a Bike and an IEP Have in Common? Ensuring the Parts Work Together to Promote Progress](#) uses a bicycle analogy to explain how a well-designed individualized education program (IEP) provides free appropriate public education to promote progress for students with disabilities.

Colorado Educator Support: Need some emotional support? This is a platform dedicated to supporting Colorado's educational workforce. Explore their collection of FREE mental health resources designed to assist you in navigating the challenges of the school year. Proudly affiliated with the University of Colorado Anschutz Department of Psychiatry.

[Colorado Educator Support – Colorado Educator Support – We Can Help](#)



CHECK IT OUT!



Blind Barbie Makes Big Splash After Summer Release

This past summer, quite a wave of excitement was created when the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) announced its partnership with Mattel on the release of Blind Barbie...[Read more on the creation and historic release of Blind Barbie.](#)

AFB Showcase: AFB Documentary Film Expands Positive Perceptions on Blindness

The AFB documentary *Possibilities* continues to gain traction as screenings and festival accolades bring an authentic portrayal of blindness to audiences across the globe. Most recently, AFB was honored to screen the film virtually to Google employees worldwide as part of their effort to raise awareness during National Disability Employment Awareness Month.



[Learn more about the documentary's newest recognitions and milestones.](#)

We Want TVIs! Strategies for Teaching Students Who Are Blind to Use Image Descriptions When Paired with Tactile Graphics or Digital Content



What is the Purpose of this Online Study? We are conducting a survey to learn more about the training, knowledge, and instructional practices of TVIs surrounding image descriptions/alt text when paired with tactile graphics and digital content.

Who is Conducting the Study? Alexis Redford, M.Ed. at the University of Utah, Tina Herzberg, Ph.D., at the University of South Carolina Upstate, L. Penny Rosenblum, Ph.D., at Vision for Independence, LLC, and Chris Clark-Bischke, Ph.D., at the University of Utah

Who Can Participate in the Study? TVIs who meet the following criteria are invited to participate in the accessible, online survey.

- Working as a TVI in the United States and employed as a TVI for a minimum of 3 years

How Do TSVIs Participate in the Study? Click on the survey link [click here](#) to enter the survey. After completing the consent form answer the questions.

When Does the Study Close? The study closes December 20, 2024.

How Will Study Data be Used? To inform the field about the image descriptions/alt text needs of TSVIs and their students. We anticipate using the data to increase current and future TSVI preparation and student support.

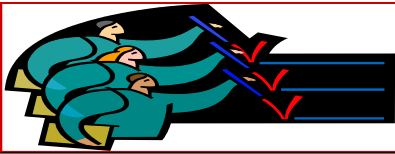
Who Do I Contact for More Information?

Alexis Redford, M.Ed., alexis.redford@utah.edu

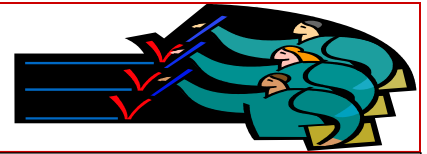
Tina Herzberg, Ph.D., herzberg@uscupstate.edu

L. Penny Rosenblum, Ph.D., rosenblu@arizona.edu

Chris Clark-Bischke, Ph.D., chris.bischke@utah.edu



CHECK IT OUT!



A Few of the OSEP-Funded TA Centers

** 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.



** Learners 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:



** Accessible Materials and Technologies

The [National AEM Center at CAST](#) has provides TA, coaching, and resources increase the availability and use of educational materials and technologies for learners with disabilities across the lifespan.



*** Professional Learning Modules

The IRIS Center is a national center dedicated to improving education outcomes for all children, especially those with disabilities birth through age twenty-one, through the use of effective evidence-based practices and interventions



*** Center for Parent Information & Resources (CPIR)

CPIR is the hub of valuable information and products specifically designed for the network of Parent Centers serving families of children with disabilities



Resources and Materials

Protactile: A Language of Touch

Documentary Synopsis: Join author and disability rights advocate Rebecca Alexander as she meets the founders and educators of Protactile, a language based solely on touch. Historically, DeafBlind people have been limited to using interpreters to communicate. With Protactile, one-on-one and group conversations are not only possible, but they also allow for deeper and more meaningful connections. [Protactile: A Language of Touch is a seventeen minutes long video](#). It includes audio descriptions and a picture-in-picture ASL interpreter, if you are interested in watching or listening to it. Additionally, a version of the [Protactile Documentary with captions](#) is available at for those interested in watching or listening.

IEP Tips in Spanish and English

The [PROGRESS Center's IEP Tip Sheet Series](#) is now available in Spanish as well as English. The tip sheets include key components of the individualized education program (IEP) as well as brief summaries of federal regulations, tips for implementation, and resources.

OSEP Website Update

The Office of Special Education Programs has retired the "IDEAs That Work" website. OSEP's information and resources can now be found on the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) website](#).

Math Thoughts and Resources

This information was shared in an email on a STEM listserv. It was written by Diane Brauner, who gave me permission to share.

Students must use tactile graphics and manipulatives to learn math concepts! Turning in pictures of homework problems that were completed using manipulatives such as APH's Graphic Aid for Mathematics does work and is a great method for lower grades and for learning critical math concepts. These tactile methods can and should be paired with digital tools. It is also important to think about how the student will review for tests. When the student is studying for a test, the student does not have access to that problem that he/she did on the grid board again and cannot access the picture of the problem that was shared with the teacher. Also, keep in mind that in college and careers, the student will need to be able to access and complete math in a digital format.

Accessible digital math is a much-needed current hot topic! While students should first learn how to set up and complete equations using a braille writer, the student should also learn how to use equation editors. An equation editor enables students to access and complete complex math equations in a format that the student using a screen reader and a general education math teacher can both access. Desmos Graphing is a free robust digital tool that is embedded into high stakes assessments, exams such as SAT, and online textbooks. Students can create, access, and share their accessible, visual graph to general education math and science teachers and can also send the graph to an embosser. The Desmos Graphing tool is a must have skill for all students!

Desmos has released an accessible version of the Desmos Geometry Tool; this is an amazing first step to making online geometry more accessible for students who use a screen reader. While the Desmos Geometry Tool is accessible, students must have a strong foundation of geometry concepts to truly understand the shapes and angles created and accessed in the geometry tool. By that, I mean that every data point, line, etc. is announced, but students have to have a working knowledge and the ability to create a mental map based on their previous experiences with geometry concepts in order to make sense of the diagram. Doing geometry auditory takes work - even when you can navigate and explore each point and line individually and on command!

(continued on page 9)

Resources and Materials

Math Thoughts and Resources

(continued from page 8)

The Desmos accessibility team is aware of the complexities of geometry in an auditory format; the accessibility team does want feedback as they continue to add helpful features! I'm also very interested in your experiences - good or bad - with the Desmos Geometry Tool!

I am very interested in how you teach the foundational geometry concepts to younger students using manipulatives and tactile graphics. Let's build a library of geometry activities that will help students build those critical concepts so that they can successfully use the Desmos Geometry Tool in higher math courses! Please share your geometry-based activities with me, so we can build this geometry activity library on Paths to Technology! The email is dianebrauner@me.com

Here is a post about the Desmos Geometry Tool that has a video tutorial using a screen reader: [Desmos Geometry Tool: Angle BCD with a screen reader](#) There are numerous posts on Paths to Technology about Desmos Graphing and Desmos Geometry with step-by-step instructions, video tutorials and student activities. There are also posts about hands-on activities for young students to build geometry and graphing concepts. On Paths to Technology, you can do a search for "Desmos" or use one of the summary pages listed below.

Want to try a Desmos Graphing activity with your student? [Thanksgiving Travel Trends Activity: Math and Desmos Line Graph](#)

Want to keep current on Digital Math? Paths to Technology has several resources that are updated each time a new math post is published. These summary pages are organized so that you can quickly find posts on the desired topic:

- [Digital Math Summary Page](#)
- [Math Apps and Activities Summary Post for Students PK - 3rd Grade](#)
- [Lesson Library](#) (The Lesson Library has a section devoted to math-related lessons/activities)

There is a national group working on developing best practices, guides, and resources for digital math: TEAM (Tech Equity and Access to Math) led by Leslie Thatcher at Perkins. Resources developed by TEAM are housed on Paths to Technology; these resources are also living documents and are updated regularly.

- [Digital Math: Introducing Skill Level Checklists](#) (Checklists of tech skills for various devices, digital math skills, links to resources and more, organized by grade level)
- [Digital Math: Workflow from Teacher to Student and Student to Teacher](#) (How to create and share accessible math assignments, various digital tools, how students can access and complete assignments, and information translation software)

Desmos Calculators

Desmos have created a couple of webinars on how to use their calculators.

One is entitled [TSBVI Coffee Hour: Accessible, Interactive Math with Desmos](#).

Check out the [Desmos—Using Geometry](#) for documentation on the geometry app's accessibility.

Resources and Materials

New Podcast from the National Federation of the Blind with Focus on Technology

Hosted by Jonathan Mosen, *Access On* features breaking technology news, product demonstrations, reviews and comparisons, and interviews about the fast-changing world of technology. *Access On* listeners will learn from the resources of the National Federation of the Blind, including their Center of Excellence in Nonvisual Accessibility, their networks in the technology sector, and their many members with specialist knowledge of technology.

Follow *Access On* for news about computers, smartphones, AI, accessible appliances, blindness-specific devices including Braille displays, and more. Find *Access On* wherever you get your podcast. [Learn how to subscribe with the Access On RSS feed](#) This link will also provide other listening options.

Introducing NCADEM

As of October 1, 2024, the National Center on Accessible Digital Educational Materials & Instruction (NCADEMI), pronounced "n-cademy" became the new technical assistance (TA) center funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to improve the provision and use of accessible materials in elementary and secondary schools. NCADEMI will build on the work and long legacy of the National AEM Center, which concluded its cooperative agreement with OSEP on September 30, 2024.

NCADEMI is based at the Institute for Disability Research, Policy & Practice at Utah State University. Our mission is to improve the quality, availability, and timely provision of accessible digital educational materials and instruction for learners with disabilities from early intervention through high school graduation. The [NCADEMI website](#) provides more information, including our goals, TA recipient groups, planned activities, and our team members.

New Federal Guidance - Using FBA to Create Supportive Learning Environments. November 2024

The U.S. Department of Education has released updated guidance on using Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs) to create supportive learning environments. This document provides essential insights into leveraging FBAs as proactive tools to address student needs and foster success.

