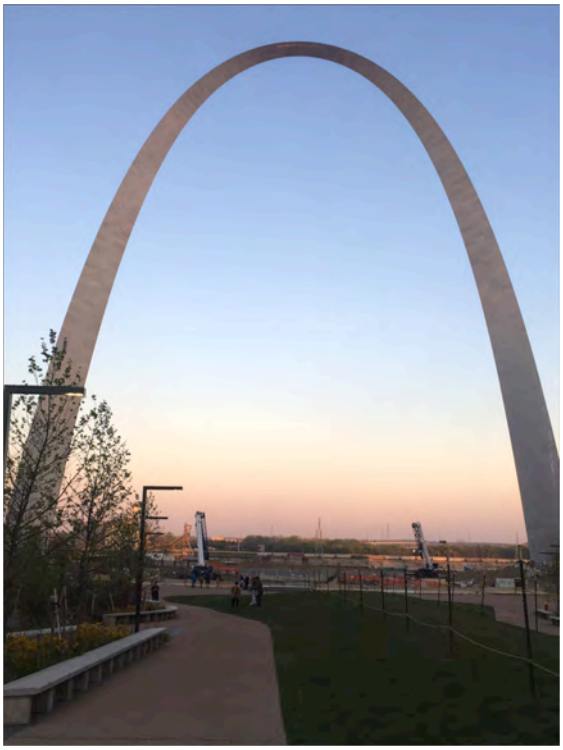
Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly

Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness



2016 Convention Issue

Volume 61 • Number 2 • 2016

The Voice and Vision of Special Education

Council for Exceptional Children
The voice and vision of special education

Contents

This is a publication of the Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Visual Impairments and DeafBlindness (CEC-DVIDB). Advertisements included in this issue are not endorsements of products or services, and individual views of authors are not necessarily the official position of CEC and/or DVIDB.

Cover Photo

Cover photo is of the St. Louis arch. St. Louis, Missouri was the home of CEC's 2016 International Convention. Photograph courtesy of Stephanie Barrows.

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Message from the Editor

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Image 1: Karen Koehler, Kathleen Farrand, and Cary Saxton before a presentation at CEC's 2016 Convention.

I am thrilled to share with you the Spring 2016 Convention Highlights Issue highlighting this year's international convention that was held in St. Louis, Missouri. The issue begins with articles on our

Division's outstanding award winners. The following five articles are summaries from a variety of conference presentations on visual impairments and/or deafblindness. Then, we have articles from first time student presenters from Augustana University. The school for the blind feature article highlights the Missouri School for the Blind. The remaining three articles include two committee reports from this year's convention and a position paper on the Expanded Core Curriculum.

Our Division had such a large and impactful presence at this year's convention that some of the articles from convention will be included in the Summer issue. The Summer issue will include two articles by student presenters from Kutztown University. The issue will also feature a focus article by Amy Parker and Nicole Johnson highlighting the Interveners Forum. I hope you enjoy the amazing contributions made to the field of visual impairments and deafblindness by our wonderful members.

President's Message

Tiffany Wild, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor,
The Ohio State University,
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I apologize for missing the convention this year. At the time of the convention I was very pregnant and unable to travel away from Central Ohio. We tried to SKYPE into the restaurant but the internet was not working. We then tried to put me on speaker phone and that too was not working so alas we went to plan C and Diane took over for me.

Since I was unable to deliver my President's Report I wanted to take the opportunity to deliver that report as my President's

Message for this issue.

First I want to start with some Thank you messages. Thank you to all our sponsors. Your support helped to make our division's activities possible this year.

I want to thank Nicole Johnson and Amy Parker for their work on the convention this year. They worked to obtain sponsors for the social and the teacher's forum meeting. They also secured the off-site location for the social. Both ladies worked hard to keep our members informed of the Division's activities during the convention on social media. I enjoyed seeing everything from Ohio.

I also want to thank Karen Koehler. She had a carload of materials that she drove from Ohio. She brought our polo shirts for delivery and sale, art materials from the students from the Ohio State School for the Blind to enhance our booth, treats for the teacher's forum, and our plaques for the awards. Every time I turned around and needed a delivery Karen never hesitated to help

out.

Thank you to Nicole Johnson and her students from Kuztown University. They provided us with handouts for the booth and manned the booth many times throughout the convention. Thank you ladies!

Thank you to Danene Fast for helping secure our ACVREP application and materials.

Thanks to Diane for her mentorship in preparing me as president and for her help with filling in at the business meeting. I truly appreciate it. She became my confidant and rock during convention.

Thank you to our committee members. As I read over reports from the Committees I could not help but be humbled at the amount of time and effort that went into making our division so great.

Last but not least I want to thank our members for their

continued support of our division.

I also want to highlight some things that have impacted our division this year. I have been working to ensure that some mandates of CEC that we learned about last summer at the leadership meeting are met. These include obtaining insurance for our division to protect our board and our members during meetings, creating new policy documents required by all nonprofits, and acquiring our own application with ACVREP. We have a few other mandates to take care of and that work will continue this summer and into early fall.

This year our division's journal has been on time all year. I am very proud of our division's publication of the *Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly*. Thank you Katie Farrand for a great publication!

A major project that our division will be completing this year is working toward the writing of our professional standards for

teachers of students with visual impairments. This committee is headed by Deborah Hatton. She is assisted by Holly Lawson and Sandy Lewis. Please be on the lookout for information from this committee in upcoming issues as we work to make this process as transparent as possible. This committee will also be working with community partners and many of you to make sure that our new standards are a true reflection of the expertise and needs of our field.

We are always looking for new members for our committees. Please let me know if you are interested in serving on any of our many committees. Many workers make for light work. Your input into the organization is valued.

Again thank you for your understanding of my absence. I was there with you in spirit and hope all enjoyed the many wonderful presentations we had planned this year, many of which are highlighted in this issue.

Thank you to our sponsors:

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NCDB National Center on Deaf-Blindness

AFB American Foundation for the Blind — Expanding possibilities for people with vision loss

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Philip J. Rock Center & School — Together for Independence

Illinois State University — Illinois' first public university

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Humanware — see things. differently.

Portland State University

Virginia M. Sowell
Student of the Year Award

Jessica Kolvites

Kutztown University

Council for Exceptional Children

Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness

Presents 2016 Awards

At International Conference in St. Louis, Mo.

The council for Exceptional Children Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness is proud to present the *Virginia M. Sowell Student of the Year Award* to Jessica Kolvites at the Council

for Exceptional Children Convention and Expo in St. Louis, Mo. on April 14, 2016.

The *Virginia M. Sowell Student of the Year Award* recognizes a student who demonstrates a commitment to the education and/or rehabilitation of individuals with visual impairments and deafblindness. The award was named after Dr. Virginia Sowell whose lifetime contributions to the profession impacted the lives of numerous educators and countless children and adults with visual impairments and deafblindness

Jessica is currently a senior at Kutztown University and will receive her degree in May 2016 in the area of VI and Elementary Education. Jessica is dedicated to the field of Visual Impairments and is always looking for ways to learn and grow as a future teacher of students with visual impairments.

Dissertation of the Year

Dr. Ellen Bowman

University of Alabama at Birmingham

Council for Exceptional Children

Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness

Presents 2016 Awards

At International Conference in St. Louis, Mo.

The Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness (DVIDB) is proud to present the *Dissertation of the Year Award* to Dr. Ellen Bowman at the Council for Exceptional Children Convention and Expo in St. Louis, Mo. on April 14, 2016. Dr. Bowman recently completed her Doctorate of

Philosophy in Vision Science at the University of Alabama at Birmingham in December 2015.

The *Dissertation of the Year Award* is presented to a DVIDB member who makes a significant contribution to the field through extensive study and research. Dr. Bowman's dissertation, "*Transferring virtual reality training to real world settings in individuals with low vision and dual-sensory impairments"* determined if individuals with severely impaired vision could learn useful road safety skills in Virtual Reality (VR) and could transfer these skills to real streets. To achieve this goal, one set of O&M skills, using the near lane parallel traffic surge to decide the best timing for crossing a signal controlled street, was selected to study. Twelve participants with low vision were recruited for the study and randomly assigned to learn the O&M still in either a VR street environment or a real street environment. Both groups showed a significant increase in their safety score after training. A repeated

measure ANOVA showed significant training effect but no significant group effect and no significant interaction between training and group. This study demonstrated that individuals with severely impaired vision can learn road safety skills in a virtual environment and transfer these skills to a real street environment.

Teacher of the Year Award

Rachel Schles

Fairfax County Public School System

Council for Exceptional Children

Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness

Presents 2016 Awards

At International Conference in St. Louis, Mo.

The Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness (DVIDB) is proud to present the *Teacher of the Year Award* to Ms. Rachel Schles at the Council for Exceptional Children and Expo in St. Louis, Mo. on April 14, 2016. Ms. Schles teaches in the Fairfax County Public School System in Virginia and has worked with students of all ages, including those

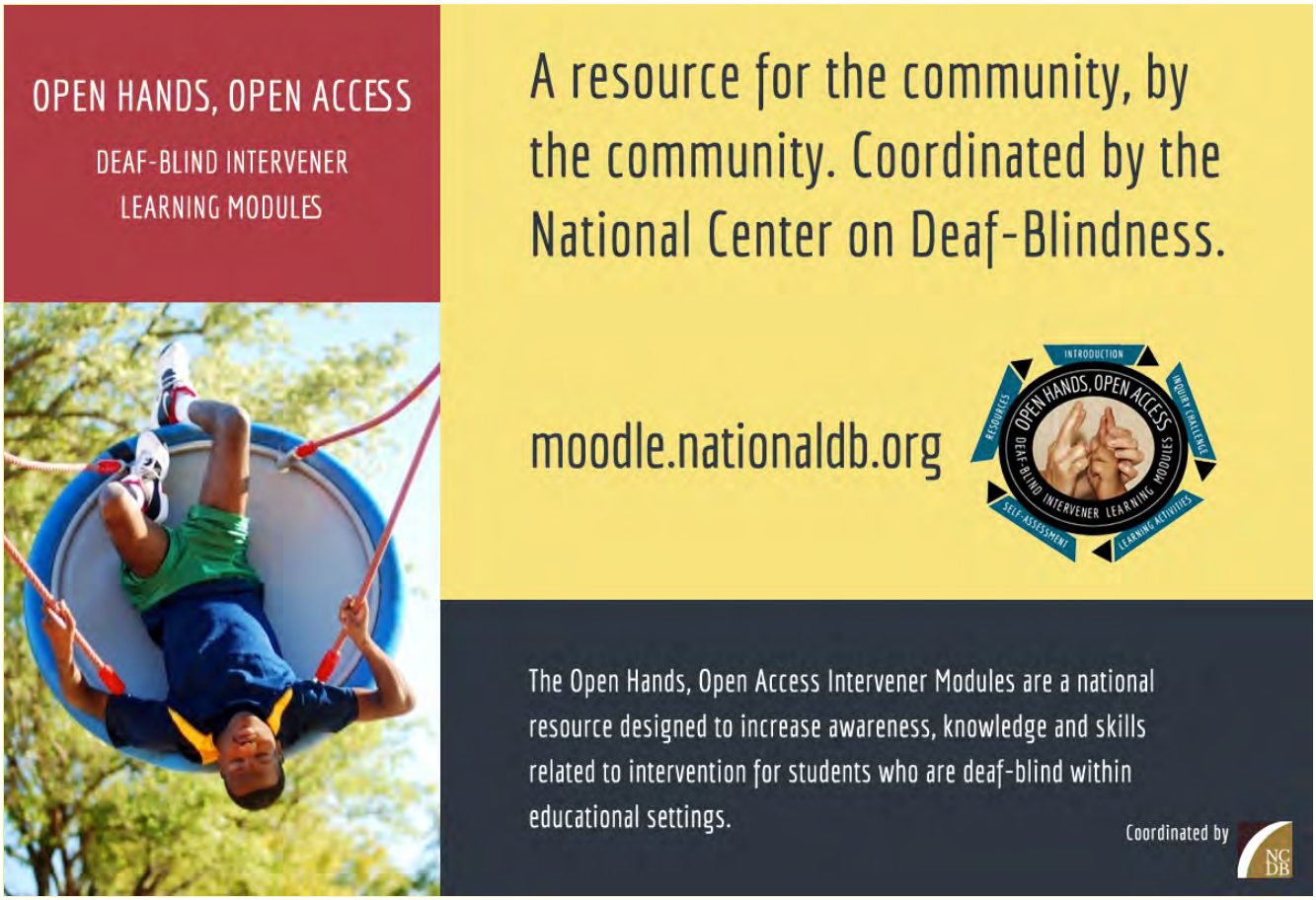
with low vision, blindness, and disabilities in addition to their visual impairment.