Key highlights include:

- **What is an FBA?** A process to identify the causes of student behavior and develop effective, individualized interventions.
- **Best Practices:** Conduct high-quality FBAs to inform positive supports, reduce disciplinary actions, and create inclusive learning environments.

Legal Alignment: Guidance on ensuring FBAs meet IDEA requirements to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

This guidance is an important resource for educators, administrators, and school-based mental health professionals. You can access the full document here:

[Using Functional Behavioral Assessments to Create Supportive Learning Environments.](#)



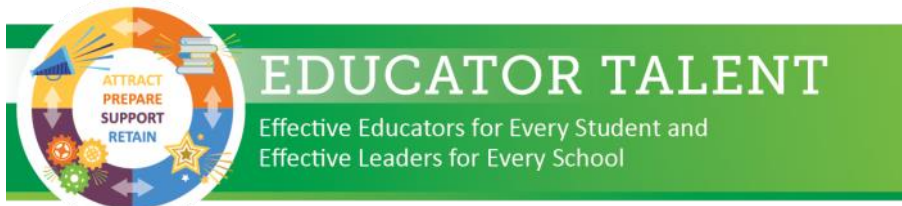
Initial Licensure and Endorsement Specific to Special Education Specialist: VI

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 350 hours, full-time, and under the supervision of an Academy of Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education (ACVREP) certified orientation and mobility specialist. ✓ Passing of the ACVREP exam. ✓ Hold a current and valid ACVREP Certified O&M Specialist certificate (for initial and renewal licenses). ✓ Do not let your ACVREP O&M Certification expire.
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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 [Educator Talent webpage](#) for resources and tools.



Educators May Add Licenses and Certifications to myColorado App

CDE has partnered with the [myColorado app](#) to provide certified educators access to digital versions of their credentials. Download the myColorado app, create an account and download certificates into the myColorado wallet. [To learn more about myColorado and the Educator Certificates, visit the myColorado FAQ page.](#)

English Learner Professional Development Requirement for License Renewal

All educators holding an elementary, English language arts, math, science or social studies (or any middle-level) endorsement on a professional teacher license that expires on or after September 1, 2025 must complete English Learner Professional Development (ELPD) prior to renewing their license or they will be unable to renew until they have done so. The ELPD training requirement for these endorsement areas was adopted by the State Board of Education in 2018, allowing teachers time to complete the training until their next full renewal period.

Anyone who holds an ELPD designation on their credential already meets this requirement.

Important note: This requirement is based solely on the endorsement(s) held; it is not based on the content area the educator is presently teaching or if they are teaching at all. For example, a teacher who also holds both a science and a music endorsement will be required to complete ELPD even if only teaching music. Individuals who are serving in other positions (as a principal, for example) or not presently employed in education and who still wish to renew their teacher license with one of the identified endorsements must meet this requirement.

The ELPD designation requires 45 hours of training focused on the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Educators may fulfill the requirement via a [pre-approved program](#) or [individual learning that aligns with the ELPD standards](#). District leaders with [COOL access](#) can download a report of their educators who have attained the designation. More details for educators needing to complete the ELPD requirement can be found on the [ELPD for Educators webpage](#). Email educator_development@cde.state.co.us with questions.

News Release

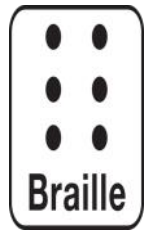
Colorado Department of Education receives \$1.6 million annual grant to strengthen school-based mental health services

DENVER -- Colorado Commissioner of Education Susana Córdova announced the Colorado Department of Education will receive a \$1.6 million yearly grant from the U.S. Department of Education to enhance mental health services for students across the state. This five-year award, running from 2025 - 2029, aims to address Colorado's critical shortage of school-based mental health professionals and strengthen support for youth experiencing mental health challenges. "This grant is an important resource for our state's school districts to help them expand access to the services our students need to thrive," Córdova said. "By investing in school-based capacity to provide mental health supports, we can better support student health, wellness, and engagement within their own learning communities."

The School-Based Mental Health Services Grant will support schools to hire more counselors and mental health professionals. It will provide funding to hire new workers, keep existing ones in their jobs and help some switch careers to work in schools. The grant includes funding for stipends, training for graduate-level school-based mental health supervisors, and developing pathways for clinic-based mental health professionals to transition to school-based roles. For more information about the grant, please contact SBMHS@cde.state.co.us











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 (Temporary Educator Eligibility-TEE) or emergency credential 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 initial certificate expires five years from its initial issue from CDE.

        The CDE Certificate of Braille Competency must be earned no later than May 31st of the first instructional year of teacher of students with visual impairments in 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. TVIs must have taken a university-level braille course or have sufficient documentation of UEB training before they can take the initial CDE Braille Competency Test. The initial CDE Braille Competency Certificate expires 5 years from its date of issue.

You can do it!

Renewal CDE Braille Competency Certificate

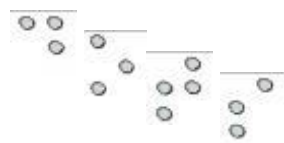
There is a one time expectation to renew the initial CDE certificate five years after its initial issue. This is accomplished by completing 15 renewal modules across the five year renewal period. These modules must be taken with one of the CDE Braille Proctors. Candidates who are in the renewal process should plan on completing three braille renewal modules during each of the five year renewal requirement.

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

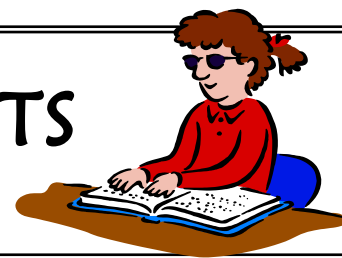


It is Our Profession! CEC Specialty Set Competency Standards

- Initial Specialty Set: Blind and Visual Impairments- <https://dvidb.exceptionalchildren.org/standards/initial-specialty-set-blind-and-visual-impairments>
- Initial Specialty Set: Deafblindness: <https://dvidb.exceptionalchildren.org/standards/initial-specialty-set-deafblindness>
- Initial Specialty Set: Intervener: <https://dvidb.exceptionalchildren.org/standards/specialty-set-special-education-paraeducator-intervener-individuals-deafblindness-pdbi>



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) 503-4647	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
Julie Wetzstein	(303) 819-7887	Wetzstein_J@cde.state.co.us

Christine Maynard is our southern 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. If there is a testing need on the western slope, please contact Tanni.

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.

Thanks for being a steward of braille competency—our students are counting on your expertise for their specially designed instruction and instructional materials.

UEB Technical Versus Nemeth Braille Codes

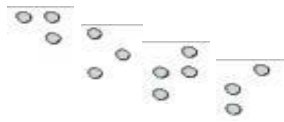
The Colorado Department of Education does not dictate a math code for students with visual impairment, including blindness. Two math codes are approved by the Braille Authority of North America. The decision about the math code is an individual student-by-student or an IEP decision. Both codes are viable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

For more information, contact Tanni Anthony at (303) 503-4647 or anthony_t@cde.state.co.us.

Braillewriter Repair

- Kirk McCall (303) 875-4527 (phone) and email km2320@msn.com
- Mark Carpenter (719) 634-8720 (phone) and email carpdiane@yahoo.com





CONNECTING THE DOTS



NFB Braille Resources

- [NFB BELL® Academy](#)
- [Braille Certification](#)
- [Early Childhood Initiatives](#)
- [International Braille and Technology Center](#)
- [Independence Market](#)
- [Free Slate and Stylus Program](#)
- [Nemeth Code Curriculum](#)
- [Braille Transcription Resources](#)
- [Braillewriter Repair Resources](#)
- [Braille Sign Resources](#)
- [Braille Music Resources](#)

Free Braille Books

- [American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults](#)
- [American Printing House for the Blind](#)
- [Braille Institute of America, Inc.](#)
- [Seeing Hands](#)
- [Temple Beth El Sisterhood Braille Bindery Volunteer](#)



NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF THE BLIND

Live the life you want.

Braille Readers Are Leaders Contest Opens

The American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults opened the [Braille Readers Are Leaders](#) contest registration on November 15, 2024. The annual contest promotes the joy of reading for pleasure, a pride in Braille as a viable literacy medium equal to print, and demonstrates the importance of independent reading in the development of Braille literacy skills.

The contest started December 2, 2024, but registration lasts through the end of the contest, January 17, 2025. The contest includes youth, adult, and teachers of blind students tracks. Participants use the Beanstack website or the Beanstack app to log minutes of reading. Have fun and challenge your friends, family members, and colleagues who read Braille to join you!





Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)



Culturally and Linguistically Relevant Education Conversations with CEEDAR

This podcast series, created with CEEDAR members across CEEDAR states, aims to share information on how we can work together to embed Culturally and Linguistically Relevant Education in Educator Preparation Programs to ensure we are preparing teachers and leaders to serve each and every student in their schools and classrooms

In Episode 1 - Link to Academic Achievement: Dr. Meg Kamman and Dr. Laura Vernikoff discuss embedding culturally and linguistically responsive education practices into preparation programs and the link to academic achievement.

Episode 2- Ethnography Project: Dr. Rachael Smith from Georgia Southern University and CEEDAR's Jennifer Greer, discuss examining culture and identity through the phenomena of literacy and language development. They highlight an ethnography project that was used as a critical lens of reflection with preservice teacher candidates

Listen at: [CLRE Conversations with CEEDAR | CEEDAR](#)

Multilingual Learners

Identified or Suspected of Having Educational Disabilities



The [Multilingual Learners webpage](#) is designed to provide guidelines and resources for professionals and families supporting Multilingual Learners (MLs) who are also identified with or suspected of having educational disabilities, also known as Dually Identified students.

There are a host of new Technical Assistance Documents to review, along with other resources on this important webpage.

Multilingual Learner Processing Guide

This [Multilingual Learner Processing Guide](#) was developed for Education Teams to use when considering a referral for Special Education evaluation of Multilingual Learners.

Multilingual Learner Family Interview Questions

School teams should engage families meaningfully as partners in the problem-solving and special education processes. The [ML Family Interview Questions](#) are meant to be used as a resource when the multidisciplinary team needs information related to a student's cultural background, academic profile, prior experiences, etc., in addition to that of the Home Language Survey/Home Language Questionnaire results. Please check out the [Spanish Entrevistas con familias de los MLs](#).

Students who are Newcomers: Considerations for Special Education

[Students who are Newcomers](#) are entitled to school enrollment and equal access to educational programming. This Fact Sheet clarifies the special education process as it relates to Newcomers who are Multilingual Learners identified with or suspected of having disabilities. Administrative Units must evaluate students who are Newcomers without delay if they are suspected of having disabilities. This evaluation must be non-discriminatory.