The *Teacher of the Year Award* recognizes a person who is exceptionally dedicated, knowledgeable and a skilled certified Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments, deafblind or COMS, in any state approved or accredited day or specialized school, who serves students who are VI and/or DB ages birth through 21, with or without additional disabilities. It is the highest award presented to education professionals within the Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness.

In her nomination documents, Ms. Schles is described as a teacher who plans well-structured, creative lessons and takes the initiative to learn to use new programs and devices so she can teach them with confidence. Earlier this year, she published an article about her use of the Individualized Meaning-centered Approach to Braille Literacy Education (I-M-ABLE) in the *Journal of*

Visual Impairment and Blindness (January-February, 2015).

Ms. Schles communicates high expectations to each of her students, particularly in the area of self-determination. Over the past several years, she has developed a project-based learning model to structure a comprehensive IEP goal related to the Expanded Core Curriculum. Students are responsible for the completion of 12 or more items ranging from a class presentation about their visual impairment to a written analysis of the pros and cons of various accommodations. Each item is evaluated using a rubric, and the student's work becomes part of a portfolio, which is used for documentation. Ms. Schles has created training materials and shared her process with other vision specialists. She also presented on this topic at the 2015 Virginia AER conference and will speak about it again next month at the Getting in Touch with Literacy Conference in Albuquerque.



One of the most impressive components of Ms. Schles' instruction is that she talks with students about their interests and uses print rich materials and high interest materials to promote literacy. Whether the student is learning with braille or large print, she takes data and uses it in conjunction with student interest to foster a love of reading. This is a skill that is tough, even for seasoned or veteran teachers, but she makes it look effortless.

Exemplary Advocate Award

Teresa Lacy

Director of the Alabama Instructional Resource Center

Talladega, Alabama

Council for Exceptional Children

Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness

Presents 2016 Awards

At International Conference in St. Louis, Mo.

The Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness (DVIDB) is proud to present the *Exemplary Advocate Award* to Ms. Teresa Lacy at the Council for Exceptional Children Convention and Expo in St. Louis, Mo. on April 14, 2016. The *Exemplary Advocate Award* honors an individual

whose personal and professional activities have significantly promoted and improved quality of life for people with visual impairments and deafblindness.

Ms. Lacy serves as the Director of the Alabama Instructional Resource Center (AIRCB). The AIRCB is a statewide provider of special media materials for visually impaired students in local education agencies and rehabilitation programs. The center has emerged as a full production facility with specialized equipment to produce braille, enlarge textbooks in color and black and white, and duplicate recorded textbooks. The center has two Nemeth Code certified braillist on staff who can produce high level math and science textbooks in braille as well as tactile graphics. The primary focus is getting large print and braille textbooks into the hands of students served by the AIRCB at the same time as their sighted peers.

The AIRCB has also focused its fiscal resources by

purchasing assistive technology for students, and continues to search for innovative programming that will enrich the educational experience of students in Alabama through new and cutting edge technology. However, the hand of the AIRCB does not stop there. The AIRCB continues to support braille literacy worldwide by sending braille textbooks and novels to agencies and schools serving the blind in Tanzania, Ireland, Bangladesh, New Zealand, and South Africa. Due to this humanitarian effort, blind children have access to expensive braille materials and supplies that are not readily available to them due to lack of funding.

Ms. Lacy is continually challenging the ways in which she serves the students and patrons. She is always working to make learning both joyous and rigorous for all students. She is always involved in creative endeavors and is currently working with her peers to improve the quality of teaching and services for the visually impaired.

Distinguished Service Award

Dr. Alana Zambone

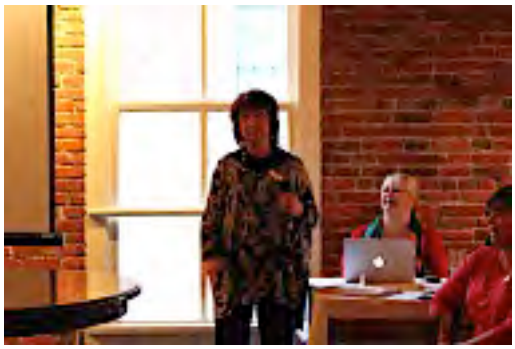
Eastern Carolina University

Council for Exceptional Children

Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness

Presents 2016 Awards

At International Conference in St. Louis, Mo.



The Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness (DVIDB) is proud to present the *Distinguished Service Award* to Dr. Alana Zambone at the Council for Exceptional Children Convention and Expo in St. Louis, Mo. on April 14, 2016. Dr. Zambone is the Interim Associate Dean for Grants and Funded Research at Eastern Carolina University. She

is responsible for mentoring and supporting faculty in proposal development; she develops and monitors college policies and procedures for grants and research and supervises the financial management of externally funded projects. This role is in addition to her responsibilities to candidates in the program in visual impairments and deafblindness.

The *Distinguished Service Award* is presented to a DVIDB member who provides exemplary leadership and commitment to the field through service, education, and research. Dr. Zambone received this prestigious award because she is the epitome of someone who has dedicated many years of service to the field of blindness and visual impairment and deaf-blindness in a myriad of ways. Dr. Zambone has provided direct service to learners with blindness, visual impairments and deafblindness; she has taught candidates on undergraduate and graduate levels; and she has been widely sought out as a consultant, specifically to help Hilton-

Perkins develop training programs internationally, particularly in underdeveloped countries.

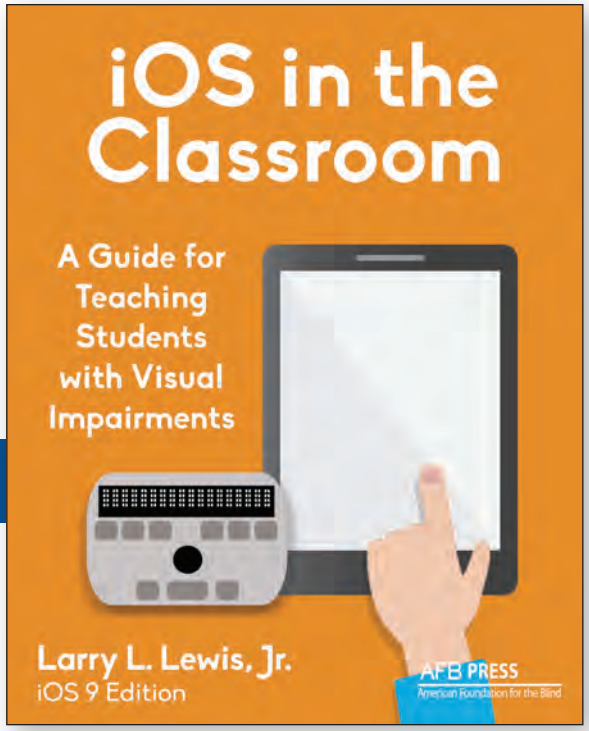
Dr. Zambone's service to the Division on Visual Impairment and Deafblindness and Council for Exceptional Children has been exemplary. She has served on various committees and as a Board Member of the organization for many years. Of particular significance are the leadership roles she played in the development and approval of the CEC-NCATE Deaf-Blind Knowledge and Skills Set for Teacher Educators and the approved Knowledge and Skill Set for Paraeducators who are Interveners for Individuals with Deafblindness. Dr. Zambone was the individual who volunteered to prepare the literature evidence for the Deafblind competencies for the DVI Knowledge and Skills Committee. The impact of these contributions is immense.

iOS in the Classroom

A Guide for Teaching Students with Visual Impairments

iOS 9 Edition

By Larry L. Lewis, Jr.



iOS in the Classroom: A Guide for Teaching Students with Visual Impairments is a fully illustrated, step-by-step guide to teaching the use of the iPad running iOS 9. The book explores the extensive accessibility options available, where to find them, and how to configure them.

iOS in the Classroom is geared to allowing students with visual impairments to use the iPad to complete the same classroom tasks as their peers. It covers a variety of tasks and features including:

- Getting acquainted with VoiceOver and Zoom
- Using external keyboards and refreshable braille displays
- Understanding touch screen gestures and braille chord commands
- Finding and managing content in iTunes, the App Store, iCloud, and other file sharing apps
- Using the iPad for online activities including internet browsing, e-mail, and instant messaging
- Utilizing specific apps

This resource provides teachers with helpful, easy-to-understand iOS technology instructions, allowing them to support their students in learning, and ensuring success in the classroom.

Available in print, e-book, and online subscription.

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Including Students Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision in English Language Proficiency Assessments

Laurene Christensen, National Center on Educational Outcomes, Research Associate, chri1010@umn.edu,

Vitaliy Shyyan, National Center on Educational Outcomes, Research Associate, shyya001@umn.edu, and

Cathryn Still, Council of Chief State School Officers, Program Director, ELPA21, Cat.still@ccsso.org

English language proficiency assessments are used for a variety of purposes in the K-12 setting, including determining placement, informing instruction, and determining exit of English language development services for English learners (ELs). Traditionally, these assessments have been developed to assess English development in four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Most recently, new assessments such as the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21) consortium have developed these assessments on technology-based platforms.

For ELs who are blind or have low vision, there have been a number of challenges related to accessing these assessments. For example, many items, including reading passages, may not be accessible to those ELs who read braille. Other items are heavily picture-dependent, such as an item that asks students to compare two pictures. Often graphic elements in such items are too complex and detailed to be accurately rendered in tactile graphics. In other cases, items for sighted ELs rely on animation, which poses accessibility challenges for those ELs who are blind or have low vision.

Process Used to Develop Accessible Test Forms

ELPA21 has been committed to the development of an accessible assessment for all students from its inception. The general test form was planned to be amenable to accessibility features and accommodations, and a team of experts and state partners worked together closely to develop appropriate

accessibility policies so that the general ELPA21 assessment could be as universally designed as possible.

Test developers recognized that some items would not be accessible to students who are blind or have low vision. These item types were identified at the item development phase. In considering the needs of students who are blind or have low vision, all test items were categorized as three different types: 1) items that are accessible to all students; 2) items that could be brailed; 3) items that were not accessible nor could be brailed. These items were identified as needing a “twin,” an accessible item that was aligned with the same standards and measured the same construct as the original item. These twinned items were developed using manipulatives, braille tiles, and assistive technology familiar to students who are blind or have low vision.