ML Enrollment Scenarios Flowchart

It is the Administrative Unit's responsibility under Child Find to locate and identify all students with disabilities including Multilingual Learners (MLs) with disabilities. School teams must not identify MLs with disabilities when linguistic and cultural differences or lack of instruction in literacy and math are the determinative causes for their difficulties in school. When parents or staff members report concerns about a student's academic, social-emotional, functional, or behavioral concerns, IEP teams including educators who are knowledgeable in language acquisition and acculturation should work to investigate these concerns before the special education evaluation referral.



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)



Important Reminders

- The U.S. Supreme Court's 1982 [Plyler v. Doe](#) decision affirmed that schools cannot deny enrollment to students on the basis of their immigration status, which ensures that all students have access to a free public education.
- Both federal and state laws prohibit discrimination and harassment of students on the basis of protected classes, which includes national origin, race, and color. You can find these prohibitions in the federal [Title IV and Title VI](#) statutes and in Colorado's Anti-Discrimination Act, § 24-34-601, C.R.S.
- Under long-standing federal guidance (see [2016 guidance](#) and [2021 guidance](#)), schools are protected spaces where federal immigration authorities should not conduct immigration activities.

US Department of Education Resources

Please see the following resource for families and educators from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice in Spanish and in English:

[Confronting Discrimination Based on National Origin and Immigration Status](#)

[Cómo enfrentarse a la discriminación basada en el origen nacional y la condición de inmigrante](#)

[Biliteracy Professional Development Series](#)

This is four-part course is comprised of an Introduction and three Modules. This course is designed to provide participants with evidence-based strategies for teaching students in English and Spanish while working towards bilingualism and biliteracy. It is an open-source format designed to be accessible to anyone interested in learning more about best practices for providing biliteracy instruction in Spanish and English. There is a note catcher that corresponds to each course component for you to capture your learning. Additionally, you will find support documents and websites to further your learning. You may take this course at your own pace. If you choose to take the quiz at the end of the course, you will be eligible for two hours of professional development.

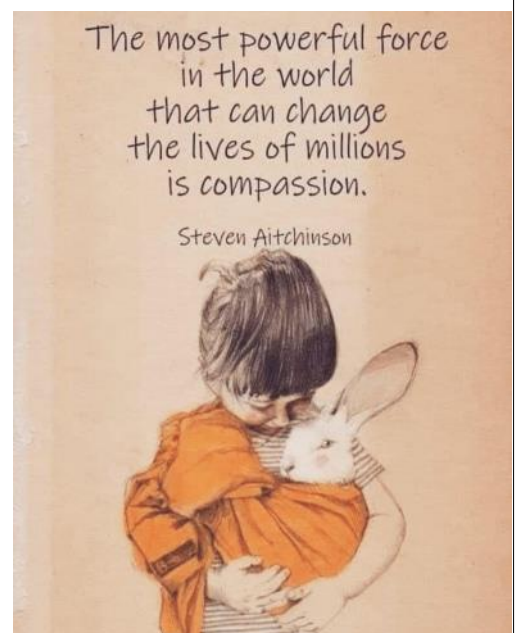
NEW Culturally Responsive School-Based Family Interview Guide

Dr. Bryn Harris has developed a NEW non-regulatory guide in collaboration with the CDE!

[Culturally Responsive School-Based Family Interviewing: Engaging in Empathic Family Partnerships](#)

Highlights Include:

- 5 hours of FREE recertification credit for reading and engaging in the guide!
- Applicable to all (Administrators, Teachers, SSPs, etc.)
- Activities for reflection
- Additional Literature
- Considerations for Broad Systemic Improvements
- Question Lists for ease of use in family interviews






Calendar of Events

2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025
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- January 1** CAER Mini Grants Due!
Submit to CAERBOARD@gmail.com
- January 4** Louis Braille Birthday—Happy #216!
- January 6-24** Open Period to Order a Braille Format CMAS Test
Contact: Your District Assessment Coordinator
- January 8** CDE Assessment Unit CMAS Webinar from 4:00 to 5:00 pm
[Microsoft Teams Link](#) to Join meeting
- January 10** CIMC Second Friday Meetings—virtual
Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@cldb.org
- January 21** Southern Region TVI—DVR Meetings
Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@cldb.org
- January 28** Sound Bites: Science Engagement—virtual
Register by 1/14/2025—[Sound Bites Registration](#)
- February 7** Braille Challenge—Colorado Center for the Blind
Contact: CIMC staff at (719) 578-2196
- February 25** Southern Region TVI—DVR Meetings
Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@cldb.org
- February 14** CIMC Second Friday Meetings—virtual
Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@cldb.org
- February 18** Blindness/Low Vision Coalition—virtual
Contact: Tanni Anthony at Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us
- February 19** Sound Bites: APE for Students with B/LV—virtual
Register by 2/1/2025—[Sound Bites Registration](#)
- February 27** Braille Challenge at CSDB from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Contact: Tina Bos at tsbos@cldb.org
- March 1** See the Future Fund Tools for Life Applications Due
[Check out See the Future for application and details](#)
- March 13** Southern Region TVI—DVR Meetings
Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@cldb.org





Calendar of Events

2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025

- March 7** **CIMC First Friday Meetings**—virtual
 Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@cldb.org

- March 19** **Sound Bites: Optical Strategies to Enhance Mobility** —virtual
 Register by 3/1/2025—[Sound Bites Registration](#)

- April 4** **CIMC First Friday Meetings**—virtual
 Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@cldb.org

- April 16** **Sound Bites: Understanding Visual Field Loss in Children** —virtual
 Register by 4/2/2025—[Sound Bites Registration](#)

- April TBD** **Beeping Easter Egg Hunt at CSDB** from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm
 Contact: Cheryl Austin at caustin@cldb.org

- May 2** **CIMC First Friday Meetings**—virtual
 Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@cldb.org

- June 5-6** **Conference for Assistive Technology and Education (CATE)**
 Contact: [SWAAAC website](#)

- June 6** **CIMC First Friday Meetings**—virtual
 Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@cldb.org

- June 22-28** **Deaf-Blind Awareness Week—Celebrate!**

- July 8-13** **National Federation of the Blind** – New Orleans, LA
 For more information, check out the [NFB Convention site](#)

- Sept 23-24** **Western Regional Early Intervention Conference (WREIC)** – Albuquerque, NM
 For more information: <http://www.wreic.org/>

- October 15-17** **APH Annual Meeting** – Louisville, KY
 Contact: www.APH.org

- November 5-8** **Getting in Touch with Literacy Conference**—Huntsville, AL
 Registration Coming Soon—<https://www.gitwl.org/register>





Cortical/Cerebral Visual Impairment News

Perkins CVI Protocol

The [Perkins CVI ProtocolSM](#) is a new educational assessment tool for students with cerebral/cortical visual impairment (CVI). It was created by The CVI Center at Perkins and is designed to help teachers of the visually impaired create an individualized CVI evaluation report with recommendations for students with CVI. It is free, downloadable, and customizable and is grounded in science.

Perkins CVI Library

The [Perkins CVI Interventions Library](#) is a collaborative collection of strategies for anyone supporting students with cerebral/cortical visual impairment. You can browse for new ideas and submit your own interventions to share with others. Topical categories include literacy and materials, learning environment, communication, and presentation methods.

Great Articles to Check Out on CVI

- **FAQs about Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI): Identifying and Helping Those Affected** by Dr. Gordon Dutton. Cerebral visual impairment is common in both adults and children, yet the diagnosis can easily be missed unless one is tuned into the presenting features. [Check out this article](#) that provides a succinct introduction to this important topic. August/ September 2022.
- **Cerebral Visual Impairment is a Growing Concern in Pediatric Vision Loss** by David Hutton. [Check out this article](#) which is an auditory file with a review by Dr. Lofti Merabet.
- **Cerebral/Cortical Visual Impairment: What Parents Need to Know** by Dr. Ryan House and Dr. Sharon Lehman. [Retrieve the article](#), which has basic overview content.



Orientation & Mobility

SEE YOU IN NEW ORLEANS, DECEMBER 2026!

The excitement is already building up for the Orientation and Mobility Opus to end all Opus' - this will be one for the O&M history books! Lynn Gautreaux, the conference chair for 2026, is already hard at work planning for it. He says, "We will have an O&M program that will be remembered for years to come, with a wide variety of O&M sessions and various tracks, lots of exhibitors, and a location venue extraordinaire in New Orleans, LA!" Specific dates in December 2026, conference hotel, and other details will be forthcoming, so, mark your calendars and start planning to attend the 2026 O&M conference!

Purchase Foundations of O&M Fourth Edition Today!

"The fourth edition of Foundations of Orientation and Mobility features contributions from over 50 experts covering essential O&M topics like teaching methods, sensorimotor functioning, and new technologies for individuals who are blind or low vision. Purchase your copy today!

[Purchase Volume I which provides a comprehensive view of the field of orientation and mobility.](#)

[Purchase Volume II which addresses sensory use, O&M instruction for different age and ability groups, and technology applications.](#)

Special note: Tanni has purchased 25 copies for administrative units serving students with blindness/low vision and deaf-blindness by full time TVI / O&M staff. The goal is to disseminate the books at the Spring 2025 CDE O&M Seminar (dates not yet determined).

Visual Impairment, including Blindness

Effective as of June 2023.

The updated eligibility criteria can be found in the [Rules for Administration of the Exceptional Children Education Act](#).

2.08(11) A child with a Visual Impairment, Including Blindness has an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects the child’s educational performance and that requires specialized instruction. The term includes low vision, blindness and/or progressive vision loss.

2.08(11)(a) A determination that a child is an eligible child with a Visual Impairment, Including Blindness may include but not be limited to:

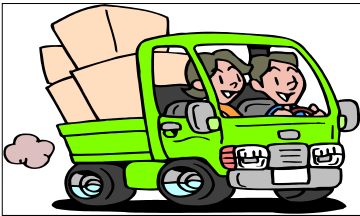
2.08 (11) (a) (i) Visual acuity of no better than 20/70 in the better eye after correction;

2.08 (11) (a) (ii) Visual field restriction to 20 degrees or less; and/or

2.08(11) (a) (iii) A physical condition of visual system which cannot be medically corrected and, as such, affects visual functioning to the extent that specially designed instruction is needed.

These criteria are reserved for special situations such as, but not restricted to cortical visual impairment and/or a progressive visual loss where field and/or acuity deficits alone may not meet the aforementioned criteria.