The twinned items were reviewed by a panel of experts which included teachers of ELs who are blind, an expert in braille literacy

who is blind, and an expert in assessment who has low vision. Some items were excluded from the assessment based on the review. Other items were revised based on reviewer feedback. The reviewers often addressed test logistics, such as ensuring that manipulatives presented to the student were contained on a tray; concerns related to graphics in the original test items, to ensure equitable access; as well as suggestions on the appropriateness of specific manipulatives to address sensory sensitivities among some students. Directions for administration were carefully scripted to ensure guidance was clear for both administrators and test takers, and the manipulatives were clearly packaged and labeled to minimize distractions during the test.

This resulted in a final test form that includes items in braille, items that use realia as manipulatives, and items that use braille tiles. The test form for students who are blind or have low vision was implemented during the Spring 2016 operational assessment

window in the ELPA21 states.

Next Steps

ELPA21 is currently in the process of conducting cognitive labs with students who use the test form for students who are blind or have low vision to gather more information about the students' overall experiences with this test form.

Early Intervention and Visual Impairments: A Prepared Workforce

Mindy Ely, MS Ed., Project Coordinator, EL VISTA Personnel Development Grant, msely@ilstuu.edu, and

Maribeth Lartz, Ph.D., Professor, Deaf/Hard of Hearing Teacher Preparation Program, Illinois State University, mnlartz@ilstu.edu

Children with visual impairments or deafblindness can experience delays in a variety of developmental areas (Chen, 2014; Ferrell, 2011). Early intervention services provided through Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are available to infants and toddlers and their families as a means to mediate the risk of developmental delays when a visual impairment is present.

Erickson, Lee, & von Schrader (2011) estimate the prevalence of visual impairments to be approximately 0.3% in young children. The Illinois Department of Public Health reported a 2013 birth rate of 156,918 (Illinois Department of Public Health, 2016). Assuming

similar birthrates over a three-year period, the Illinois Early Intervention system could anticipate 1,410 children in need of services from a professional trained in visual impairments. Yet, in recent years, the Illinois Early Intervention system has had less than 25 Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) and 4 Orientation and Mobility Specialists (O&M) credentialed to provide part C services.

Infants and toddlers learn differently than older children. In fact, recommended practices in early childhood (2014) call for service provision in natural settings, through parent-child relationships, and with parent-identified outcomes. This approach is fundamentally different than school-based services that are driven by educational need and adverse educational effects. As a result, professionals working with infants and toddlers must be trained to engage in practices that meet the needs of the child and family. In a white paper regarding family-centered practices, Hatton et al. (2003) outline the importance of the application of early childhood

practices by TVIs or O&Ms who work with this population. In this manuscript, TVIs and O&Ms who work with infants and toddlers will be referred to as early intervention visual impairment (EIVI) professionals.

TVIs and O&Ms are trained to meet the needs of a broad age group. Some personnel preparation programs include content specific to infants and toddlers, while others do not. Anthony (2014) cautions that curriculum designed to address broad age-ranges may fail to prepare professionals to meet the specialized needs of young children and their families.

Given the lack of EIVI professionals and the need for high quality and specialized training, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), awarded personnel development monies to Illinois State University to design and implement a graduate training program for EIVI professionals. The 5-year grant entitled *Early Learning Visual Impairment Services Training and Advancement*

(*EL VISTA*™) will serve as a model program to inform training efforts. Three critical components are described including design, content, and practicum.

Design

The *EL VISTA*™ program was modeled after an earlier OSEP-funded personnel development project awarded to Illinois State University—AIM To Be Ahead™(AIM). AIM provides training to teachers of the deaf, speech-language pathologists and audiologists to provide effective services to infants and toddlers with hearing loss and their families through the Part C Early Intervention system. Both AIM and *EL VISTA*™ were designed so that trainees could complete the training program while working full-time in an educational setting.

The *EL VISTA*™ program was not designed to pull TVIs and O&Ms out of their teaching jobs and into early intervention. Rather, by increasing the number of EIVI providers, it is hoped that a TVI or

O&M could carry a caseload including local children in need of early intervention services in addition to the school-aged caseload that they are already serving. This model would decrease family anxiety related to transitioning from early intervention to school-aged services by providing continuity of providers through transition from Part C to Part B services.

EL VISTA™ includes a year-long, five-course sequence. Trainees complete two intensive summer courses, followed by 9-months of practicum experiences, and a final summer that includes two additional courses. The courses include master's-level content that is rich in early childhood philosophy and recommended practices applied through the perspective of visual impairments. Practicum experiences allow trainees to observe professionals in practice, while availing opportunities for personal application and reflection of learned theory.

Content

The course topics include assessment, collaboration with families, development and intervention strategies, and working with children with multiple impairments including deafblindness. Course content is steeped in research and recommended practice from the fields of visual impairment, deafblindness, and early childhood. Each course topic offers an opportunity to challenge trainees to consider early childhood recommended practices.

Collaborating with Families. The basic tenets of family-centered practices are outlined in the content for this course. Since TVIs and O&Ms come to the *EL VISTA*™ program with experience in a school environment, learning to collaborate with families in a manner that is family-centered requires a challenging paradigm shift.

In stark contrast to the teacher-directed learning based on IEP team priorities typically found in K-12 schools, early intervention principles empower the family to set priorities and guide their child's

learning. Pletcher and Younggren (2013) outline the five key foundations of early intervention, including family-centered and relationship-based practices, natural environments, child learning, adult learning, and quality team practices. These concepts echo the practices described in the white paper entitled *Family-Centered Practices for Infants and Toddlers with Visual Impairments* (Hatton et al., 2003). Family-centered philosophy is put into practice through study of the *Agreed Upon Practices for Providing Early Intervention Services in a Natural Environment* (Workgroup on Principles and Practices in Natural Environments, 2008). This document provides a foundation for understanding what home-based intervention should look like when aligned to family-centered practices including a) building trust and rapport, b) session planning with parents, c) implementation of the plan alongside parents d) reflection and adaptation with parents during the implementation, and e) reflection and adaptation with parents after the implementation.

Assessment. In the assessment course, trainees are introduced to specific assessment tools appropriate for the early developmental needs of young children. EIVI trainees are instructed on global assessment tools, functional vision assessments, and orientation and mobility assessments especially designed for young children. Since EIVI professionals often serve children with multiple impairments, a portion of the course content is specifically directed at assessment of children with multiple impairments, deafblindness, and/or brain-related visual impairments. In addition, trainees are introduced to the Communication Matrix (Rowland, 2016).

Development and Intervention Strategies. This course has two primary objectives. First, trainees receive an in-depth study of early child development specifically related to visual impairment and its potential impact on development. Course textbooks include *Developmental Guidelines for Infants with Visual Impairments: A Guidebook for Early Intervention* (Lueck, Chen, Kekelis, &

Hartmann, 2008) and *Reach Out and Teach: Helping Your Child Who is Visually Impaired Learn and Grow* (Ferrell, 2011). EIVI professionals must have a comprehensive understanding of early child development with the ability to recognize next steps in development across domains. Such professional knowledge grows with time and experience. In this introductory course, trainees cultivate a deep base for future growth. In addition, access to resources provide supports that can be called upon as needed. Toward that end, we have recently introduced a new website designed specifically for EIVI professionals. This site will become more robust over time with the addition of articles and content to help professionals perfect their craft. The website can be found at www.eiviprofessionals.com.

The second course objective is to help trainees learn recommended practices for implementing the foundational principles of early childhood intervention. Trainees learn the

research-based model called *Parent Interacting with Infant* (PIWI). This model, developed by Tweety Yates and Jeanette McCollum (Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, n.d.), emphasizes development of the parent-infant relationship. Interventionists support parents as parents work with their child to implement parent-identified priorities. In this way, parents gain the confidence, knowledge and skills to be the primary teacher of their infant. Given the school-based experience of EIVI trainees, this approach requires a significant shift in practice. Much discussion, observation, and practice is required to gain competence in implementing this family-centered model of intervention.

Working with Children with Multiple Impairments including Deafblindness. The primary goal of this course is to teach specialized knowledge and skills needed to work effectively with children who have multiple disabilities and their families. Several common diagnoses are highlighted throughout the course including

deafblindness, cerebral palsy, cortical visual impairment, cerebral visual impairment, intellectual disability, autism, and significant disabilities. The characteristics of each diagnosis and the impact on sensory and developmental needs, positioning, assessment, assistive technology needs, and team collaboration are discussed. Trainees are challenged to consider combinations of different diagnoses and plan for the resulting developmental needs.

In order to work effectively with infants and toddlers with multiple disabilities, therapists must become knowledgeable about the daily challenges that families face as they juggle multiple medical and developmental appointments, lack of sleep, feeding issues, etc. In light of family-centered philosophy, trainees are encouraged to consider their responsibility to offer support and flexibility to families living in environments that can be both unpredictable and stressful.

Practicum

Practicum is an essential piece of the *EL VISTA*™ model. Research supports the effectiveness of a mentor relationship with hands-on practice as a means to promote development of knowledge and skills in early intervention providers (Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 2011). Trainees in the program are paired with EIVI professionals currently working in the field. The trainees accompany their mentor on five separate visits with one "case study" family. During the visits, the trainee is required to complete a family interview, assessment, and three separate interventions. Trainees submit personal reflections about each session including self-identification of strengths and areas for improvement. Formative and summative feedback is provided at several junctures throughout the practicum-year, such as a) therapy intervention plan evaluations, b) field mentor and university supervisor evaluations, c) pre/post student surveys, d) practicum family evaluations, and e) video review of practicum sessions.

In addition to completing a case study, trainees also complete at least seven observations of additional home-based early intervention sessions with a variety of providers (e.g. occupational therapist, physical therapist, etc.). Trainees reflect on these experiences and compare their observations to the guidelines suggested in the *Agreed Upon Practices for Providing Early Intervention Services in Natural Environments* (Workgroup on Principles and Practices in Natural Environments, 2008). .

Conclusion

The *EL VISTA*™ program provides avenues to increase the quality of services being provided to families. The first cohort of *EL VISTA*™ trainees will complete the program well prepared to return to their local community to serve families. Through the mentor relationship, trainees are meeting providers and establishing a network that will provide support once they are out in the field. Trainees are establishing professional development circles with

fellow trainees in common geographic areas. They are excited about the interactive *EL VISTA*™ website that will provide an additional platform for a supportive community of practice. Trainees are beginning to understand the benefits to family-centered practices, as evidenced by the changes in their written reflections. Several have noted the impact to parent follow-through when a parent is not engaged in the intervention session. The trainees are becoming more and more aware of the practices that can be put into place to increase parent involvement and foster collaborative partnerships between parents and professionals.

In addition to the impact of the *EL VISTA*™ program on the quality of services available in early intervention in the state, changes are also being made regarding the quantity of trained providers. When *EL VISTA*™ began in September 2015, there were only 4 O&Ms working in the Illinois Early Intervention system. The class that will complete the program this summer consists of 2

O&Ms, 3 dual-certified, and 5 TVIs. Upon becoming credentialed to work in the Illinois early intervention system, the number of O&Ms will increase from 4 to 9 providers, representing more than a 100% increase in providers. The number of TVIs working in early intervention will increase by 33%, from 24 to 32. Through these additional providers, increasing numbers of young children with visual impairments in Illinois will receive quality early intervention services.

Ultimately, the goal of the *EL VISTA*™ program is to achieve an adequately-staffed and highly-qualified early intervention workforce. The OSEP-funded *EL VISTA*™ program at Illinois State University is attempting to help in those efforts. The services have the potential to provide a life-long impact to infants and toddlers with vision loss and their families.

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Introducing the iBraille Challenge!

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The iBraille Challenge (iBC) integrates technology and literacy skills in a mobile app that teachers of students with visual impairments can use to support daily reading instruction for students who read braille in grades 1-12. Designed to work with refreshable braille displays and iPads using Voice Over (VO) screen access software, the iBC is based on ***The National Braille Challenge***, a contest of braille readers and writers, sponsored by the Braille Institute of America, Inc. Using the age and grade level structure of the National Braille Challenge (see Table 1), the iBC

includes *Challenges* and *Activities*.

Age grouping	Grades levels covered	Number of levels
Apprentice	1st and 2nd	4
Freshman	3rd and 4th	4
Sophomore	5th and 6th	4
Junior Varsity	7th, 8th, and 9th	3
Varsity	10th, 11th, and 12th	3

Table 1: Age and Grade Levels Covered in the iBC

The Challenge section includes a *Placement Test*, which is used to determine which level of content is most appropriate for a particular student. This section includes several sets of content that provide literacy practice in two domains – reading and writing. The *Reading Challenges* provide students with opportunities to read passages and respond to several *Reading Comprehension* multiple choice questions. While reading the passages, reading speed and

accuracy is measured within the app, and teachers are given the opportunity to conduct a *Miscue Analysis* of the student's reading using an audio recording of the student's voice. Scores for reading speed (in words per minute and correct words per minute), accuracy (in percentage of words read correctly), and comprehension are given for the *Reading Challenges*. In the *Writing Challenge* domain, students have opportunities to practice proofreading braille and writing braille. In the *Proofreading Challenge*, students are given several multiple choice questions in which they must choose the correctly brailled version of a given sentence. In the *Speed and Accuracy Challenge*, students listen to an audio recording of a word, phrase, or sentence, and they must correctly braille it. All Challenges are tied to the National Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for College and Career Readiness, and reports are generated documenting the student's performance on specific skill sets within the CCSS.

Once an age/grade level is determined, several activities are available in the iBC to support development of specific literacy skills. Under the Reading domain, these activities include:

- *Braille Hunt* – an activity in which students are presented with a string of characters with one anomalous character embedded in the string of characters, and the student must identify it. This activity is designed to support tactile discrimination and reading fluency.
- *Deduction Detective* – an activity in which students are given a very short passage to read and then they must respond to two questions – one recall question and one inference question. This activity is designed to support development in reading comprehension.
- *Repeated Readings* – an activity in which students must re-read passages and try to increase their reading speeds and accuracy. The activity supports development of reading

speed and accuracy.

Under the Writing domain, these activities include:

- *Braille Scramble* – Students are presented with a base word and they must braille as many additional words using the letters from the base word as they can. This activity is designed to develop word knowledge, phoneme knowledge, and may prompt discussions of new vocabulary.
- *Blinking Braille* – Students are presented with a word, phrase, or sentence in braille, and then it quickly disappears. The student must then reproduce what they saw with accuracy. The activity is designed to support short term and working memory, spelling, grammatical structure, and braille writing accuracy.
- *Repeated Writing* – Students are presented with audio recordings of words, phrases, or sentences and they must accurately braille them. The activity is designed to support spelling and braille writing accuracy.

Designed under an Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) federal grant Stepping Up Technology Grant (H327S120007), the *Reading* domain of the iBC has been pilot tested with over 60 students who read braille, 40 students without disabilities, and 66 special education teachers. Data is being analyzed to determine the quality, usefulness, and relevance of the iBC as a tool to improve braille literacy for students who read braille. Researchers are currently recruiting for a pilot study for the *Writing* Domain of the iBC, and expect to begin pilot testing in Fall 2017. Upon completion of the pilot study, researchers anticipate publishing and widely distributing the iBC as a free tool for teachers to use to support braille literacy instruction.

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Mathematics Instruction for Students with Visual Impairments: What is there and where can we go

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With funding from Aresty Undergraduate Research Program at Rutgers University, we conducted a review of literature on existing intervention studies for teaching mathematics to students with visual impairments (VI). We were interested in examining the effectiveness of existing methods to instruct students with VI to learn mathematics and in evaluating the research rigor of the existing interventions, with the aim to provide a solid understanding of what has been done and where we should go in research on teaching mathematics to students with VI. This study was presented in CEC 2016 in St Louis, MO, and was published in Journal of Childhood & Developmental Disorders.

We found this topic very important. World Health Organization

estimated that about 285 million of people suffer from visual impairments in the world, including 19 million children below the age of 15. Mathematics learning is critical for everyone, however, elementary and middle school students with VI typically lag up to three years behind their normal-developing peers in mathematics achievement (Blackorby & Cameto, 2004; Blackorby, Chorost, Garza & Guzman, 2003). There could be many reasons explaining the difficulties of students with VI, such as inaccessibility to educational materials, difficulties with mentally representing numerical or graphic information, and limited social interaction or communication with teachers and peers.

We systematically searched the five most widely used electronic databases including ERIC, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, PsychInfo, and ProQuest from 1980 to 2014, using keywords: mathematics, learning/education/teaching/instruction/, visual impairment/visually impaired/visually handicapped/blind/low vision, and program/intervention. In addition, we also conducted a hand-

using the same descriptors as the electronic search. The first author reviewed six important special education journals (i.e., *Journal of Special Education*, *Remedial and Special Education*, *Exceptional Children*, *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, *Intervention in School & Clinic*, and *Exceptionality*) and checked if there were any missing studies unidentified in the electronic search.

In this study, we employed a set of very rigorous inclusionary criteria to evaluate the evidences of intervention effectiveness. To be included in the review, the article must have (a) focused on intervention methods, (b) focused on mathematics, (c) included participants with VI; (d) use an experimental, quasi-experimental, or single-subject design, and (e) published in peer-reviewed journals in English. Conference presentations, papers published in conference proceedings, or papers published in non-peer reviewed journals were excluded in this synthesis. Qualitative case studies, students or parents' self- reports, teachers' anecdotal reports or

reflections, and position papers without empirical data were all excluded. The above set of criteria for inclusion was created according to the recommendations by What Works Clearninghouse (WWC) (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/topic.aspx?sid=9) to provide scientific evidence.

Although the electronic search yielded 273 results, with the strict inclusionary criteria we only found five studies to be included in this review. It appears that there is not adequate research focusing on teaching mathematics to students with VI, at least no adequate research with the required rigor. On the other hand, all these five studies were conducted only within recent years (2011-2014), indicating an increasing attention to this important education topic. All five studies are single-case studies in nature, suggesting the difficulties with recruiting large group participants with VI.

Of the studies included, two main intervention methods used to instruct VI students in mathematics emerged: assistive technologies and

and human-delivered cognitive interventions. Three studies were identified under the category of assistive technology (Beal, Beal, Rosenblum & Smith, 2011; Bouck & Weng, 2014; Bouck, Flanagan, Joshi, Sheikh & Schleppenback, 2011). All three studies provided audio material to help students with VI access information. Beal, Rosenblum and Smith (2011) had fourteen students with VI participate in the field-testing of AnimalWatch-VI-Beta, a computer program that delivered 12 prealgebra math problems and hints through a self-voicing audio feature. Bouck et al. (2011) compared the effects of a newly developed computer-based voice input, speech output (VISO) calculator with students' regular method of calculation. Bouck and Weng (2014) conducted an intervention to understand how the performance of three secondary students with visual impairments was impacted by accessing algebra via a digital textbook in comparison to accessing it via a traditional textbook. However, none of the three studies could make a strong conclusion that assistive technologies providing audio information are more

effective than traditional methods.

Two studies (Chang & Bin, 2013; Pevsner, Sanspree & Allison, 2011) were identified using cognitive instruction via individualized instruction to each participant to assist the math learning of students with VI. Chang and Bin (2013) conducted an intervention that explored whether people who are blind and have no visual experience are able to learn how to draw perspective through education. The researcher used a cube as the stimulus, together with special teaching aids, to help a participant with congenital total blindness understand the drawing method used by his sighted counterparts to illustrate the three-dimensional object, such as a cube. Results suggest that after completing the lessons, the participant was able to select the correct oblique projection of a cube and no longer insisted that a cube can only be ideally represented by a square, however, although he was able to cognitively accept the concept, he was unable to join various dimensions (such as joining various corners of the cube). The other

study (Pevsner, Sanspree & Allison, 2012) conducted an intervention that investigated the effects of teaching strategies that address individual learning styles for students with VI. Results suggested that when learning styles were addressed, test scores of students remained the same or improved, and there was an increase of positive responses of students' attitudes towards school. However, the test scores of the five participants with VI were comparable to peers in the control group.

In sum, although it is well known that students with VI encounter tremendous difficulties with learning mathematics, very little empirical research exists with the basic standards of research rigor. Future research with more rigorous designs, especially randomized controlled trial experiments, is warranted. In addition to developing cognitive instructional strategies and examining the effectiveness of assistive technologies, future research may also explore the possibility of developing a functional mathematics curriculum for students with congenital total blindness.

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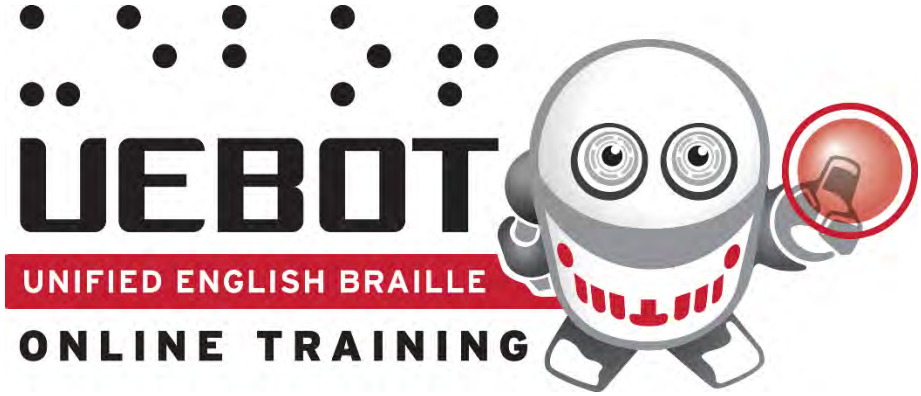
Another note: The research manuscript developed from this presentation has been accepted by an online journal. So this is a summary of the presentation rather than a research paper, and we just briefly described what we did and what we found out. I believe this is not self-plagiarism. And so have also made it explicit in the first paragraph that this study was presented in CEC and was published in a journal.



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Peer Assisted Learning Strategies to Improve Reading Fluency and Socialization Among Students Who Are Blind and Visually Impaired

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Developed by Lynn Fuchs and Doug Fuchs in 1997, Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) is a supplemental peer-tutoring program in which students are paired to complete structured tasks in reading or math. Students take turns acting as the tutor, coaching and correcting one another as they complete learning activities. Research indicates that PALS enhances reading and math skills for students with diverse academic needs. This article focuses on the use of PALS to improve reading fluency and comprehension for students with visual impairments. The teacher of the visually impaired or classroom teacher first trains their students in PALS procedures, described below:

Partner Reading

Partners take turns reading aloud for five minutes. When not reading, they listen for omissions, mispronunciations, and insertions and provide corrective feedback when necessary. The program calls for the stronger reader in each dyad to read first, giving an opportunity for the weaker reader in the pair to preview the passage and review difficult words before it's his or her turn to reread the same text. Students switch roles after five-minute blocks.