TRANSITION INFORMATION ABOUT MOVING ON!

Browse APH ConnectCenter's Content on Transition:

NSITE and American Printing House for the Blind Connect Center bring you the [Job Seeker's Toolkit](#), an accessible, self-paced, free online training course. The purpose of The Job Seeker's Toolkit is to assist you in acquiring and build critical tools that will ultimately help conduct a successful job search. The Toolkit's five courses are structured into modules and activities that build on the content and exercises of the preceding course.

Applying for a Job: The Young Adults Guide, Revised 2023 [English and Spanish versions]

This tip sheet is a great resource for young adults beginning their job search. It covers key topics such as evaluating pay, growth opportunities, and choosing between in-person and remote jobs. The guide also offers tips on creating a professional online presence, securing references, and developing networking skills. Additionally, it includes a list of valuable resources to support the job search journey. Check out the [YA Guide Tip Sheet](#).

APH WEBINARS

Tuesday, January 14, 2025, 3:00 – 4:00 PM EST

Empowering Independence: Discover Leader Dogs for the Blind's Teen Programs

Discover how Leader Dogs for the Blind empowers teens with vision loss through Teen Summer Camp and Teen O&M. These free programs focus on independence, confidence, and leadership. This webinar will provide insights into unique training opportunities, eligibility, and the impact these programs have on young lives.

[Register Here for Empowering Independence: Discover Leader Dogs for the Blind's Teen Programs](#)

[Click here to learn more about upcoming virtual events](#), and [Check out all of our recorded webinars here](#). Please note that it takes up to 48 hours to upload the webinars to our site. Please check back in a few days to see if the webinar you are looking for is available.

Thursday, January 9, 2025, 6:00 – 7:00 PM EST

Career Conversations: Interview with an Administrative Law Judge

Join APH CareerConnect for our very popular Career Conversations Series. Steve Elliot will share his journey through law school, a career serving the public in various areas of law and now as an Administrative Law Judge.

[Register Here for Career Conversations: Interview with an Administrative Law Judge](#)

Thursday, January 16, 2025, 6:00 – 7:00 PM EST

Maximizing Social Security using Work Incentives, Part 1

Join APH CareerConnect Employment Connections to learn about work incentives for beneficiaries of Supplemental Security Income SSI and Social Security Disability Insurance SSDI. In this session, we will cover Supplemental Security Income work incentives. Learn how working will impact your SSI, specifically if you're 16 to 21 years old.

[Register there for Maximizing Social Security using Work Incentives, Part 1](#)

Engineers make bridges.
Artists make paintings.
Scientists make rockets.
But teachers make them all.

just for PARENTS

National Family Association for Deaf-Blind (NFADB)

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.



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.

Exceptional Parent Magazine

Did you know subscriptions to [Exceptional Parent Magazine](#) are free? This award-winning publication focuses on serving the special needs community.

[Sign up here](#) to receive a free monthly subscription.

Have a child with a Recent Eye Condition Diagnosis?

APH FamilyConnect's Getting Started Guides provide information about vision development, navigating IFSP and IEPs, braille literacy, and technology. They offer transition support, tips and ideas to support your child at home, as well as a wealth of additional resources to help you raise your child. [Access the Getting Started Guides here.](#)

Frequently Asked Questions: Social Security Administration, Supplemental Security Income, and Social Security Disability Insurance - Can I work if I receive social security benefits?

This FAQ provides people with disabilities and their families an overview on social security benefits and answers common questions about these benefits and employment.

Check out the [Financial Toolkit: Frequently Asked Questions](#) resource.

just for PARENTS

Resources from *the National Research Center for Parents with Disabilities*

Serving Parents with Disabilities: **The National Research Center for Parents with Disabilities** has a range of resources for parents with disabilities and those who support them covering a variety of topics such as child welfare law and its effects on parents with disabilities, firsthand narratives from disabled parents about how they raise their children, and advice for professionals working with specific populations of parents with disabilities.

[Access the resources.](#)

Family Engagement Solutions

[Family Engagement Solutions](#) is a new online tool from the [National PTA](#) and Johns Hopkins University to help district and school leaders, educators, and advocates find evidence-based programs that strengthen family-school partnerships and improve student outcomes. As family engagement is a key factor in student success, impacting attendance, behavior, academic achievement, and graduation rates, this tool serves as an essential complement to strong and effective leadership.

Home-to-School Connections for Early Learners

Did you know that [literacy development is a complex process that goes beyond mere reading and writing](#)? [Reading is Fundamental](#) shares that literacy development is rooted in both cognitive and social experiences, beginning in infancy within family settings. The interactions children have with family members, whether through conversations, storytelling, or daily routines play a crucial role in building foundational literacy skills. By engaging with words, sounds, and symbols in meaningful, familiar contexts, children begin to connect language with understanding, setting the stage for future reading comprehension and critical thinking. This early exposure also emphasizes the importance of family engagement in fostering literacy, underscoring how educational development is a shared journey between schools and families.



A Guide for Parents and Family Members of Students on IEPs

The CDE website has great information for parents. Go to this link for frequently asked questions. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/parent-faq>

Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP)

PEP is a conference for families and parents who have children with disabilities, ages birth to 21.

Parents include parents as couples, single parents, legal guardians, adoptive, and foster parents. A support person may attend and accompany a single parent. A support person is one who is helping a parent to raise a child(ren) with a disability or who is a caretaker of the child(ren) with a disability in the family (can include grandparent(s) or other relatives). PEP is a non-specific disability conference that focuses on commonalities, not diagnoses.

PEP In-person Conferences at Hotels: PEP in-person conferences are arranged at various hotels throughout regions in Colorado, and offers free registration, food, and lodging (if applicable). Special accommodations, language interpretation, and document translation are available. Transportation is not provided; consider carpooling if applicable; parking and sometimes valet service is available at the hotel venue.

Cost, Food, Lodging: PEP conferences are free to attend. Funded by both federal and state grants, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU) offers these conferences free of charge to eligible Colorado parents of children with disabilities and to Colorado professionals who work with children and youth with disabilities and their families. Parents are responsible for their own transportation to and from the hotel venue.

For more information about PEP check out the [CDE PEP website](#).

For questions, reach out to Pahmela Mendoza, Family School Program Specialist at mendoza_p@cde.state.co.us.



IMPORTANT! We have JOB OPENINGS!!

We are facing our first real shortage for Colorado TVIs (teachers of students with visual impairments) and Orientation and Mobility Specialists = orientation and mobility specialists. Please keep in touch with Tanni about our 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 they have an opportunity to learn about being a TVI and/or an O&M Specialist. This may be a paraeducator, 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!. If you are looking for a job, please check out the listings below and also reach out to Tanni, who will have a current list of work across the state, including TVI and O&M Specialist contract work. Together, we can fill in the needed gaps to serve all of our students.

Metro Region

- ◆ **1 FTE TVI (or part time)** TVI at the Anchor Center for Blind Children. For more information, please reach out to Tammy Miller at tmiller@anchorcenter.org
- ◆ **1 FTE for TVI/O&M Specialist** in Cherry Creek School District. Please contact Amy Barr at abarr2@cherrycreekschools.org
- ◆ **1 FTE TVI / O&M Specialist Position** in Littleton School District. Please contact Jennifer Templeton at jtempleton@lps.k12.co.us
- ◆ **.9 and a .4 FTE TVI Position** in Denver Public Schools. For more information go to: [Teacher of the Blind / Visually Impaired - Part time](#)

Northern Region

- ◆ **.5 FTE or part-time TVI / O&M Specialist**—Windsor School District. For more information, please contact Jennifer Sedaghat at Jennifer.sedaghat@weldre4.org
- ◆ **.2 FTE for TVI / O&M Specialist** in Poudre School District. For more information, please contact Amy Villard at avillard@psdschools.org

Southern Region

- ◆ **.4 FTE TVI Position**—Colorado Springs District 11. For more information, please contact Nancy Melo Maresh at nancy.mereshmelo@d11.org or (719) 520-2158.
- ◆ **1 FTE TVI and 1 FTE BLV Literacy Specialist Positions** at CSDB. Please contact Cheryl Austin for more information at caustin@csdb.org
- ◆ **1 FTE TVI / O&M Specialist** for CSDB Outreach. Please contact Jac Tyrcha at jtyrcha@csdb.org





IMPORTANT! We have JOB OPENINGS!!

Across Metro, Northern, and Western Regions

- ◆ **Contract 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.

TVIs and O&M Specialists—If you are getting ready to retire, please do not let your CDE TVI and/or O&M licenses expire, as you are in a great position to keep contributing with part-time or substitute work. This includes maintaining your ACVREP O&M certification.



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 on the CDE's TVI and/or O&M Specialist contractor list, please be in touch with Tanni at anthony_t@cde.state.co.us



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

IMPORTANT RECRUITMENT OPPORTUNITY

AER's Professional Personnel Recruitment Committee (PPRC) is proud to announce the release of the long-awaited recruitment video: "Visual Impairment Professions." The 5-minute PBS Spotlight On video started airing nationwide between regular programming on September 30, 2024. It is expected to reach 3 million viewers in just the first 3 months. It will continue to air for a minimum of one year.

The links to access this video with and without audio description are:

- 1) Without audio description <https://youtu.be/I90UJSQNGU8>
- 2) With audio description <https://youtu.be/mGscr-DO0Eg>

Please use the video and spread the word. Everyone needs to help bring new people into our field!

Dear Colleagues and friends,

It is that time of year holidays and family celebrations!

If you are a CAER [member](#), It is also MINI-GRANT TIME!

One of the many perks of being a [CAER](#) member is the opportunity to apply for a mini-grant that is offered each year. Please review the [CAER Mini Grant document](#) that includes the needed information to apply. Please send your completed application back NO LATER than **January 1, 2025**. We will be voting at our January Board Meeting.