Paragraph Shrinking

Readers monitor their comprehension and make deliberate judgments in the selection and reduction of textual information and elaborate on information in the text. The reader states the main idea of the passage (who or what the passage is about), gives a 10-word summary of the passage, and provides a sequential retelling of the important events of the passage.

Prediction Relay

The reader predicts what is likely to happen next on the next page, reads aloud from the page, and summarizes the just-read text, with the tutor deciding whether the predictions are accurate. Students switch roles after five minutes.

Benefits of PALS

Benefits of PALS include smaller pupil/teacher ratios, increased time on task, increased opportunities to respond, immediate error corrections, enhanced motivation and improved social skills. Previous studies conducted by Guralnick et al. (1996), Guralnick and Groom (1987), Sacks et al. (1992), Sacks and Silberman (2000), and Sacks and Wolffe (2006) show that children with visual impairments often face the problem of making and maintaining friendships with their classmates in inclusive settings. This condition affects their social development and can lead to isolation and segregation from their sighted peers. The social needs of students with visual impairments must be addressed by all

those who are involved in the child's daily programs, both in terms of direct teaching of social skills as well as integration of those skills into all aspects of their education.

The use of PALS benefits the student with visual impairments in various ways that include building greater reading comprehension, reading fluency, and social skills with their peers. The use of PALS can be monitored by the teacher within the general classroom environment so students with visual impairments can stay included with their classmates instead of being segregated from peers during reading interventions. The benefits of PALS have the possibility to extend well beyond the classroom walls and can lay the foundation for friendships and the love of reading. The use of PALS can also be paired with games to help develop phonemic awareness, braille contraction recognition, and increase motivation to read. Some suggestions for games are bingo, rhyming matching games, fishing for braille contractions, pick a stick where various

words are on different colored sticks and the students would pick a stick to form their own sentence, onset and rhyme games where the beginning of a word is one container and the end of words is in another container and the student would put both parts together to read the word they formed, roll-a-word, and many others. The teacher of the visually impaired can help adapt general classroom reading materials so the student with visual impairments can be immersed in reading throughout daily routines. Pairing fun games with the use of PALS can increase students with visual impairments motivation to read, help to build friendships, and help the student to feel included with their classmates.

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University and School for the Deaf and Blind Partnership Experience

Deb Bracke, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Augsutana College, deborahbracke@augustana.edu

One of the challenges facing education programs is the question of how to effectively prepare teacher candidates for an increasingly diverse student population. Research suggests that community-based experiences with diverse learners are essential to effective teaching.[1] Hence, a critical purpose of any teacher education program is to ensure that students are able to understand the multiplicity of differences (and similarities) among the students they will encounter. The *Florida School for the Deaf and Blind* in St. Augustine, Florida, provided a venue for this enriched learning opportunity.

In February, 2016, six students from Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois spent a week at the *Florida School for the Deaf and Blind*. They were immersed in a variety of high impact learning

experiences that could not be found in a traditional clinical placement or classroom setting. Their "charge" was to learn as much as possible about the "expanded core curriculum" and to plan a poster presentation for the 2016 CEC Convention in St. Louis, Missouri.

What follows is a description of this "peak" experience. More specifically, how did these undergraduate students prepare for an academic conference of this magnitude? …What was it like to present at a national conference? … How did they maximize their CEC experience?

See Grant, C.A. & Secada, W.G. (1990). Preparing teachers for diversity: In W.R. Houston (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 403-422). New York: MacMillan., Pohan, C.A. (1996). Preservice Teachers' Beliefs about Diversity: Uncovering factors leading to multicultural responsiveness. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, (29), 3. 62-69., Telez, K., Hlebowitsh, P, Cohen, M. & Norwood, P. (1995). Social service field experiences and teacher education. In J.M. Larkin & C.E. Sleeter (Eds.), *Developing multicultural teacher education curricula.* (pp. 65-78). Albany: State University of New York Press., Wiest, L. R. (1998). Using immersion experiences to shake up preservice teachers' views about cultural differences. *Journal do Teacher Education*, 49, 358-365.

The Expanded Core Curriculum: What We Learned at the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind

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We are three undergraduate students from Augustana College who spent a week at the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind in St. Augustine, Florida. We found ourselves quickly immersed in the school's expanded core curriculum and were given the privilege of re-telling our story at the 2016 Council for Exceptional Children Conference in St. Louis Missouri. Following is a summary of what we presented at the conference. To some, this may be very basic, but to us it was a revelation.

The Florida School for the Deaf and Blind in St. Augustine, Florida is an 80-acre campus for students with visual and/or hearing impairments. It is the longest standing program of its kind in the state of Florida and is the only public school in Florida devoted to educating eligible children with visual or auditory impairments. It is free to Florida residents. Some students commute on a daily basis; others, who live too far away for a daily commute reside on campus during the week. Charter buses arrive every Friday afternoon to transport them home each weekend.

Safety is a priority at FSDB. The school has its own police force, fire station, and security gate. Passing through this gate provided us with our first glimpse into the “expanded core curriculum.” For students with visual impairments, the expanded core curriculum provided a variety of opportunities to learn essential skills for independence. Some of the subjects and skills we observed were: compensatory academics, orientation and mobility,

social interaction, independent living, recreation and leisure, sensory efficiency, use of assistive technology, career education, and self-determination.

We couldn't help but notice that the staff's primary concern was teaching their students self-determination and life skills. For example, we helped one second grade teacher teach her students the difference between "wants" and "needs." She connected this to savings accounts because she wanted her students to know they shouldn't spend any money they get right away.

Extracurricular activities and athletics were equally important. Students at FSDB compete against public and private schools in Florida, as well as other Deaf and Blind schools across the country. The athletic program includes basketball, cheerleading, cross country, football, goal ball, Little League baseball, soccer, swimming, tennis, track and field, volleyball, and wrestling, Other clubs and activities include Academic Bowl Team, blind ski club,

bowling, camping, canoeing, Deaf Dance Troupe, fishing, fitness center, hiking, kayaking, Mathcounts (competitive math team), outdoor club, OuttaSight band, photography club, rock climbing, and student council. Such broad avenues for participation certainly provide students many opportunities to collaborate and excel.

The services offered through speech and language also ensure the students are developing in both the standard curriculum and the expanded core curriculum. Speech-language pathologists focused on receptive and expressive language with students with visual impairments. Students used the Smart-Brailler and other hands on activities to expand their vocabulary and other semantic skills. By working on increasing their lexicon within these activities, students were able to express their thoughts more effectively through writing, reading, and conversation with peers. Pragmatics, which are related to a student's social language/interactions were also integral to the speech and language program. Therapists used

mock interviews, ordered food, and simulated paying the bill in restaurants. This opportunity to manage “real life” experiences was a critical component of the expanded core curriculum.

We interacted with specialists for reading, math, science, social studies, braille, and orientation & mobility. The latter is taken very seriously at FSDB and the students look forward to working with the specialist. We learned that orientation is the idea that students know where they are, where they are going, and how they are going to get there; mobility is students knowing how they are going to move from one place to another. We took students to the grocery store and observed a student crossing the street for the very first time. Seeing the way the specialist interacted with her and worked with her strengths was amazing and helped us truly appreciate the important work that mobility specialists do. On another occasion, a kindergarten student gave us a tour of the campus. A five year old gave us perspective on the methods he

used to get around-- pointing out things that we hardly noticed, like echoes and background noises. We could only imagine that ultimately these students would travel independently. In fact, many of these students will become independent because FSDB also includes an optional career education program. Partnerships with area colleges and employers are available for eligible students until the age of 22. Over 80% of FSDB graduates continue their education at a college or vocational program.

Image 1: Students from Augustana College.

Experience of a Lifetime for an Undergraduate Student

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Image 1: Katie, Maddie, Courtney, Kylee, Allison and Eric at their Poster Presentation at CEC's 2016 International Convention.

As the Gateway to the West welcomed us with open arches on April 13, 2016, the streets were filled with a variety of people all carrying the same orange bags. They were all headed to one place: The Council for Exceptional Children: Conference and Expo. With about 10,000 special education teachers gathered in one space, it is the largest assembly of professional development for those interested in special education. There was not one unfriendly person in this crowd because everyone who attended this conference had one mission: advancement of success for children with exceptionalities.

The orange bags were no longer just bags, but a symbol of the community that we were so fortunate to be a part of. This was now our community of educators coming together to celebrate and share successes. This was our journey towards a multitude of new instructional methods and teaching strategies from classrooms throughout the nation. This was our sneak peek into what success

looks like for those who learn differently.

The amount of sessions that this particular conference offered were excruciatingly challenging to us because even though we wanted to attend every session, there was no time in the day to do so. We kicked off the first night with our keynote speaker, Temple Grandin. Temple Grandin's story is a remarkable one because even though she has ASD, (Autism Spectrum Disorder) that did not get in the way of her chasing her dreams. One of those accomplishments was obtaining a PhD and being named one of Time magazine's 100 "most influential people." Dr. Grandin shared her valuable insights on how others with ASD can overcome obstacles and improve the quality of their lives. She also shared many useful dos and don'ts for educators. Grandin's speech reminded all of us about our experience at the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind and how their faculty, as a community, came together to provide amazing opportunities for students who were visually and hearing impaired.

For the students we worked with, quality of life was having a successful future outside of the campus boundaries.

The independence of the students at the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind was very impressive. Much of this independence is a result of an Expanded Core Curriculum. (The Expanded Core Curriculum focuses on the concepts and skills that often require specialized instruction with students who are visually impaired in order to compensate for decreased opportunities to learn incidentally by observing others.) We were captivated by this new kind of teaching and learning. This is why we wanted to discuss and share the extended core curriculum with others, especially those interested in visual impairments.

We began by preparing an extremely large poster. None of us had any experience in designing this. As you can imagine, this was not easy, especially considering group scheduling conflicts. At times it was very stressful, frustrating, and overwhelming; but in the end,

we produced something we are all very proud of.

In St. Louis, a couple nights before our poster session, we all sat down to try to figure out a plan: who would talk when and who would say what. Twenty minutes into planning, we decided to scratch the script and just invite, engage, and share our experiences with our audience. We decided to go with this method of presentation because all of the other sessions we went to during the days prior to our session were all personable and more of a friendly conversation between the presenter and the audience. This approach seemed like it would be engaging and beneficial to us as well as our audience.

In the end, the conference was a huge success! Not only did we enjoy other educator's sessions, but also having the opportunity to present our own discoveries and experiences with students who were visually impaired was the icing on the cake. Something that surprised us about our presentation was how it sparked discussions

between us and the other presenters. We realized we had much in common – and that even though we were undergraduate students, our experiences and insights were appreciated.

This experience brought us into the impressive community of educators, parents, students, and administrators that is the Council of Exceptional Children. All of our late nights of preparation were truly worth it in the end. Our presentation was a success with many attendees engaging with our props (beep ball, simulation glasses, and braille books). More importantly, it was a success because of the personal development we achieved through our participation with those friendly members of the Council.

It is still hard to believe that we were able to share new understandings at such a prestigious, well-known conference. This is a day we will remember forever – and our orange bags are prized possessions.

New Resources for Professionals from AFB Press!

Burns Braille Guide

A Quick Reference to Unified English Braille, Second Edition

MARY F. BURNS

The *Burns Braille Transcription Dictionary* has been revamped as the *Burns Braille Guide* to usher in the new era of Unified English Braille (UEB). This easy-to-use reference guide includes common braille to print and print to braille conversions, as well as punctuation, new UEB contractions, and general rules and terminology.

Available in paperback, e-book, and online subscription.

Beginning with Braille

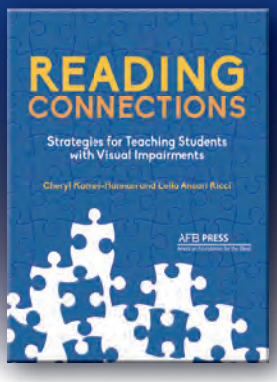
Firsthand Experiences with a Balanced Approach to Literacy

Second Edition

ANNA M. SWENSON

This new edition of an exceptional resource for helping educators teach braille has been updated using UEB and includes new sections on general education literacy instruction, teaching the dual-media learner, adapting materials, and addressing diverse needs. In addition to including favorite teaching activities from the first edition, the new *Beginning with Braille* also features new teaching materials, record forms, and braille activities.

Available in paperback, e-book, and online subscription.



Reading Connections

Strategies for Teaching Students with Visual Impairments

CHERYL KAMEI-HANNAN and LEILA ANSARI RICCI

A teacher's guide for addressing the needs of students who read print and/or braille with a focus on supporting those who have, or who are at risk for developing reading disabilities. Includes strategies and classroom activities.

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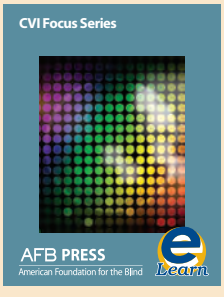

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Missouri School for the Blind

Patti Curran, Community Relations Director

Image 1: Exterior image of the Missouri School for the Blind

Missouri School for the Blind was founded in 1851 and was the first school to introduce Braille in the United States in 1859. Since the beginning of its rich history, MSB has helped thousands of students achieve academic, vocational and personal success. We strive to help every student achieve his or her highest level of success and independence.

Missouri School for the Blind is operated by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and provides services at no cost to families or school districts. MSB is dually accredited through AdvancEd's North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement and the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP). Missouri School for the Blind offers a variety of services for students who attend the school as well as students and families in districts across the state.

Centerbased Services are available for student's ages 5-21. Outreach Services are available statewide for children and youth ages birth through 21.

Missouri School for the Blind's centerbased programs fall into three major categories including academic K-12 programs, K.E.Y.S., and MSB L.I.F.E. MSB also offers unique opportunities for learning and socialization through the summer programs and special

offerings such as the annual Braille Challenge.

ACADEMIC K-12 PROGRAMS

MSB offers a full schedule of academic programs in grades K-12 fully aligned with the Missouri Learning Standards and the Expanded Core Curriculum for students who are blind and visually impaired. MSB's highly qualified staff assures that our rigorous curriculum is implemented and differentiated with instructional strategies and ongoing assessments to ensure student success. MSB is dedicated to high levels of student achievement and we work to improve educational opportunities and increase the effectiveness of the programs and services provided to our students.

MSB's standards-based curriculum includes a variety of offerings in:

- English/Language Arts
- Mathematics

- Social Studies
- Science
- Health and PE
- Practical Arts
- Fine Arts

The Expanded Core Curriculum includes:

Compensatory or functional academic skills (including Braille and other communication modes)

- Orientation and mobility
- Social interaction skills
- Independent living skills
- Recreation and leisure skills
- Career education
- Use of assistive technology
- Sensory efficiency skills
- Self-determination

MSB Knowledge to Empower Your Success (K.E.Y.S.)

K.E.Y.S. is an intensive IEP driven short-term program designed to provide specific, direct instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum, as well as individually identified areas of need for students who are blind or visually impaired. K.E.Y.S. students will attend MSB for a pre-determined period of time to develop Expanded Core Curriculum skills while keeping up with the core curriculum. K.E.Y.S. courses include: Independent Living Skills, Orientation and Mobility, Braille, Sensory Efficiency, Transition Skills, and Computer and Assistive Technology.

MSB LEARNING INDEPENDENCE FROM EXPERIENCE (L.I.F.E.)

MSB L.I.F.E. was created to facilitate a positive beginning to the world beyond traditional high school. MSB L.I.F.E. is a transition program designed to provide qualified students with the opportunity to continue their educational experiences in an age-appropriate

simulated community setting. Each day, MSB L.I.F.E. student's work in three areas of transition based on their IEP-driven transition goals: employment, independent living, and education.

MSB L.I.F.E. allows participants to learn and practice the skills necessary to live independently through a supervised apartment-style setting. Students clean their own apartment, manage a budget, and plan and prepare their own meals using the latest assistive devices. During L.I.F.E., qualified students may benefit from college dual-enrollment, and/or work in the community, supported by an MSB job coach. Students are provided with opportunities to use newly-acquired skills and knowledge in real-life situations which extend what is taught beyond the classroom into the community.

SUMMER EXPLORATIONS IN LEARNING

Through Summer Explorations in Learning, MSB seeks to provide non-traditional, high-quality, academic and functional

program designed to supplement the student's regular educational experience with an emphasis on the Expanded Core Curriculum. Courses range from two to four weeks and topics vary each summer. Summer Explorations in Learning are available to students throughout

the state and will be accepted on a first come, first serve basis.

ATHLETICS & EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

MSB offers a variety of competitive and participative athletics and extracurricular activities. MSB athletes compete within the North Central Association of Schools for the Blind in Track and Field, Goalball, Wrestling, Swimming, Cheerleading and Forensics. MSB also offers a variety of extracurricular activities including clubs, intramural sports, and daily academic support through our AcLabs.

INTRAMURAL SPORTS

- Track and Field
- Bowling

- Skiing

CLUBS

Junior and Senior Beta

- Horticulture
- Craft
- App Club
- High School Book Club
- Alternative Book Club
- Library Cat Club

TECHNOLOGY

Including, but not limited to:

- Screen Readers
- Text-to-Speech Software and Devices
- Audio Devices
- iPads
- SmartBoards

- Handheld Scientific Instruments
- Color Identifiers
- Money Identifiers
- Electronic Calendars
- Talking Watches

FACILITY HIGHLIGHTS

State-of-the-Art Science and Computer Labs

- New Sensory Courtyard (2014)
- Library Media Center
- Indoor Traverse Climbing Wall
- Onsite Athletic Facilities:
  - Indoor Pool
  - Bowling Alley
  - Two Gymnasiums
  - Wrestling Room
  - Fitness Center
  - Full-Sized and Cabled Tracks

CLINICAL AND ANCILLARY SERVICES

Clinical and Ancillary Services includes an onsite health center staffed with licensed nurses, and also provides occupational, speech and physical therapies, as well as mental health services for students.

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

Residential Services provides students with a home-away-from-home atmosphere Sunday through Thursday. Students travel home every weekend. Residential Services also encourages the development of independent living skills such as cleaning, cooking, washing and care of personal hygiene needs. Students have an opportunity to participate in a number of recreational activities and outings including the list below.

- Professional baseball, hockey and football games
- Performing Arts and Theatre Experiences
- Circus Outings
- Movie Nights

- Shopping Trips
- Game Nights
- Roller Skating

MISSOURI DEAFBLIND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT

The Missouri Deafblind Technical Assistance Project provides high quality technical assistance and support services statewide at no cost to state and local educational agencies, private programs and families of individuals with combined vision and hearing loss, age birth through 21 years. Services include:

- Assistance in the identification and referral of children and youth who are deafblind
- Professional and parent training
- Resource information and materials on loan
- Onsite technical assistance and consultation on assessment, education and employment
- Transition assistance, including person-centered planning

MISSOURI STATEWIDE PARENT INVOLVEMENT NETWORK (MoSPIN)

The Missouri Statewide Parent Involvement Network (MoSPIN) provides in-home parent training statewide at no cost to families of children, age birth to five years, who are visually impaired and who may also have other disabilities. Services provided are family-focused, involving active parent participation in the child's development. Parent advisors are provided with comprehensive training sessions on the INSITE curriculum, which is used during regularly scheduled home visits.

MISSOURI INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCE CENTER (MIRC)

The Missouri Instructional Resource Center (MIRC) registers students who are legally blind and administers the Federal Quota Fund. The funds:

- Are for the purchase of braille and large print texts and specialized educational materials produced by the American

Printing House for the Blind (APH)

- Are available to eligible students in public, charter, private, home or parochial schools and agencies statewide

Workshops and displays of APH materials provide training opportunities with these specialized products.

MISSOURI SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER (LMC)

The Missouri School for the Blind Library Media Center (LMC) loans library materials to professionals throughout Missouri who work with students who are visually impaired. The materials that are available for loan include professional books and videos for educators, and braille library books for use by students throughout Missouri. Services for Missouri educators who work with students with visual impairments include:

- Professional Development Lending Library
- Borrow braille and print-braille books from the MSB Library

- Browse-and-borrow visits to MSB's Library Media Center
- Advice on selecting books to borrow from the MSB librarian

OUTREACH VISION EDUCATION AND ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY SERVICES

Outreach Vision Education and Orientation and Mobility Services offer assessment and technical assistance to all local and state board operated programs, as well as First Steps, in Missouri. These services are intended to support programming efforts. Assessments are conducted by professionals certificated in their respective fields. Services currently being offered by a vision supervisor for children and youth, age birth to 21 years, include:

- Functional Vision Learning Media Assessments (FVLMA)
- Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Assessments
- Technical Assistance for Information and Resources

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Professional development opportunities offered by Outreach

STUDENT ARTWORK

Puff the Magic Dragon artwork, provided by the Missouri School for the Blind.

Services include coursework and a variety of workshops on topics relevant to the education of children and youth who are blind/visually impaired/deafblind. For information on current offerings, visit MSB's Web site at www.msb.dese.mo.gov.