You can send the form to CAERBOARD@gmail.com

Blindness/ Low Vision Coalition

Virtual Meeting – December 12, 2024

Persons in Attendance: Tanni Anthony, Nancy Cozart, Chaz Davis, Abby Horner, Donna Keale, Paula Landry, Jamie Lugo, Tammy Miller, Erin Schroeder, Jim Olson, Michele Reed, and Chloann Woolley

Persons Absent: Paula Conroy

Guest: Stephanie Steffer, CVIConnect

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

ACRONYM LEGEND

ASV	A Shared Vision
BLV	Blindness / Low Vision
COMS	Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist
CAER	Colorado Chapter - 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
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 BLINDNESS/LOW VISION COALITION FOR THE 2024-25 SCHOOL YEAR

- A Shared Vision – Paula Landry
- Anchor Center for Blind Children – Tammy Miller
- Colorado AER Chapter – Chloann Woolley
- Colorado Center for the Blind Youth Program – Chaz Davis
- 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 / Cheryl Austin
- Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind Outreach – Donna Keale
- Metro TVI / COMS– Nancy Cozart
- Northern TVI / COMS – Abby Horner
- Southern TVI / COMS – Chloann Woolley
- University of Northern Colorado – Paula Conroy
- Western TVI / COMS – Erin Schroeder

Norms of the Blindness/Low 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). Blindness/Low 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.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Metro Region (Nancy Cozart)

The Denver Metro Region had its most recent meeting on December 5. Will Reynolds hosted and provided an option to participate in person as well as online. He shared his beginning braille lessons that he used with some preschool staff. It has provided background knowledge and an opportunity for staff to create some simple literacy for future students. The lessons can be adapted for parents and other staff at other levels. Thanks for sharing, Will!

In addition, attendees had a chance to share questions on topics such as the implementation of the new VI disability criteria. People also shared ideas of possible O&M topics. There were wide-ranging ideas that hopefully can be incorporated into the spring state conference, regional meetings, and future Sound Bites. Topics included: (a) Accessible WayFinding Tools for education, work and play; (b)-O&M for those with multiple impairments; (c) O&M for those with deafblindness (crossings and approaches); (d) adaptive Sports and O&M; (e) Tactile Maps (creation and instructional strategies); (f) determining need for use of a white cane; (g) the belt cane: when and how to use it; (h) new technology for O&M, including apps. Assessment formats (can we create an outline across the state?)

Nancy shared the value of these gatherings for camaraderie and touching base on how things are going, suggestions for the field, and learning together.

Discussion: In the different IEP platforms, should personnel check boxes for visual impairment, including blindness AND hearing impairment, including deafness AND deaf-blindness? People are doing different things when checking the boxes. Tanni shared it is important that all learners with VIB or DB must have a learning media plan. All learners with HID or DB must have a Communication Plan. A child with deaf-blindness must have a completed Learning Media Plan and a Communication Plan. These plans drive the content of the IEP. The IEP team is charged with appropriate evaluation to determine the needs of the child. These needs drive the Special Factors, as appropriate, and the basis of the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance that lead to the goals/objectives.

Northern Region (Abby Horner)

The Northern TVI/COMS met virtually on November 8th, 2024. We heard from the Vice President of the NFB Greeley Chapter to learn about connecting more with them as a resource. During the open discussion, we talked about technology, the Oregon Project, and possibly coordinating field trips for our students to get together. We will meet again in the spring and possibly have CATT present.

The Northern Region Low Vision Clinic happened in November and was a success. There were students from all over the Northern region with 6 TVIs in attendance with their students.

Discussion: What tools do ophthalmologists use to diagnose CVI? If there is not an MRI, what are the diagnostic criteria?

From Dr. Lauren Mehner, Children's Hospital Ophthalmologist: To date, there is no formal published diagnostic criteria for CVI, in the US or throughout the world. This is what makes CVI so challenging. Just last month a working definition was published by the CVI working group sponsored by NEI in the journal *Ophthalmology*, which is great progress but also highlights how far we still have to go in accurately diagnosing and managing this condition. From that publication: *A panel consisting of a group of clinicians with expertise in diagnosing CVI convened to draft a working definition for this condition. Five key elements were identified: (1) CVI encompasses a spectrum of visual impairments caused by an underlying brain abnormality that affects the development of visual processing pathways and is characterized by deficits in visual function and functional vision; (2) the visual dysfunction in CVI is greater than expected by any comorbid ocular conditions alone; (3) the visual dysfunction in CVI may manifest as lower-order or higher-order afferent visual deficits, or both, leading to characteristic behaviors in affected individuals; (4) although CVI may be comorbid with other neurodevelopmental disorders, CVI is not primarily a disorder of language, learning, or*

social communication; and (5) the underlying neurologic insult of the developing brain may go unrecognized or undiagnosed until later in life. Future work is needed to achieve consensus on nomenclature, diagnostic criteria, and strategies for early identification and intervention. [https://www.aaojournal.org/article/S0161-6420\(24\)00565-7/fulltext](https://www.aaojournal.org/article/S0161-6420(24)00565-7/fulltext)

So, clearly, diagnostic criteria is on the to-do list but probably will take a while to achieve. Currently, doctors use a combination of clinical visual function, parent reports, and other information to come up with a diagnosis. A variety of published screening tools/instruments exist, and can be used as a helpful adjunct, but no single instrument is all-encompassing. We can also now use this working definition as a helpful guide too.

From Dr. Linda Lawrence, a pediatric ophthalmologist incredibly involved with CVI across the globe: “Bottom line is our profession is trying to standardize diagnosis, but not yet there. We still have practitioners who look ONLY at the MRI and make the diagnosis, with no functional assessments. We have normal MRI in some genetic conditions and sometimes even with significant neurological challenges which is the reason MRI testing was taken out of the diagnostic criteria. Insurance often has to pre-approve MRI, so can be complex and expensive for a family, and often requires a general anesthetic. And we do not always need it, although I think most of us feel it is extremely helpful. Also, MRI may not be available in many countries.

A structured medical history for "risk factors" for CVI is the most important. Now that we know the high incidence of cerebral palsy and Down syndrome, these populations need more specific screening early and often. Those born premature, post hemispherectomy for seizure disorders, intrauterine or perinatal infections, stroke, etc.....Also lesser known and not yet researched as well: maternal preeclampsia, Group B strep infection in mom, and other already familiar and extensive risk factors.”

Tammy Miller shared the following resources:

- CVI Workgroup (NIH): Summary Article: <https://pcvis.vision/clinical-report-released-diagnosis-and-care-of-children-with-cvi>
- Actual Report: [https://www.aaojournal.org/article/S0161-6420\(24\)00565-7/fulltext](https://www.aaojournal.org/article/S0161-6420(24)00565-7/fulltext)
- American Academy of Ophthalmology, November 2024: <https://www.aao.org/education/1-minute-video/evaluating-pediatric-cerebral-visual-impairment>

Discussion: Does a CVI diagnosis always mean that the student meets eligibility requirements? There are concerns about an increase of referrals/students on TVI's caseloads.

Eye doctors can confirm the health of the eye and work with the family and others on next steps to confirm. No condition that results in a disability automatically qualifies a child as eligible for special education services. This is true across all eligibility categories. Any student suspected of having a disability can be referred for special education and must have a comprehensive evaluation to discern adverse educational impact that cannot be addressed through general education and, as such, requires specially designed instruction. As we continue to learn more about cortical / cerebral visual impairment, the special education field will need to work together both on eligibility and services.

What are CDE and others doing to recruit TVIs and O&M Specialists to Colorado?

The topic of recruitment and retention has been on the docket for the Blindness/Low Vision Coalition for over two years. Past notes from the coalition have been published in the *Keeping in Touch* newsletters. Recruitment is a statewide issue that requires all hands on deck. As soon as an agency / AU knows there is a vacancy, Tanni has asked to be notified. Advertisement options for CDE and AUs can be AERBVI, ACVREP, and national special education listservs. This past summer, there were no bites from the AERBVI posting. The best sources of recruitment to the field have been personal contacts and an effort of home-growing personnel in local districts. We have seen personnel enter our field from the special education generalist field, paraeducators with experience with blind/low vision students, and parents. There is a national shortage, and it is important to grow the pipeline to the field. There have been discussions about

how to link and even create undergraduate programs that can tap candidates without BA degrees. This would assist in the recruitment of high school personnel.

Why did the process change on renewing the O&M license with CDE and having to have ACVREP certification now?

Per discussions with the past Vision Coalition from many years back, the decision was to require ACVREP certification. In a recent licensure evaluation of all special service providers, it was recommended to maintain this requirement. All CDE trainings specific to blindness/low vision offer ACVREP clock hours for this purpose. New personnel coming into the field must have an ACVREP-certified practicum supervisor for their ability to obtain ACVREP certification. This means CO needs ACVREP-certified O&M providers to support these practicum experiences. Many professionals have professional certifications. If there is another national O&M certification, this would be reviewed by CDE and recommended for licensure. CAER has a long history of partial reimbursement of CO AER members who earn an initial or renewal certificate. If Colorado wants to revisit whether ACVREP certification should continue to be a requirement, this is a conversation with our licensure personnel. Many believe it is a professional standard as indicated per the discussion of this coalition.

Is it true that some districts are asking to be compensated additional salary when they are both O&M and TVI for the same student? Salary compensation is addressed at a local level. This may be a project that CAER or others may want to address specific to recommendations for AUs to consider the dual role of our TVIs / COMSs.

Western Region (Erin Schroeder)

The Western Slope TVI/COMS met virtually on October 21st and November 18th so far this school year. We welcomed new TVIs to the region and supported each other with ideas for goals and teaching strategies. Information was shared about how virtual TVI's work with students.

Mesa Valley School District hosted the Low Vision Evaluation Clinic for the Western Region on September 26th, 2024. We enjoyed working with the new "clinic team." Students attended the clinic from different parts of the Western Slope with 5 TVIs in attendance.

Southern Region (Chloann Woolley)

The first Southern Region TVI/DVR Meeting was held on Tuesday- September 24th from 2:30-4:00 at Manitou Springs SLIC Building - hosted by Ute Pass BOCES. We shared a few snacks and introduced new members to our region. Welcome Natalie (District 49), Danielle, and Maddee (CIMC staff)! So glad you are here.

Meeting Highlights: Keeping In Touch (KIT) Newsletter is only online and will remain available for the school year. It is our job to distribute any information (newsletter) to parents. Jim shared the new texture Strips kit from APH and passed out new APH catalogs. Donna shared a flyer for the group as an FYI -Save the date for the Western Regional Early Intervention Conference on September 22-24, 2025, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The September TVI Conference hosted Matt Tietjen, M.Ed., TVI from Connecticut. He is the author of the 'What's the Complexity Framework' with the 2D visual assessment and Co-Author of the CVI Ally and other articles. He talked about the complexity of CVI at the conference. The CVI Range authored by Dr. Christine Roman-Lantzy is a tool of reference, but we have learned so much more about the importance of complexity for students with CVI. We need to take into consideration when their environment is too complex, and what other compensatory strategies are used to make sense of their environment. Please check out the new research and information about brain-based visual impairments. CVI links to share for more information:

- CVI All Teach CV
- CVI No CVI Perspective
- CVI Scotland CVI for the TVI & other Professional

The second Southern Region TVI/DVR Meeting was held on November 12th. The Academy School District 20 provided snacks and cookie prep under blindfolds, but the group was small, so we did not engage in the activity but had a good

discussion about updates for the area. CIMC has updated its website. The state has been divided into Administrative Units to make material distribution equitable across the state- Everyone needs to update their spreadsheet for registration. DVR shared that Pam Ellis is a new rehab counselor in the area. DVR is still in a transition period between case managers. Megann Brouard mentioned that DVR is always looking for summer employees for \$150 per hour - you must have a DVR vendor status.

Manitou Springs is its own AU. Cripple Creek and Woodland Park are an AU. UTE Pass BOCES has dissolved.

Our next four meetings are as follows:

- January 21, 2025, hosted by D49 with Dr. Griggs
- February 25, 2025, hosted by DVR
- May 13, 2025, hosted by CIMC - Make and Take topic

A Shared Vision (Paula Landry)

As Colorado's leading provider of early intervention vision services for children who are blind or visually impaired, A Shared Vision is committed to ensuring that all families have access to essential services. Our community of skilled professionals works collaboratively to empower families and help children with visual impairments reach their full potential. Here is how we are continuing to make an impact:

Innovative Resources for Families: We are expanding our curated collection of resources tailored for families with young children who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired. These include:

- Let's Play Activities©: Engaging play ideas that support sensory and visual development.
- Sensory Recipes©: Hands-on cooking activities that encourage exploration and sensory learning.
- Learning Experiences©: Structured opportunities to build developmental skills based on the Expanded Core Curriculum.

These tools are not only valuable for our teachers as they guide families but are also designed to empower parents and caregivers to support their child's learning between visits.

Quick Response Visits: To bridge the gap for families waiting to be matched with a teacher, we continue to provide Quick Response Visits. These timely telehealth sessions address immediate concerns, offer insights into a child's functional vision, and provide essential support during challenging moments.

Enhanced Vision Screening Protocol: For professionals in Colorado and across the country, we are updating our vision screening protocol with the expertise of Colorado's leading pediatric eye doctors. These enhancements will be launched in phases during the first half of 2025 and made available via CognitoForms, offering even more effective tools for early identification and intervention.

We remain deeply committed to supporting families and professionals in building a strong foundation for children with visual impairments. Thank you for your continued partnership in this vital mission. For more information or to access our resources, visit www.asharedvision.org or contact Paula Landry, at plandry@asharedvision.org

Anchor Center for Blind Children (Tammy Miller)

Program Updates: We are enjoying a fantastic school year in our three children's programs! Preschool is on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, and our Infant & Toddler Program is on Mondays and two Fridays per month. Our Home Visit EI Program is continuing strong with a great team!

Anchor Center's Pediatric Eye Clinic program's expansion has been wonderful over the past couple of years. Our partnerships with Children's Eye Physicians and Children's Hospital of Colorado Ophthalmology have been incredibly beneficial on both sides and most especially for our families. Our Research Team continues to make strides with new projects on the horizon for this year. Our NAVeG research project (newborn screenings for brain-based visual

impairments), now in its second phase and showing promising results for the future of newborn vision screenings, is underway at Children's Hospital of Colorado. The NAVEG team continues to have requests for trainings on the screening from TSVIs and early interventionists across the country. They have trained EI professionals, vision professionals, and hospital personnel from 24 states, including presenting a full-day training pre-conference day at the 2024 International AER Conference in Charlotte, NC this past July.

Events: We have Community Days planned for each month of the school year for all our students and their families, including swimming, playground visits, adaptive horseback riding, etc. Our Family Services team holds Night Watch respite events one night per month during the school year. Our Annual Family Holiday Celebration will be on December 19th with a visit from Santa & Mrs. Claus, animals from The Urban Farm, professional family portraits, and some treats and crafts.

Headquartered in Denver for 40 years, Anchor Center for Blind Children specializes in serving children with visual impairments or combined vision and hearing loss during their most formative years of development, ages birth to five years. Staffed by a transdisciplinary team of highly trained teachers of students with visual impairments, early childhood special educators, therapists, and a pediatric ophthalmologist, Anchor Center's vision services are customized to meet each child's unique needs and strengths. Families also receive support, guidance, practical knowledge, and connections to other important resources. Anchor Center's primary programming includes: vision assessments and pediatric ophthalmology exams; early intervention home-based services (for children, ages birth to 3 years); center-based programming for infants (newborn – 18 months), toddlers (18 months – 3 years), and preschoolers (3 – 5 years); occupational, physical, and speech/language therapies; recreational, music, and horticultural therapies; summer camps and family respite care; and family support, including programs for caregivers and siblings. The Anchor Center charges a nominal tuition fee for toddler and preschool programs but does not charge for infant services. No child is ever denied access to services based on the family's inability to pay.

Discussion: As learners transition from the Anchor Center for Blind Children to districts, how best to prepare the families for school-based services, which are both the same and different from Part C and Part B. Transitions are emotional, as well as technical with new personnel and procedures. Donna shared that parents that she works with through the CSDB BVI early intervention program come back to share that they often feel so overwhelmed at those first IEP meetings with so many people in one room. It can be helpful to have the school district TVI meet the family ahead of the school experience, inviting them to a home visit before a formal school district meeting. Paula Landry shared about the need for many conversations ahead of the transition – noting their expertise on the IEP Team. She also talked about making a list with the parents to address potential concerns in advance so they can be reviewed and discussed. The Lunch Bunch meetings at Anchor Center were helpful in the past to have a way for parents to meet metro TVIs. The conversations focus on the individual needs of the child and introduce the concept of specially designed instruction, the focus from family-centered to child-centered. Chloann recommended a book called *Parents and Professionals Partnering for Children with Disabilities: A Dance That Matters* by Janice Fialka, Arlene Feldman, and Karen Mikus, which addresses collaboration with families. Working together begins with listening, leaning in, and taking time to learn about the child.

Colorado AER Chapter (Chloann Woolley)

Please join and support your local Chapter of The Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER). January 1st is the new deadline for the member mini-grant application. See the website for details. New fundraiser - shopping bags for Braille Literacy Mont. Watch for more info coming soon. Chloann will send out the link for people to purchase the bags. People can pay through Venmo.



Colorado Center for The Blind Youth Programs (Chaz Davis)

In September, we had a fantastic event in partnership with the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Department. It was an exciting day where blind youth and their siblings got up close and personal with horses from the mounted unit, as well as young, miniature horses from a nearby farm. Watching the kids read a short children's book to the horses was a fun way for youth to become more comfortable with reading Braille aloud.

October brought a unique opportunity for collaboration with a Boy Scout troop from Highlands Ranch. We organized an Outdoor Skills Building Day at our Center, where blind participants teamed up with the Scouts to learn valuable skills like tent building, knot tying, and making a controlled fire. It was inspiring to see everyone working together, and they even took time to pick up trash and clear debris from our property to make it more accessible for everyone. The camaraderie among the participants was encouraging to see, and it was a great example of community spirit.

We held our annual NFB of CO state convention at the end of October. Attendees enjoyed a sports and recreation day complete with a rock wall, axe throwing, learning about blind sailing, dragon boats, track and field, goalball, and much more. Increased exposure to various physical activities will hopefully promote a healthier and more active lifestyle.

In November, we hosted a baking event we affectionately called "Conquering the Kitchen." Participants from the Denver Metro and Colorado Springs areas gathered to prepare delicious pumpkin pie filling, blueberry, and cherry pies, and to peel and slice apples for apple pie. Family members joined in the fun, trying on learning shades to practice non-visual baking techniques. It was validating to hear one mother share how using a long white cane alongside her son gave her a new appreciation for his everyday experiences.

As the year wrapped up, we celebrated our annual December holiday party. It was a joyful gathering where sighted and blind attendees came together to make ornaments, solve creative clues in a scavenger hunt, enjoy various hot chocolate creations, and learn gift-wrapping skills. The sense of community and holiday spirit was on full display.

Looking ahead to January, I am thrilled about our upcoming skiing program with Ignite Adaptive Sports. We are also planning an exciting shark dissection event toward the end of the month, hoping to attract students from different school districts for a unique educational experience.

The traditional summer program will be from June 4-July 2. The goal is about 20 students over the four-week period. There will be a program for younger students in July.

The CCB offers roles models to all school-district learners. Contact Chaz for program information and the opportunity to learn more about the role models.

Colorado Instructional Materials Center (Jim Olson)

Statewide Count: The next statewide count day is Monday, January 6, 2025. This is a count of all learners with visual impairment, including blindness, from all early intervention agencies (ages birth-2) and administrative units (ages 3-21) in Colorado. Send questions to: cimregistrations@cldb.org

Federal Quota Census: The next federal quota census count, managed by the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) is Monday, January 6, 2025. This will drive funding for federal fiscal year 2026 (FY26) which will run from October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026.

The most common questions we are receiving in preparation for this year's counts are related to CIMC Parent Consent Forms and Federal Quota eligibility. More detailed information is available on our CIMC website pages of the www.cldb.colorado.gov website. As a reminder, the "CIMC Parent Consent Form" has a Part I and a Part II. You need Part I signed for every student on your statewide count. Part I is the parent giving your administrative unit/agency

permission to share their child’s personally identifiable student information (PII) with the CIMC, CSDB, and CDE. Part 2 is the parent giving your administrative unit/agency additional permission to also share their child’s PII with APH and the federal government for purposes of the federal quota census. You need Part II signed if you are including them in the federal quota census (even using the new IDEA eligibility category).

Eligibility Criteria for the Federal Quota Census: Best practice is to verify your student “Meets the Definition of Blindness” (MDB), as verified by a current (within 3 years) eye doctor report; or “Functions at the Definition of Blindness” (FDB), as verified by a current eye doctor report. If the eye doctor’s report does not explicitly verify acuities (to verify MDB) or specifically verify FDB, then you can request the eye doctor to sign the *optional* “CIMC MDB-FDB Form.” There is an optional box on the form the eye doctor may sign that says, “for eligibility into the annual federal quota census, this child meets or functions at the definition of blindness and no further verification of legal blindness is necessary until this student graduates.”

“IDEA” Eligibility Category: If you cannot verify MDB or FDB for your student, but your student has an active IEP on count day and your administrative unit has determined they qualify for an IEP based on visual impairment, including blindness, then you can include your student into the federal quota census as “IDEA” eligible.