MISSOURI SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND
3815 Magnolia Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63110
Phone: (314) 776-4320 • Fax: (314) 776-1875
www.MSB.dese.mo.gov

DVIDB Professional Standards Committee

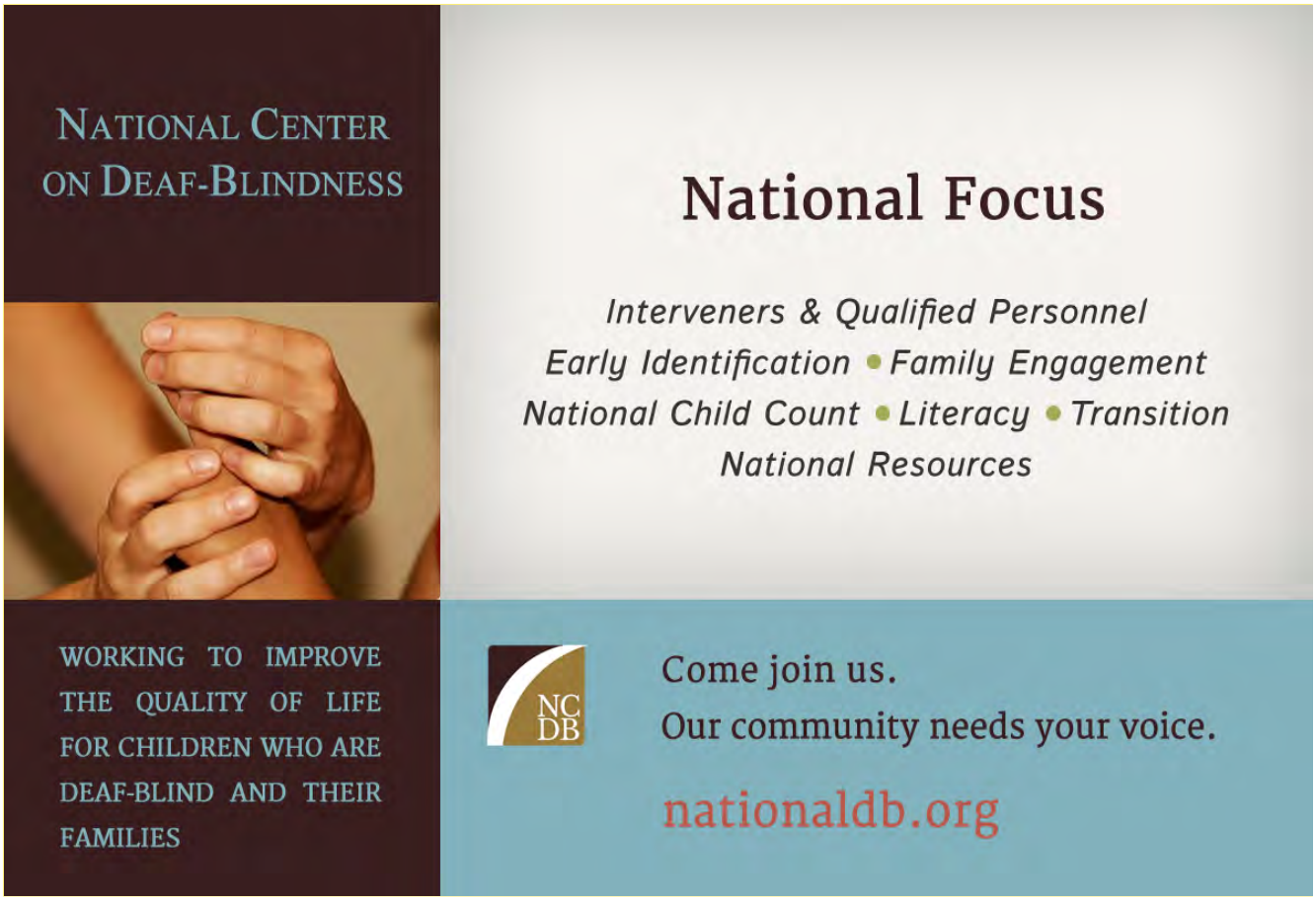
Deborah Hatton, Chair

Committee Report

April 11, 2016

This committee is in a planning stage and has started planning for revisions of the initial and advanced specialty standard sets for teachers of students with visual impairments. Tiffany Wild, Deborah Hatton, Sandy Lewis, and Holly Lawson had an organizational phone call conference on March 23, 2016. Potential organizational partners were identified, and letters inviting these organizations to participate will be sent shortly.

We anticipate asking for assistance in developing the background concept paper and literature review that CEC requires as the first step in developing updated standards. Our goal is to have a draft of the initial licensure standards for input from colleagues at the International AER Conference this summer. Having a transparent process with multiple opportunities for input



from the field is our goal, and we welcome input from the DVIDB Executive Board and anyone interested in helping with this endeavor.

An overview of the process that must be followed can be found at https://www.cec.sped.org/Standards/Special-Educator-Professional-Preparation/CEC-Initial-and-Advanced-Specialty-Sets

Ad Hoc Committee on DVIDB Position Papers

Deborah Hatton, Chair
Donna Brostek-Lee, Co-chair
Jennifer Cmar, Sandra Lewis, Tiffany Wild, Catherine Greeley-Bennett,
Sarah Ivy, Mackenzie Savaiano

Committee Report

April 3, 2016

Since the 2015 CEC Conference in San Diego, the committee has made progress on four position papers. The position paper on the role and function of orientation and mobility specialists was updated and presented to the DVIDB Executive Board for approval during the 2015 CEC meeting in San Diego; it has been posted on the website for input from the field. I did not receive any input on this paper.

Sandra Lewis completed a new position paper on the expanded core curriculum that is attached and is ready to be presented to the DVIDB Executive Board meeting in St. Louis at the 2016 DVIDB Executive Board meeting. The position paper on the

role and function of teachers of students with visual impairments was revised by Martin Monson, Kay Ferrell, and Susan Spungin; it is currently being revised based on input from the DVIDB position paper committee. Deborah Hatton, Sandy Lewis, and Kitty Greeley-Bennett secured input and revisions on the family-centered practices position paper from early childhood special educators. Deborah Hatton is on the agenda for the upcoming International Preschool Seminar that will be held in California in April. She will lead a working session on edits to the existing paper.

We recommend that the new paper on the expanded core curriculum be published in the next *VIDBE Quarterly* and be posted on the DVIDB web site with a request for input from the field. As soon as the revisions to The Role and Function of Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments and the updated family-centered practices position papers are completed, we will share the DVIDB Executive Board, and we recommend publishing those papers, too,

in *VIDBE Quarterly* and posting on our website.

According to Derrick Smith, members can vote on the position papers via email at a time that the DVIDB president/chair thinks is appropriate. We have not asked members to vote on the updated Orientation and Mobility position paper. He suggested that we submit items that need approval at specified times that are tied to elections. Our committee would like the DVIDB Executive Board to decide on timing during our upcoming board meeting.

Past Accomplishments of Ad Hoc Committee on Position Papers

2016

Lewis, S. (2016, submitted). *The expanded core curriculum.* Position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness, Council for Exceptional Children, Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children. (To be presented to DVIDB Executive Board at 2016 CEC conference)

Spungin, S. J., Ferrell, K. A., & Monson, M. (2015). *The role and function of the teacher of students with visual impairments.* Position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments, Council for Exceptional Children. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children. (Revisions continue based on input from the position

paper committee)

2015

Cmar, J. L., Griffin-Shirley, N., Kelley, P., & Lawrence, B. (2015). *The role of the orientation and mobility specialist in public schools.* Position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness, Council for Exceptional Children. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children. (Presented to DVIDB Executive Board April 2015; posted on DBIDB web site; not published in DVIDB or voted upon by members)

Position Papers Approved 2011 and 2012

Lewis, S. (2012). *The need for targeted instruction in independent living skills in the curriculum of students with visual impairments.* Position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments, Council for Exceptional Children. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Lueck, A. H., Erin, J. N., Corn, A. L., & Sacks, S. Z. (2011). *Facilitating visual efficiency and access to learning in students with low vision.* Position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments, Council for Exceptional Children. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Parker, A. T., McGinnity, B. L., & Bruce, S. M. (2011). *Educational programming for students who are deafblind.* Position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments, Council for Exceptional Children. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Sacks, S. Z., Lueck, A. H., Corn, A. L., & Erin, J. N. (2011). *Supporting the social and emotional needs of students with*

low vision to promote academic and social success. Position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments, Council for Exceptional Children. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Smith, D. W., Kelly, S. M., & Kapperman, G. (2011). *Assistive technology for students with visual impairments*. Position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments, Council for Exceptional Children. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Tutt, L. M., Lieberman, L., & Brasher, B. (2011). *Physical education for students with visual impairments. Position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments,* Council for Exceptional Children. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Papers that need to be revised and updated that were formatted for web:

Spungin, S. J., & Ferrell, K. A. (2007). *The role and function of the teacher of students with visual impairments.* Position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments, Council for Exceptional Children. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children. ***Request for revision made in 2014 and final edits in progress April 2016***

Silberman, R. K., & Sacks, S. Z. (2007). *Expansion of the role of the teacher of students with visual impairments: Providing for students who also have severe/multiple disabilities.* Position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments, Council for Exceptional Children. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children. Change title to *Meeting the needs of students with*

visual impairments and severe/multiple disabilities

Huebner, K. M., Garber, M., & Wormsley, D. P. (2006). *Student-centered educational placement decisions: The meaning, interpretation, and application of least restrictive environment for students with visual impairments.* Position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments, Council for Exceptional Children. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Griffin-Shirley, N., Kelley, P., & Lawrence, B. (2006). *The role of the orientation and mobility specialist in the public school.* Position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments, Council for Exceptional Children. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children. ***Request for revision made in 2014; revisions made and paper approved by DVIDB Executive Board in April 2015.***

Erin, J. N., Holbrook, C., Sanspree, M. J., & Swallow, R. M. (2006). *Professional preparation and certification of teachers of students with visual impairments.* Position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments, Council for Exceptional Children. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Hatton, D., Anthony, T., Bishop, V., Gleason, D., Greely, J. C., Miller, T. … Tompkins, C. (2003). *Family-centered practices for infants and young children with visual impairments.* Position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments, Council for Exceptional Children. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children. ***Request for revision made in 2014 and again in 2015; Agenda item at upcoming preschool seminar meeting***

DVIDB Social

Celebrating Anne Sullivan Macy's Birthday at the DVIDB Social in St. Louis, Missouri!

Hart, V., & Ferrell, K. A. (date). *Cooperative efforts with families in educating children with visual impairments.* Position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments, Council for Exceptional Children. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Gardner, L. R., & Corn, A. L. (date). *Low vision: Access to print.* Position paper of the Division on Visual Impairments, Council for Exceptional Children. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

The Expanded Core Curriculum

A Position Paper of the Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness
Council for Exceptional Children
Submitted April 7, 2016

Sandra Lewis

Students who are blind and who have low vision, including those with multiple disabilities, do not have the same opportunities as students with unimpaired vision to take full advantage of learning through vision. Vision allows individuals to observe their own behaviors and the impact those behaviors have on the environment; it also allows individuals to observe the behaviors of other people and objects and the effect those behaviors have on both people and objects around them. Just as importantly, vision is the primary sense through which individuals synthesize the information that they receive through other sensory channels and make sense of that input. Without the advantages to learning that vision provides, children with visual impairments are presented with challenges to

understanding and taking control over the events occurring in their lives. As a result, they are at risk for not being able to interpret the sensory information that is received and for not developing skills that other children learn incidentally through observation in a variety of areas, including skills related to concept development, use of technology, independent living, maneuvering in the environment, socialization, recreation and leisure, knowledge of career options, and self-determination. These areas comprise the expanded core curriculum.

The expanded core curriculum represents the areas for which students with visual impairments need intentionally designed opportunities that provide the context for learning to occur. One of the primary roles of teachers of students with visual impairments is to ensure that these opportunities are provided and that students who are blind or who have low vision acquire age-appropriate skills that gradually and naturally build upon one another.

History

What has come be to known as the expanded core curriculum was first described by Philip Hatlen in the late 1970s in the coursework that he taught at San Francisco State University. After listing the areas of the general education curriculum that were targeted for mastery by all students (e.g., reading, social studies, mathematics, etc.), he would have students generate a second list that captured the additional areas of instruction needed by students with visual impairments, then provide a rationale supporting the concept that students must master both curricula—the general education curriculum plus the curriculum that was necessary to meet their unique educational needs and that this latter curriculum was the primary instructional focus of teachers of students with visual impairments.