Braille Challenge: Colorado hosts two Braille Challenge contests each year; one in the Metro Denver area in collaboration with the Colorado Center for the Blind (CCB) in Littleton, and one in the Southern region at the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind (CSDB). The Metro Denver Braille Challenge is scheduled for Friday, February 7, 2025, with an alternate date of Friday, February 28, 2025, in case of inclement weather. Metro Denver Contact: Danielle Steele, dsteale@csdb.or, (719) 578-2196. Check the Braille Challenge page of the CIMC website for updated information. The CSDB location is scheduled for Thursday, February 27, 2025. CSDB contact: Jamie Lugo, Principal, jlugo@csdb.org.

CSDB School for The Blind (Jamie Lugo)

School for the Blind Updates: CSDB celebrated White Cane Day on October 18th at Acacia Park. Some of the local school districts also participated and so did the School for the Deaf. The Bulldog and PRIDE bands performed. Students read original poems. Michael Stone was our guest speaker this year. We wore matching White Cane Day Shirts designed by one of our students. White Cane Day earrings and pottery made by the students were sold. White Cane Day themed art was also displayed. Jenny Wheeler from APH held an experience story workshop with students and staff. She also did some Monarch training with our math, science, and assistive technology teachers.

We hosted our 2nd Annual Spelling Bee on Tuesday, November 12th.

Campus Updates: CSDB hosted its first-ever Blind Homecoming Weekend/Goalball Tournament hosting the Montana School for the Blind and the New Mexico School for the Blind. Staff members and two of our school for the blind families represented CSDB at the Breakfast with Champions at the Olympic Paralympic Museum on Friday, November 15th. Post Secondary Preparation students are participating in off-campus work experiences at the Arc Thrift Store, Zach’s Place, and a neighboring childcare center. CSDB hosted its 3rd Annual Holiday Lighting Ceremony.

CSDB recently participated in a CDE monitoring visit and completed the Facilitated Assessment and IEP review process. The involved staff were invested in the discussions and there already has been subsequent trainings with staff.

Teacher Trainings: Teachers received a two-day intensive training on the Cadence Braille Display. CSDB recently purchased two sets of Cadence devices to be used in math, science, and technology classes. This device connects easily with cell phones.

Celebrations: Mitch Davila, produced Blind Sighted <https://www.pbs.org/video/blindness-and-autism-blind-sighted-a-lonely-highway-W99qMz>. Mitch’s film has been nominated for nationwide awards and is now available on PBS.

One student recently auditioned and was successfully selected in the Colorado Allstate Choir. This is the first student at CSDB (as far as we know) to be selected to attend the festival for two years in a row.

Open Positions: Elementary Literacy Teacher, Literacy Specialist/Coach, and School for the Blind Principal

Upcoming Events:

- Career Fair, May 9th. If you have any blind role models that would be willing to present in person or virtually, please contact Cheryl Austin caustin@csdb.or
- Braille Challenge at CSDB: February 27, 2025, back update, March 6, 2025.

Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind (CSDB) Outreach Services (Donna Keale)

The fall has come and gone! CSDB Outreach TVI/COMS had a busy couple of months to say the least. We are continuing to try to connect families together in their home neighborhoods as much as possible. We provided an outing to the Venetucci Pumpkin Farm, in Security, Colorado on a Saturday and had 6 families attend. The two dually certified Teachers of the Visually Impaired and Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists in Outreach provided services to 31 students in five school districts/BOCES plus early intervention services to 37 families with BVI infants/toddlers during October 2024. During the same time frame last year, October 2023, services were provided to 22 school age children and 23 families with BVI children under the age of three years old. To rephrase this, the two Outreach providers' combined caseloads increased from 45 families/students during October 2023 to 68 families/students during October 2024. We have reposted the TVI position and are currently looking for the right someone to join our team.

Donna is serving 31 families with infants and toddlers with blindness/visual impairment. There are two CSDB BVI Outreach consultants and the numbers for both infant/toddlers and school-based requests are high. The Outreach Program is considering summer activities. They would love to hear from the field on outreach activities.

CSDB's preschool also falls under CSDB's Outreach and Michelle Boyer, Preschool TVI is doing a great job serving the students who are attending. We are exploring the possibility of bringing back the Little Learners and Explorers (LLE) in 2025. This was a pilot program in 2023 for toddlers who are blind/visually impaired.

At the February Blindness/Low Vision Coalition meeting we are hoping that Jaclyn "Jac" Tyrcha, the new Outreach Director will join our meeting. Please bring your suggestions and request to the table. We will start planning for the new strategic plan in the spring and would love to have your input and ideas.

Discussion: Donna would like a list of resources for very young children with BVI to share with families. She knows about Wonder Baby, A Shared Vision, and Anchor Center's web pages. If you have suggestions, please reach out to her. Chloann talked about parent groups that are extremely specific to disability categories or particular conditions. For families who may have children with medical fragility, there are district home-based and online programs.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) (Michele Reed)

Staff Updates: Our current vacancies include a Field Instructor O&M/VRT for the Denver Metro area and a Field Instructor O&M/VRT for the western slope. The Assistive Technology Unit Supervisor is vacant. Audrey Wille retired last month, so we have a Rehabilitation Tech position open. The last vacancy is for the Business Enterprise Program Manager. All our vocational rehabilitation counselor positions are filled. Showe Trela continues to serve as the interim supervisor of the unit. Finally, Susan Emmerling has joined the Assistive Technology Team.

The Personal Adjustment Training Unit continues to provide training in the community. We continue to discuss and examine ways to provide comprehensive services to the people we serve that include remote training, in-person

training, and Zoom virtual group sessions (Reflections, Enrichment Hour, Women's Group, and two Braille Groups and a Men's Group).

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. DVR has joined the Blind Statewide Task Force Meeting organized by Tera Spangler. DVR can accept referrals for the youth program starting at the age of 15 to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services during the summer and school breaks.

Colorado Department of Education (Tanni Anthony)

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

- **Project Staff:** Tanni Anthony and Gina Herrera are Co-Directors on the grant project. Jessica Meisel is our Technical Assistance (TA) Specialists. Jessica provides onsite consultation and customized training to the educational teams of the children with deaf-blindness. She is also leading our training and support to school-based interveners. Cindy Colwell is the Family Specialist. Roberta Curtis is our program support assistant.
- **Technical Assistance:** To request FREE technical assistance for students with deaf-blindness, please contact Gina Herrera at Herrera_g@cde.state.co.us
- **Annual Deaf-Blind Child Count:** The December 1, 2024, Colorado Deaf-Blind Child Count forms have been disseminated to the field and should be returned to CDE through a secure online portal by February 14, 2025. The forms for each Colorado administrative unit, Anchor Center for Blind Children, and A Shared Vision will be sent to a designated contact who is a TVI. Please note that a child can be registered at any time in the calendar year. If you work with a learner with both vision and hearing loss, please be sure to work with Tanni to register the child. All learners identified as having combined vision and hearing loss are eligible for free technical assistance. This can be child-specific consultation and customized staff training.
- **Project Webpage:** The CDE DeafBlind webpage URL is <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/SD-DB.asp>
- **Project Trainings:** Tanni is getting close to sending registration information for three DB webinars and the summer institute.
- **O&M Foundation Books:** The project has funded the purchase of 25 hot-off-the-press Foundations of O&M books. They will be disseminated at the spring O&M Conference to AUs with full-time staff representing O&M services.
- **BVI State Funded Activities:** The CDE has a strong commitment to services and support to our students and the staff who serve them. We are pleased to offer professional learning and technical assistance to the special education field serving children who are blind/low vision or have CVI.
- **Braille Competency:** All TVIs who are new to the field are expected to demonstrate braille competency in their first year of employment in this role. If a TVI extends this date, the administrative unit of employment is at risk for a citation of noncompliance. A Practice Test is posted on the Visual Impairment, Including Blindness website. It includes practice multiple-choice items and braille samples. One recent change is a requirement that a TVI must have taken their university-level braille course or have evidence of another form of significant self-study before taking the CDE Braille Competency Test the first time. 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.
Thanks to Brenda Shepard and Nancy Cozart who met in November to review existing braille passages and prepare to introduce new passages to the CDE Braille Competency Test and the renewal modules.
- **CDE State Conference on Blindness/Low Vision / CVI:** This year's conference was held at the Lowy Conference Center on September 20-21. The topic was *Academic Excellence for Learners with CVI* with Matt Tietjen. Over 60 people were in attendance.
- **CDE/CSDB Regional Low Vision Evaluation Clinics:** We have a full return team with Dr. David Simpson and Dr. Kara Hanson as our optometrists, Jim Olson and Karin Hensel as our Low Vision Therapists, and Roberta Curtis as our State Low Vision Evaluation Clinic Coordinator. The site coordinators include Angela Sims for the Western Region,

Jim Olson for the Southern Region, Samantha Thuis for the Northern Region, and Roberta Curtis for the Metro Region.

We have enjoyed successful western, southern, and northern clinics. The final clinic will be held at the Anchor Center for Blind Children in February 2025. The great news has been solid attendance at the clinics, a good flow to the evaluations, and the top talent of our team. We appreciate the hosting sites. The not so good news is extremely late preclinic paperwork. This has put an undue burden on the team for their inability to fully prepare for the individualization of students seen at the clinic due to an inability to have the paperwork by the two-week-in-advance deadline. This will mean a hard-cut-off for the all clinics going forward. If the paperwork is not submitted by the deadline, we will not be able to schedule the student.

- **CDE O&M Seminar:** The Spring 2025 seminar is in the planning stages. Recommendations for topics / speakers should be shared with Tanni.
- **Listserves:** The CDE ESSU maintains two 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, which is being updated. 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.
- **Keeping in Touch Newsletter:** The August--September and October editions have been posted. Remaining editions include November - December 2024; January – February; March-April and May 2025. Please be sure to share the email messages with the link with parents and paras, 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.
- **Recruitment and Retention:** The good news is that many of the openings were filled over the summer and we have had additional personnel since the school year began. We have a new .5 FTE in Littleton and Danielle Burden has been busy with western slope contacts.

We continue to have openings Please share any expected vacancies with Tanni so we can be as proactive as possible with new recruits. Contract TVI and O&M staff are needed in several AUs. A Shared Vision and Anchor Center need more TVI / O&M Specialist support. Please keep Tanni in the loop on anticipated and real vacancies. If you want to be on the CDE list of contractors, please reach out to Tanni.

- **Sound Bites:** Sound Bites are monthly virtual training / dialogue sessions based on identified topics of needs. There have been three Sound Bites this school year featuring Dr. Penny Rosenblum, Dr. Tina Herzberg, Dr. Lauren, Lieberman, Ruth Childs, Dr. Tanni Anthony, and Elizabeth Webb. We will have three Sounds Bites in the remaining of this school year, in January, February, March, and April.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

CDE BVI Budget for 2025-26

The following activities have been funded:

- ⇒ Braille Competency Testing / Mentor Support
- ⇒ CDE O&M Seminar
- ⇒ CDE State Conference on BVI
- ⇒ CIMC Interagency Agreement
- ⇒ Blindness/Low Vision Coalition
- ⇒ Regional Low Vision Evaluation Clinics
- ⇒ Sound Bites (monthly virtual training events) (ECC follow-up, low vision, SDI, trauma)

DISCUSSION ITEMS

CVI Connect

Stephanie Steffer joined us to talk about CVIConnect, a federally-funded OSEP grant. They are in their fifth and final year. They offer a trainer-of-trainers model and have worked in seven states. Sara Noel from CSDB Outreach has been one of their trainees, as is Elise Darrow from the Anchor Center for the Blind. The program has 9 learning modules and three questionnaires. The selected participants have responsibilities to complete the modules and questionnaires and participate in a coaching. The involved student with CVI (the goal is to start with one learner) will receive an iPad to

collect data on how they are using their vision, specifically where their gaze is directed. The technology can be used from birth through 21 years. Stephanie would like to recruit interested CO participants, with the understanding of the time commitment for the project. There is room for 3-4 TVIs as the mentoring will need to be supported by either Sara Noel or Stephanie. The TVI's employer must be on board with study and Stephanie can assist with the required agreement paperwork. The goal will be to complete the Internal Review Board agreements with the interested agencies / AU by the end of the January and then the focus will be on completing the modules to be able to implement the technology with the teams. Tanni will send the project literature out to state.

Working with Virtual Staff

We are seeing more virtual TVIs, and to some extent, O&M Specialists, working in Colorado. It would be great to have more information about this role and what is needed to optimally support the virtual TVI's work with students.

Assignment: Tanni will pursue a speaker for our Spring Blindness /Low Vision Coalition meeting.

State Assessment – Braille Review

There will be two opportunities for braille reviews this school year for the Spring 2025 CMAS assessments. The first one occurred on December 3rd and attendees were from the CDE Assessment and Exceptional Student Services Unit (Tanni), Pearson Test Publishing, and the following field experts: Lisa Brocard, Kyle Berns, Michelle Chacon, and Alyshia Shelton. The December review is specific to CMAS Math tests. The January braille review will address CMAS Science and Social Studies tests.

Discussion: You can still request braille College Board tests. Do it in advance.

Specially Designed Instruction

Specially designed instruction goes beyond universal design for learning and differentiated instruction, the latter which are important for all students based on their individual learning styles. Specially designed instruction specifically targets and addresses the unique communication, learning, social emotional, behavioral, mobility, and transition needs that exist because of a student's disability. Specially designed instruction should be implemented in addition to, not in place of, universal design for learning, differentiated instruction, and/or high yield instructional strategies.

Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate, to the needs of a child eligible for special education services and supports, content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child that results from the child's disability, and to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards adopted by the State. As such, SDI is individualized to each student receiving special education services.

The design and delivery of SDI is the core of special education. SDI is the vehicle to ensure students with disabilities receive accessible, high-quality instruction and services that will result in progress toward academic and functional standards, graduation, and meaningful postsecondary outcomes.

Content - substance of the knowledge, skills and dispositions that is taught that is specific to the student with a disability; directly links to curriculum standards, and may be an underlying, prerequisite needed to meet the standards; answers **what** the student will learn through specially designed instruction.

- ⇒ ECC content that extends beyond the general education curriculum that is necessary for the student to access information.
- ⇒ Explicit instruction in braille codes
- ⇒ Explicit instruction in how to approach and decipher tactile graphics
- ⇒ Explicit instruction in the care and use of assistive technology (e.g., braille writer, braille note, screen readers, magnification tools)
- ⇒ Explicit instruction in organizational tools.
- ⇒ Explicit instruction in tactile symbols, sign language, or other communication symbols

- ⇒ Explicit instruction in orientation and mobility tools and strategies within the classroom, school campus, home neighborhood, and community
- ⇒ ECC content that extends beyond the general education curriculum on functional content that is affected by reduced incidental learning
 - ⇒ Explicit instruction on visual / nonverbal social communication norms and appropriate social skills
 - ⇒ Explicit instruction on self-care / independent living techniques
 - ⇒ Explicit instruction on understanding one's own visual impairment / other disabilities and self-determination and self-advocacy skills
 - ⇒ Explicit instruction on recreation and leisure activities / adapted physical education
 - ⇒ Explicit instruction on career exploration and job skills

Methodology: the instructional design of content using evidence-based practices matched to unique student needs resulting from the disability; answers **how** specially designed instruction is designed

- o Preteaching of vocabulary associated with academic / functional content
- o Preteaching concepts associated with academic/ functional content
- o Preteaching prerequisites of use of equipment, procedures associated with lessons
- o Explicit verbal description or audio description
- o Repeated instruction across people, materials and settings (generalization)
- o Modeling how to use specialized materials or assistive technology
- o Guided physical demonstration (working from behind student to feel needed actions)
- o Hand under hand guidance for instructional / functioning learning

Delivery: the instructional context or conditions, specific to the student with a disability, which results in access to, participation in, and progress in the curriculum. Answers **who, where, and when** the specially designed instruction will occur.

- o Classroom environment with a paraeducator, brailist, and/or a TVI
- o Separate setting selected due to the nature of the SDI needs of the student with a paraeducator, brailist, and/or a TVI.
- o Before or after school lessons
- o Evening O&M lessons to address poor night vision.
- o Instructional group size (individual, small group)

Next Virtual Meeting Dates:

February 18, 2025

Thanks for all of the wonderful memories and accomplishments of 2024!





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Braille Competency News



- ◆ Congratulations to **Laura King, Gable Meade,** and **Nancy Barron** for earning their initial CDE Braille Competency Certificates! Lauren is a brailist working with Kaitlin Lombardi, Gable is a brailist employed by Denver Public School District, and Nancy is a TVI with CSDB. Also congratulations to **Jennifer Holt** from CSDB for earning her CDE Renewal Certificate. Hats off to **Nancy Bannon, Julia Hutchison, Michael Wright, Jennifer Holt, Autumn Odette,** and **Morgan Harrison** for completing braille renewal clock hours.
- ◆ Thanks to proctors **Chris Maynard, Brenda Shepard, Nancy Cozart,** and **Julie Wetzstein** for recent proctoring and mentor work. Thanks to Brenda and Nancy for working to update the CDE Braille Test documents. The plan is to post updated items on the CDE Blindness/Low Vision pages by December.

Professional Development/ Activities

- The NFB of Colorado held their annual conference in late October. Updates were given by **Tanni Anthony, Jamie Lugo,** and **Tara Spangler** on Colorado early intervention and school based services for children and youth with blindness/low vision, or deaf-blindness.
- Thank you to **Dr. Lauren Leiberman** and **Ruth Childs** for their co-presentation on *Stand Up, Speak Up: Infusing Self Advocacy into PE and Health Education*. Thanks to those who shared out to help solidify examples of student self-advocacy. Self determination is such an important part of our Expanded Core Curriculum and this certainly includes learners understanding their diagnosis, functional implications, and access needs.
- Thanks to **Dr. Tanni Anthony** and **Elizabeth Webb** for their co-presentation on Meaningful and Measurable IEP Goals. They presented at the December 11 Sound Bites Sessions.

Applause

- Thanks to everyone who did White Cane Day with their students / schools. CSDB had a great turn out in Acacia Park! So thrilling to hear about these celebrations!
- A huge thank you to **Kyle Berns, Lisa Brocard, Michelle Chacon,** and **Alyshia Shelton** for their expertise and commitment to accessibility during their work at the December 3 CMAS braille-format Math Test review on December 3rd. Tanni was also in attendance, and it was wonderful to see the commitment of the CDE Assessment Unit, Pearson Test Publishing, and our CO TVI team. Each item of the grade-level math tests was carefully reviewed for the accuracy of the braille narrative, tactile graphics, and transcriber notes. Colorado proud!

Personnel

- ◆ **Heather Burkhardt** is a new TVI to Littleton Public Schools. She has worked in Oregon, Florida, Ohio, North Carolina, and Michigan both as a TVI and outreach consultant. Heather has also worked as an itinerant teacher and at the state school for the blind. She shares that she is happy to be in Colorado and at LPS!
- ◆ Congratulations and thank you to **Julie Deden** for her 25th years of service as the Director of the Colorado Center for the Blind.



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Programs / Personnel News

Bridges to Life Program at CSDB

By Julie Harrison

In the past, our department has been known as the Employability Center or the "EC" department. Last year, it was decided that our program would be called "Bridges to Life Transition Program or "BtL." Julie Harrison (TSVI) is the coordinator of the program. The primary goals of the Bridges to Life Transition Program are to provide community-based work experiences, facilitate post-secondary training opportunities, and to increase independent living skills. We provide a variety of classes across different Expanded Core Curriculum areas, and our residential program further supports the development of these essential skills. For more information about the program, please contact Julie Harrison at jharrison@csdb.org.

CSDB Partners, and Friends,

It is with great sadness that I am writing to inform you all that I am resigning from my position as the Principal of the School for the Blind, effective January 3, 2025. This decision was not made lightly, as my time at CSDB has been incredibly meaningful and rewarding. Working with the students, families, blind community/stakeholders and such a passionate team of educators and staff has been an absolute honor. I have immense pride in the work we've accomplished together. You have all taught me so much and I will be forever grateful.

My family is going through a difficult time and after careful reflection, I feel that it is the right time for me to step down and focus on us. I am confident that the School for the Blind will continue to thrive and evolve, and I have full faith in this team to continue the important work we've started. I am committed to ensuring a smooth transition and will do everything I can to support my successor and the school's leadership during this time.

After the winter break, Cheryl Austin (Dean of Students in the School for the Blind) will be the interim principal as the superintendent takes a step back to analyze the current structure of services for blind students, to determine what positions to post and how to proceed. I am very grateful for Cheryl and her willingness to serve as interim. The School for the Blind staff is strong and will continue to thrive under Cheryl's leadership. If you would like to contact Cheryl, her email address is caustin@csdb.org.

I will still be working with the blind students and families in the new year. I am very happy to share my new contact information upon request.

Sincerely,

Jamie Lugo



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