Hatlen's conceptualization gained widespread support among professionals in California and in 1986, the State Department of Education published guidelines for programs for students with visual

impairments that identified the following seven areas as representing the potential unique educational needs associated with severe visual impairment: concept development and academic needs, communication needs, social/emotional needs (including socialization, psychological implications, affective education, recreation, and sex education), sensory/motor needs, orientation and mobility needs, daily living skills needs, and career and vocational needs. Assessment and instruction of students in these seven areas were considered to be critical to providing appropriate services to them. Hatlen and Curry (1987) and Curry and Hatlen (1988) further described the significance of assessment and instruction in these areas and in 1989, Hazekamp and Huebner published a national version of the California guidelines, thereby introducing the concept of a disability-specific curriculum related to the unique learning styles of children with visual impairments to professionals across the country.

Hatlen and Curry (1987) and Curry and Hatlen (1988) explained that the need for this disability specific curriculum results from the impact of visual impairment on learning. Blindness and low vision have the potential to interfere with the natural acquisition of skills in these areas. Consequently, focused instruction in the components of the expanded core curriculum, using techniques to overcome the limitations imposed by visual impairment, is necessary to ensure their mastery by students whose impairment limits their access to the environment. By 1995, the framers of *The National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities* (Corn, Hatlen, Huebner, Ryan, & Siller), included as Goal 8 of their national plan the achievement of an educational system in which "educational and developmental goals, including instruction, will reflect the assessed needs of each student in all areas of academic and disability-specific core curricula" (p. 23). Heumann and Hehir (1995) reiterated the importance of addressing students' specific

unique needs related to their visual impairment when developing IEPs.

Arguing that the words, “disability-specific curriculum” implied that the development of these skills was not equal to the core curriculum, Hatlen (1996) introduced the phrase, “expanded core curriculum” (ECC), and defined this curriculum as comprising skills in the following areas: (a) compensatory or functional academic skills, including communication modes; (b) orientation and mobility skills; (c) social interaction skills, (d) independent living skills; (e) recreation and leisure skills; (f) career education; (g) technology; and (h) visual efficiency.

With the publication of the revised edition of the *National Agenda* (Huebner, Merk-Adam, Stryker, & Wolffe, 2004), the ECC was further defined to include:

- Compensatory skills, such as communication modes
- Orientation and mobility skills
- Social interaction skills
- Independent living skills

- Recreation and leisure skills
- Career education skills
- Use of Assistive technology
- Visual efficiency skills (later changed to Sensory efficiency skills)
- Self-determination skills

Rationale

One of the most powerful impacts of visual impairment is the limited awareness of the affected individual of the activities in which others, both peers and adults, are engaged. Not knowing what others are doing limits one's impulse to imitate those actions and to explore one's own capabilities. For example, it would not be surprising that a child who is blind might not know that others cut their own meat or that flirting involves certain eye and facial behaviors. The most immediate effect of this limited awareness of others is a tendency toward passivity, a potential threat to self-determined behavior.

Another impact related to having limited visual access is not being able to imitate the way that others perform tasks. Even for

those individuals with low vision who can observe that others are engaged in a task, the limited ability to view the detail with which the task is performed can influence the acquisition of the skill. So, the child who knows a parent is making toast for breakfast may not be able to observe the way the parent removes the twist tie, takes a slice of bread out of the bag, plugs in the toaster, places the toast in and adjusts the machine, etc. Without specialized instruction to teach the individual parts of tasks their peers are learning through observation, children with visual impairments may not be given enough information to master those tasks, or the larger activity of which they are a part.

Similarly, the instructional techniques that are typically used to teach tasks rely on requests that children imitate a modeled behavior (e.g., “fold your paper like this,” or “here’s how to hold your crayon”). Learning also involves comparing one’s product with the products of others to determine what adjustments need to be made to improve one’s performance. Thus, both teaching and learning

typically involve vision, a sensory avenue not always fully available to students with visual impairments.

Fluency in skills typically is developed over time through visual observation and personal experiences that facilitate an appreciation that the skills are not discretely applied in the natural environment, but are interdependent. For example, shopping for groceries requires not just independent living skills, but social interaction, orientation and mobility, self-determination, and sensory efficiency skills, and depending on the needs and resources of the shopper, assistive technology skills. Specialized instruction is usually needed for students with visual impairments to master the complex skills associated with college and career readiness and successful adult outcomes.

At the heart of the need for specialized instruction in the areas of the ECC is the fundamental nature of learning without clear, reliable visual input. Lowenfeld (1973) noted that students who are blind and who have low vision require instruction that involves the

use of concrete objects, learning by doing, and the provision of unifying experiences. Creating these conditions of learning, as well as the high expectations and accommodations or modifications that facilitate skill acquisition, are the responsibility of teachers of students with visual impairments.

Just as instruction in the areas of the ECC facilitates development of the skills needed to function as adults in society, this instruction is thought to facilitate access to and success in educational programs. Students who have actively engaged in the typical kinds of experiences in which their peers participate with families, pets, and friends are more likely to have developed the concepts needed for success in literacy and other academic activities, to have skills to interact with others, to be aware of personal preferences, to be eager to try new experiences, and to solve complex problems. In addition, they are more likely to develop fine and gross motor skills, increase language and vocabulary, and cultivate a sense of control over their lives.

The ECC

The nine areas of the ECC can be conceptualized as essential to achieve two overarching goals: the development of those skills that are directly necessary to access activities related to the academic curriculum and those skills that are necessary to meet the demands of functioning within school, home, and community environments. These skill sets are complementary, and development of skills in all areas is important at all ages and critical for optimum functioning in both current and future environments.

Access to Activities Related to the Academic Curriculum

The development of ***sensory efficiency skills*** is essential for the development of methods for obtaining information from the environment and is the foundation for the development of all other skills used in life (Smith, 2014). Students who have significant visual impairment must learn to use alternate sensory systems that may be more efficient for gathering information about the environments

in which they spend time. These sensory efficiency skills do not develop without opportunities to be exposed to and taught to explore objects and relate those objects with meaningful sensory experiences. Learning to ascribe meaning to sensory experiences and to increase the efficiency with which one accesses those experiences cultivate the skills used to access all instruction for these students.

Development in two other areas of the ECC is critical for success in meeting the demands of students in school. Acquisition of skills related to ***compensatory access*** allows students to understand concepts and to receive and convey information (Guerette, 2014). Included in this area are skills related to the acquisition of communication and literacy (including through tactile symbols and braille), the interpretation and creation of tactile graphics, and the development of listening, study, and organizational strategies. Without such skills, students are unable to fully participate in the core curriculum and make progress towards

achievement of state-defined standards of learning. Similarly, ***assistive technology skills*** provide students with access to the tools of learning used in classrooms today, including textbooks, communication devices, and the Internet. Without instruction in compensatory access skills and the use of assistive technology, students with visual impairments are likely not to have the tools to reach their full potential or to be successful in academic activities

Access to Meet the Demands of Functioning in Home, School, and Community Environments

Six areas of the ECC are more broadly linked to meeting the needs of functioning within home, school, and community environments. Included within these ECC areas are skills related to independent travel, independent living, social interactions, recreation and leisure, self-determination, and career education. The acquisition of these skills in children with unimpaired vision occurs gradually over time and students are able to practice and refine them to be prepared to use these skills as they enter post-

school environments. As much as possible, the same learning circumstances should be created for students who are blind or who have low vision. With instruction that is delivered throughout the developmental period, students are more likely to gain fluency in these skills and integrate them into their naturally occurring behaviors.

The development of ***orientation and mobility skills*** facilitates movement within the environment and access to the interactions with objects and people that are important for healthy growth. Students with age-appropriate orientation and mobility skills have increased opportunities to socialize, make decisions, learn concepts, and to engage in recreation and leisure activities. As students mature, this area of the ECC becomes critical for accessing work, social, and community activities.

Also needed for functioning within society are ***independent living skills,*** including the skills to care for oneself and others with whom one lives. Students who acquire the wide variety of skills in

this area have more in common with their peers while growing up and have a greater number of living options as adults. When students acquire these skills, they are better prepared to contribute to families, engage with peers, and make decisions about (and meet) their own needs.

Social interaction skills, recreation and leisure skills, and ***self-determination skills*** are all closely related and build on one another. Students who have the ability to make and maintain friendships are more likely to be engaged with peers in age-appropriate recreation and leisure activities, which are known to develop self-determination skills (McGuire & McDonnell, 2008), or those abilities that facilitate one's understanding of self, one's needs, and the advocacy strategies to set and achieve personal goals and to solve problems. The reverse is also true; students who are engaged in recreation and leisure activities are more likely to have age-appropriate social and self-determination skills (McGuire & McDonnell, 2008). Being able to occupy one's time, appropriately

interact with others, and make decisions in the best interest of oneself are among the “soft skills” (Lipman, Ryberg, Carney, & Moore, 2015) that have been found to be associated with workforce participation. Because these skills are not learned incidentally by children with visual impairments, it is important that they be the focus of instruction while in school.

Finally, skills associated with ***career and vocational skills*** are specifically designed to lead to meaningful workforce participation of students. Without direct instruction, students with visual impairments are not likely to be familiar with a variety of employment options, how to identify employment that matches one’s aptitude and interests, and acquire and maintain employment. One develops many of the prerequisite skills related to career development through the acquisition of and integrated use of all other ECC skills.

The development of competence in most ECC skills depends on their being practiced frequently until they are naturally integrated

into the lives of students with visual impairments. Therefore, it is important that family members be involved to the extent that they are interested and able in the instruction and reinforcement of these skills. Ideally, teachers of students with visual impairments work closely with families of young children to lay the foundation of high expectations for participation of students in the activities that engage the family at home and in the community. As the children age, families and teachers work closely together to identify gaps in children's skillsets, to assist each other to determine how best to teach needed skills, and to ensure that the skills are used by students when needed.

Position

Because students with visual impairments do not learn critical skills incidentally through observation, it is important that instruction in these skills be provided to students in a manner that promotes their natural evolution throughout the developmental period.

Collectively, these skills are referred to as the expanded core curriculum and encompass a variety of:

- Sensory efficiency skills
- Compensatory access skills
- Assistive technology skills
- Independent living skills
- Orientation and mobility skills
- Social interaction skills
- Recreation and leisure skills
- Career and vocational skills
- Self-determination skills

One of the primary roles of teachers of students with visual impairments is to ensure that they, other educators, and family members provide opportunities for students to develop skills in the areas of the expanded core curriculum. Assessment of students' current level of functioning in these areas should be documented and used to intentionally plan instruction, which should occur, as often as possible, in the natural environments in which these behaviors typically are performed. To facilitate the natural acquisition of mastery in these skill areas, it is critically important

that teachers of students with visual impairments work closely with family members to ensure that children integrate these skills across all of the environments in which they spend time. When students develop skills in these areas, they are better prepared to successfully meet the demands of full participation in the home, at school, and in the community.

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2016 Submission Dates

Issue	Submission Deadline
Back to School Summer Issue	July 22, 2016
STEM Issue Fall Issue	September 30, 2016

*Please email your article submissions to Kathleen Farrand, farrand.9@buckeyemail.osu.edu

Smith, M. (2014). Sensory efficiency. In C. B. Allman & S. Lewis (Eds.), *ECC Essentials: Teaching the expanded core curriculum to students with visual impairments* (pp. 117-186). New York, NY: AFB Press.

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